Pacto por la Cultura: The Power and Possibility of Cultural Activism in Ciudad Juárez

Kerry Doyle
University of Texas at El Paso, kadoyle@utep.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.utep.edu/open_etd

Part of the Latin American Languages and Societies Commons, Latin American Studies Commons, Social and Cultural Anthropology Commons, and the Sociology Commons

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcommons.utep.edu/open_etd/2474

This is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@UTEP. It has been accepted for inclusion in Open Access Theses & Dissertations by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UTEP. For more information, please contact lweber@utep.edu.
PACTO POR LA CULTURA: THE POWER AND POSSIBILITY
OF CULTURAL ACTIVISM IN CIUDAD JUÁREZ

KERRY A. DOYLE

Center for Interamerican and Border Studies

APPROVED:

_______________________
Josiah Heyman, Ph.D., Chair

________________________
Howard Campbell, Ph.D.

________________________
Aileen El-Kadi, Ph.D.

Patricia D. Witherspoon, Ph.D.
Dean of the Graduate School
PACTO POR LA CULTURA: THE POWER AND POSSIBILITY
OF CULTURAL ACTIVISM IN CIUDAD JUÁREZ

By

KERRY A. DOYLE
BA, POLITICAL SCIENCE; BA, DRAWING AND PRINTMAKING

THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at El Paso

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Center for Interamerican and Border Studies
The University of Texas at El Paso
May 2011
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In gratitude and admiration for the work of Pacto por la Cultura, and for the generous ways in which they shared their time and insight during the research and writing of this paper: thank you to Leobardo Alvarado, Veronica Corchado, Perla de la Rosa, Angel Estrada, Vladimir Fong, Fausto Gomez, Luis Magueregui, Zulma Mendez, Omar Ojeda, Hector Padilla, Sandra Ramirez and very especially to Willivaldo Delgadillo.

Thank you to Eliana Loya de la Cruz, who spent many hours transcribing these interviews in Spanish. I am grateful for her care and professionalism.

This paper benefitted greatly from the input of Josiah Heyman, who read and re-read multiple drafts and always managed to point me in the right direction. The final draft additionally benefitted greatly from the comments, questions and support of Howard Campbell and Alieen El-Kadi.

All of my work is dedicated to Simon, Carlos and Owen. It would not have possible without their love and support.
ABSTRACT

This paper is a qualitative study of Movimiento Pacto por la Cultura¹, a group of cultural activists that operate in the hyper-violent reality of 21st century Ciudad Juárez. This work looks at Pacto as a case study to explore the possibilities of culture as a tool of activism in a particular time and place, exploring in the ways in which economic development policies, deficiencies in infrastructure, and rising violence both effect and can be affected by cultural processes. Through analysis of the group’s original documents and qualitative interviews with organizational members, the paper documents both the successes of the organization in using culture to respond to the complex reality of Ciudad Juárez and the difficulties faced in sustaining positive action in the face of increasing violence, militarization and political instability.

¹ Throughout the paper the organization Movimiento Pacto por la Cultura (Movement for a Cultural Pact) will be interchangeably referred to as Movimiento Pacto por la Cultura, Pacto por la Cultura and Pacto, reflecting the ways in which the group refers to itself.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview ........................................................................................................... Page 1
1.2 Working Definition of Culture.......................................................................... Page 2
1.3 Gramsci and Culture......................................................................................... Page 6
1.4 Art as Interstice- Potential of Art to Respond in 21st Century Juárez............. Page 13

## CHAPTER 2: HISTORY

2.1 Origins of Pacto: Zona PRONAF and Cultural Activism in Late 20th Century Juárez – ........................................................................................................................................................................... Page 22
2.2 Toma del INBA .................................................................................................. Page 28
2.3 Demand for Municipal Institute of Art and Cultures....................................... Page 31
2.2 Creation of Movimiento Pacto por la Cultura............................................... Page 35
2.3 Analysis of Original Documents from Movimento Pacto por la Cultura...Page 36

## CHAPTER 3 INTERVIEW METHODOLOGY AND POSITIONALITY..... Page 44

## CHAPTER 4: LIFE EXPERIENCES

4.1 Products of Maquila Modernity..................................................................... Page 46
4.2 Professional Formation .................................................................................... Page 48
4.3 Early and Transformative Experiences with Culture..................................... Page 50

## CHAPTER 5: PROFESSIONAL AND ACTIVIST ACTIVITIES

5.1 Cultural Production by Individual Members................................................. Page 52
5.2 Community Participation by Individual Members....................................... Page 54
5.3 Public Policy Focus......................................................................................... Page 55
5.4 Community Initiatives .............................................................. Page 59

CHAPTER 6: TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE ORGANIZATION

6.1 Formation of the \textit{Associación Civil} ................................. Page 63
6.2 Massacre at Villas de Salvarcar ............................................ Page 65
6.3 Emerging Ideological Differences ......................................... Page 68

CHAPTER 7: “WHAT IS TO BE DONE?”

7.1 Shift from Insider to Outsider Perspective ............................. Page 70
7.2 Employing Art and Culture to Engage Marginalized Communities... Page 73
7.3 Effects of Current Violence on Pacto’s Work ............................ Page 75
7.4 Divisions Within Pacto: A Fork in the Road? ....... Page 77

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH ....... Page 84

APPENDICES

Guetzow Chart .......................................................... Page 88
Questions ....................................................................... Page 90

REFERENCES ................................................................. Page 90

LIST OF IMAGES

Image 1: Aerial view of Zona PRONAF, c. 1963 .......................... Page 22
Image 2: PRONAF Convention Center ....................................... Page 24
Image 3 and 4: original interior of the Museo de Arte y Historia INBA... Page 25
Image 5: Museo del INBA showing the reflecting pool, c. 1963 ........ Page 26
Image 6: Mercado featuring both high and low end crafts, c. 1963 .... Page 26
Image 8: Members of civil society signing the original Pact ............. Page 37
Image 9: Interior of maquiladora plant.................................Page 46
Image 10: Members of the Orquesta Juvenil en Ciudad Juárez........Page 51
Image 11: Theatre production of the group Telon de Arena..............Page 52
Image 12: Youth prepare wall for mural in the Juárez colonia Diaz Ordaz...Page 54
Image 13: Pacto member Veronica Corchado during Semana por Juárez....Page 55
Images 14-17: Activities in Mexico City during Semana por Juárez..........Page 58
Image 18: Children's activities during a Jornada Cultural....................Page 59
Image 19: B-boys and hip-hoperos during a Cultura en Tu Barrio event......Page 60
Image 20: Workshop for Voces de las Mujeres: Mi Vida en Juárez........Page 62
Image 21: The aftermath of the massacre at Villas de Salvarcar............Page 65

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Profesional Formation of Pacto Members..................................Page 49
Figure 2: Effect of Violence on Pacto’s Work........................................Page 68
Figure 3: Radicalizing Experiences........................................................Page 72
Figure 4: Divisions within Pacto..............................................................Page 79
Figure 5: Cycle of Cultural Production....................................................Page 80
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

This paper is a qualitative case study of Movimiento Pacto por la Cultura, a small group of cultural activists in Ciudad Juárez whose work addresses political, social and economic issues through the framework of culture. The group has been formally active since late 2004, though individual members of the organization have had a long history of cultural practice and community activism that spans several decades. The paper begins in Chapter 1 by laying out a conceptual and theoretical framework for understanding Pacto. I begin by looking at the term culture as a complex and shifting concept, and draw heavily from the work of Kate Crehan (2002) in understanding the theory of Antonio Gramsci and interest in cultural processes as tools for meaning-making and for challenging economic and political systems. In a section titled Art as Interstice, I look at the use of culture, in the sense of artistic and intellectual production, to address complex social problems.

Chapter 2 gives a brief history of culture in late 20th century Ciudad Juárez, beginning with the development of the Zona PRONAF by the Mexican government as a complement to the economic and political policy that generated the massive growth of the maquiladora industry and subsequent waves of migration along the U.S. Mexico border, and detailing resistance to and critique of these projects as the earliest roots of Pacto’s activism. In this chapter I also briefly analyze Pacto’s core documents as a way of understanding the organizational history of the group.
Chapter 3 addresses the interview methodology and its shortcomings. Chapter 4 analyzes the life experiences of members of the organization and proposes a connection between these particular life experiences and the at times opposing worldviews and activist strategies that are employed by different members. Chapter 5 looks at the professional and activist activities of individual members and as Pacto por la Cultura, and begins to outline a split between the intellectual and professional activities of the organization and their community organizing initiatives. Chapter 6 addresses the transformation of the organization that occurred when the group formally incorporated as a non-profit organization and as it became increasingly effected by rising violence in Ciudad Juárez. Chapter 7 is a discussion of the current moment, using both Gramsci’s cultural theory and the work of Adams, Benton and Snow, and Moser and McIlwaine to understand the ways in which the group’s progress has been halted by current violence, and to propose possibilities for future action. Chapter 8 is the conclusion and addresses possibilities for further research into the topic, while also underlining the challenges posed by the current climate of violence in realizing that research.

1.2 A working definition of culture

Culture is a complex concept with a complex history. It is impossible to define a singular fixed definition of culture, a word that Peter Worsley notes contains a variety of overlapping meanings accreted over centuries (1984:59). In 1952, Kroeber and Kluckhohn came up with no less than 164 active definitions of the word (Worsley,
1984:84 and Crehan, 2002:79). Raymond Williams called culture one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language (1983:87). In *Keywords* Williams outlines the historical development of the word culture, from its early uses as a noun of process that described the tending of plants or livestock, to the first use of the word to describe a general process of development that was at times interchangeable with the concept of civilization, to the use of cultures in plural to describe the “specific and variable cultures of different nations and periods” (1983:89), finally the use of the word culture to describe the products of intellectual and especially artistic activity. It is precisely because of the historic and contemporary complexity of meanings that the concept of culture affords such rich discursive potential. The ambiguity and overlapping meanings of the word are at the core of my operative definition of culture for this paper, and key to understanding the ways in which Pacto por la Cultura uses the word culture in their writing and activism.

The constantly shifting meaning and usage of the word culture will become apparent in the study of Pacto por la Cultura’s writings and activism. It has been both a strength and a weakness for the organization as they try to define their agenda. But central to Pacto’s understanding of the word is the idea that culture itself is a tool for addressing larger systemic issues. This usage contrasts significantly with the ways in which the world culture has been traditionally used in the field of anthropology, which Crehan suggests are wrapped up in three primary assumptions, “that cultures are in some sense systematic; that they are bounded; and that there is a fundamental and structuring dichotomy between ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’” (2002:42). While these
definitions have been challenged in recent years with concepts of cultural hybridity and globalization, and very particularly within the field of border studies (Anzaldúa, 1987; Rosaldo, 1989; Garcia Canclini, 1995), they still frame our basic assumption that cultures are an identifiable “way of life”, a meaning which has its roots in German Romanticism and the work of Herder and Klemm (Williams, 1984:91 and Crehan, 2002:42).

A more helpful framework for understanding Pacto’s use of the concept of culture, would be to think of culture as a shared process of meaning making. Worsley offers culture as an answer to Chernyshevsky’s famous question, “What is to be done?” Culture supplies us a project or a design for living, providing what Bailey and Peoples identify as a shared concept of rights and duties that are commonly accepted by the group. (2002:30). In contemporary society, and particularly in a complex and unstable environment like 21st century Ciudad Juárez, there are endless projects for living, and countless ways both mainstream and alternative, to answer that question. How does one decide what is to be done in this context? How does one make life choices in relation to self, family, community and society? Furthermore, such alternative projects exist in unequal social fields, acting within and against them. How, then, are choices made with respect to such heterogeneous fields?

Discussions of meaning making in relation to contemporary social movements incorporate collective identity, moral judgment, and narrative structure (Kurzman, 2008). Central to this idea of meaning-making is the concept of framing, the active process of constructing meaning in a given situation, helping to both organize experience and
guide action (Benford and Snow, 2000). Framing processes include naming and describing injustices, identifying sources of causality and/or culpable agents, articulating solutions, and forming strategies for carrying out those solutions.

In the late 20th and early 21st century culture is increasingly a response to both local and transnational processes (Clifford, 1997:7). This may be even more true in a border environment, where scholars like Martinez have developed theories that explore the development of a unique border identity that develops within the “wide array of cross-border and cross-cultural ties, networks and relationships” that one finds in the border environment (Martinez, 1999: xvii). While recognizing that one can find cross-cultural interaction throughout the world, he asserts that the nature of internationality inherent in the border zone is fundamentally different because of the level of internationality that is inherent in economic patterns of consumption and production as well as in cultural tendencies and relationships. Negotiations between both countries and both cultures are a fact of daily life for most, if not all of the inhabitants in areas of education, social interaction, employment and income, consumerism, popular and core culture, and creates an environment which Martinez terms the “borderlands milieu”. In the study of Pacto, the international character of border life will be most important in the effect that the transnational organization of the maquiladora and the narcotrafficking industries have had on the economic, social and political development of the region.

The final facet of defining culture that will be important for understanding Pacto’s writing and activism is the commonly used definition of culture as the products of intellectual and especially artistic activity (Williams, 1984: 89). In addition to the groups
intellectual and political activity, one core activity of the organization, which counts in its numbers a large number of artists, actors and writers, is the promotion of artistic and cultural activity in marginalized areas of the city. This particular aspect of their promotion of culture will be discussed at length in Chapter 5. But it is not dissimilar to Garcia Canclini’s proposition that art and culture in contemporary society can be a vehicle, albeit a problematic one, for translating “that which within us and between us remains torn, belligerent, or incomprehensible, or could perhaps be hybridized” (Garcia Canclini, 1995: xliii). Garcia Canclini sees this process of culture as translation as a path that can “liberate musical, literary and media practices from the “folk” mission of representing a single identity” (1995: xliii). In this paper, instead of trying to isolate artistic culture as a single definition of culture, my analysis, like the analysis of Pacto will draw from both views, culture as lived experience and meaning making and culture as artistic practice.

To complete an operative definition of culture that will help us to fully understand Pacto’s use of the word we must also understand that Pacto’s engagement with culture has been born from a history of activism, rather than from either the anthropological or artistic perspectives outlined above. It is because of this activist perspective that I introduce a discussion of Gramsci and his concept of culture.

1.3 Gramsci and Culture

Throughout my discussion of Gramsci and culture I will rely heavily on Kate Crehan’s 2002 Gramsci, Culture and Anthropology, which I found to be groundbreaking in my own understanding of the ways in which Pacto por la Cultura is using culture in
the environment of 21st century Juárez. My primary interest in Gramsci stems from the fact that at the heart of all of his writing, he is an activist who is struggling to define not only the conditions necessary for change, but also the specific processes that would bring about change in a particular time and place. Industry, production and social realities are so different between early 20th century Italy and contemporary Juarez that it is not necessarily useful to apply Gramsci’s Marxist framework as a primary tool of analysis. However my interest in employing Gramsci has less to do with a desire to impose his specific critique of capitalism on 21st century Juarez, and more to do with invoking both his interest in culture as a tool for collective meaning-making and his desire to create processes that unite the analysis of intellectuals and the subaltern. Crehan’s reading of Gramsci is unique in that it de-emphasizes the concept of hegemony that she suggests has been both overused and misunderstood through much of the later half of the 20th century. Instead she takes a closer look at Gramsci’s concept of culture as stemming from an interest in understanding the specific processes necessary to bring about radical change in a particular time and place.

Gramsci was an activist who was concerned above all with a radical transformation of capitalist society. Crehan suggests that Gramsci’s primary concern with the topic of culture was, “How might a more equitable and just order be brought about and what is it about how people live and imagine their lives in particular times and places that advances or hampers progress to this more equitable and just order?” (2002:71). This concern about the power of culture as a force within society is a cultural project that is shared by Pacto por la Cultura in the particular time and place of
21st century Juárez. Crehan points out that Gramsci’s understanding of culture challenged early anthropological concepts of culture as systematic, bounded wholes, and instead presented culture as a “complex tapestry of interwoven strands” (2002:82). People are not empty receptacles into which culture can be deposited, but active creators of culture in relationship with one another. Central to Gramsci’s notion of culture is the process of collective critique of society by which one moves from an individual understanding of immediate problems relating to the individual to a collective understanding of the problems of society, and the ways in which people are linked to one another within that society. “Creating a new culture does not only mean one’s own individual discoveries. It also, and most particularly, means the diffusion in critical form of truths already discovered, their ‘socialization’ as it were, and even making them the basis of vital action, an element of coordination and intellectual and moral order” (Gramsci, 1971: 325 in Crehan, 2002:82).

Gramsci’s notions of culture emerge from a Marxist framework that assumes that the class that seizes material power also seizes ideological power. His concept of hegemony has passed in recent years from scholarly circles to popular usage, and is used now in a variety of ways in which Crehan sees as divorced from Gramsci’s central definition of the word. Contemporary use of the concept of hegemony is often overly concerned with the propagation of ideas and ideology without fully understanding that for Gramsci, these ideas could not ever be separated from the larger and more essential material circumstances from which they arise. He never saw hegemony as simply ideology, or the propagation of ideas by those in power, but rather as the complex
interplay between ideologies and the practical activities from which those ideologies arise. As such, hegemony for Gramsci is “a way of mapping an ever-shifting landscape of power that includes both accounts of ‘reality’ as these confront particular people in particular places, and the hard realities that lie outside the realm of discourse…what constitutes a particular hegemonic landscape at any given moment…is likely to include an extremely complicated intertwining of force and consent, and the entanglement of accounts of reality with hard realities that are more than discourse. “ (Crehan, 2002: 176). Crehan suggests that hegemony in the Prison Notebooks is, “an approach to the question of power in its exploration of empirical realities – how power is lived in particular times and places – that refuses to privilege either ideas or material realities, seeing these as always entangled, always interacting with each other. It is a concept, that is, that rejects any simple base-superstructure hierarchy. It is precisely this rejection that makes hegemony such a potentially fruitful way of approaching issues of power.” (Crehan, 2002:200). Ideology arises from specific modes of production in specific places and times, and as such it is impossible to divorce an understanding of a hegemonic culture from the systems of production that produce that particular culture. Gramsci articulates the contradictory consciousness that exists between the world-view of the dominant group (who are dominant because of their economic role in society) and an implicit and unarticulated understanding of how things are on the part of the subaltern class, who will absorb to different extents the dominant world view, while holding (mostly unarticulated) sense of how things really are for them in their state of oppression. (Crehan: 2002:185).
There is for Gramsci a deep and complex relationship between culture and basic economic relationships and there is no cultural, intellectual or moral reform without a concurrent program of economic reform (Gramsci, 1971:133 in Crehan, 2002:94). Gramsci’s concept of culture combines aspects of diagnosis (what is the state of culture in a given set of dynamic but unequal social fields) and action (how do we use and transform culture together with the related social fields). One of the unique characteristics of Pacto por la Cultura is their dual commitment to both diagnosis and action, a commitment that stems from the diverse membership of the group, and complementary histories of intellectual, artistic and community activism.

Crehan discusses at length Gramsci’s concepts of the subaltern classes, their folklore and their “common sense”. In contrast to older anthropological concepts of culture (but see Wolf 1982; Worsley, 1984), Gramsci’s exploration of subaltern culture holds as central the condition of class and the ways in which the condition of class is lived in a particular place and time. Subaltern classes cannot be discussed as homogenous or interchangeable groups, but specific groups that emerge in specific times and places as a result of specific processes of production. Crehan points to Gramsci’s detailed studies of southern Italian peasantries to highlight the complexities and the subtleties of his understanding of their cultural situation, and to highlight how the subaltern manifests itself different ways in different times and places. The fact that Pacto operates in the hyper violent reality of Ciudad Juarez, in an environment that rose out of neoliberalist development policy, the extensive presence of transnational
corporations and on an international border will have a very specific effect on the processes it develops as it works for change.

Gramsci believed that subaltern groups possessed a particular common sense and understanding of their world and their place in it that was largely unarticulated, but at the same time integral to the overall understanding of society necessary to effect meaningful change. The term common sense alludes to a particular vantage point of the oppressed classes that gave them a privileged understanding of the specific nature of their lived oppression that could not be known by people who were not in that particular situation. This state of oppression was never romanticized by Gramsci, who saw it as something to be liberated from rather than to celebrate. He saw the culture of the subaltern as formed by a jumbled array of ideas that came from the dominant classes, religion, folklore, and popular culture. However aware they may have been about the local state of their oppression, for Gramsci, the subalterns were incapable of a larger systemic understanding of that oppression. (Crehan, 2002: 205). That is, without the active participation of independent intellectuals.

This intellectual class was responsible for the production of both intellectual and cultural activity that supported the dominant classes aims and ideals. Gramsci held that because of the domination experienced by the subaltern classes, and the confusion of ideas and ideologies that made up their culture, that it was impossible for an intellectual class to rise organically to promote the hegemony of subaltern values. That is not to say that a peasant could not become an intellectual, but rather to say that if he did, he would become an intellectual for the dominant class and not an intellectual for the
subaltern. And yet, Gramsci holds out as a proposition, the uniting of intellectuals in support of the revolution with the common sense and emerging intellectuals of the subaltern classes to create a new kind of intellectual, and a broad reengagement with the subaltern classes based on the production of shared intellectual activity. Intellectuals and the subaltern need one another because intellectuals are capable of knowing in a larger way the systems of oppression as they effect society as a whole, and the subaltern are capable of this unique “common sense” or way of feeling what is happening on a concrete, localized level.

Emerging intellectuals from the subaltern class move from trying to figure out how to solve their own individual problems to beginning to understand how to address problems of the collective whole, and they are assisted by sympathetic traditional intellectuals, who need the common sense perspective of the subaltern for their own liberation. While Gramsci writes about culture as a very personal process, “a discipline of one’s inner self, a coming to terms with one’s own personality; it is the attainment of higher awareness” (Gramsci, 1977: 10-13 in Crehan 2002:74), it is always with the end goal of using that knowledge to understand one’s place in relation to others, and in relation to society as a whole. The ultimate aim, says Gramsci, is to know oneself better through others and to know others better through oneself (Crehan, 2002:76). The process of culture making was to be shared by all, it was a “detailed work of discussing and investigating problems, work in which everybody participates, to which everyone contributes, in which everyone is both master and disciple,” (Gramsci, SCW, 25 in Crehan, 73). I believe that it is this very collective and passionate project that the
members of Pacto por la Cultura are engaged in, the project of collective meaning making in a volatile and rapidly-changing reality.

1.4 Art as Interstice – The Potential of Art to Respond in 21st Century Juárez

Despite the often broad way in which the concept of culture is applied by Pacto por la Cultura in their writing and political activism, at its heart, the organization is made up primarily of artists and people who believe in the power of art to have an impact in the social and political reality of life in Ciudad Juárez. This section will give a brief overview of literature that addresses the potential power that this narrower definition of art and culture might have in a 21st century border reality.

Most of the members of Pacto por la Cultura are practicing artists of one kind or another - actors, writers, filmmakers, and musicians. As such, they are at times concerned with the narrower definition of culture as a product of intellectual or artistic activity. The earliest organizational efforts of the group stemmed from what were primarily artistic concerns, including a critique of the lack of infrastructure and resources to support artistic activities in Ciudad Juárez, and the fact that those activities that did receive funds showcased artists from outside of Juárez and reflected a national political agenda, a romanticized view of Mexican folk art and culture that did not reflect the contemporary urban reality, and an absence of dialogue, participation, and opportunities for local agents of culture. Pacto’s activism has never been explicitly tied to an analytical or data-driven assertion that arts and culture bring social and economic benefits to Juárez, but much of their writing and activism explores the possibility of art
as actively impacting social reality. For that reason, in this section I will briefly outline current research on the potentially positive benefits of artistic and cultural activities in Juárez, beginning with a theoretical assertion, and moving to more concrete studies that seek to explore measurable impact of arts and culture on conflictive urban environments.

Like Gramsci, Bourriard is interested not only in the social and cultural relationships, but also the ways in which culture both reflects and challenges new global economic relationships. Bourriard (1998) invokes Marx’s concept of interstice to suggest that art creates unique possibilities for exchanges between individuals and communities, and has the potential to create relationships of empathy and to generate links. “An interstice is a space in social relations which, although it fits more or less harmoniously and openly into the overall system, suggests possibilities for exchange other than those which prevail within the system...creating free spaces and periods of time where rhythms are not the same as those organized in everyday life, encouraging an inter-human intercourse which is different to the zones of communication that are forced upon us” (Bourriard, 1998, in Bishop, 2006:161).

The possibility of art to create a unique opportunity for communication and exchange within a contemporary urban environment is not a quantifiable fact but rather an enticing possibility. Bourriard writes of an emerging relational aesthetic, which “takes as its theoretical horizon the realm of human interactions and its social context rather than the assertion of an independent and private symbolic space...a development (that) stems essentially from the birth of a global urban culture and from the extension of the
urban model to almost all cultural phenomena. “ (Bourriard, 1998, in Bishop, 2006: 160). In these new urban environments division between those with access to the institutions and resources that enable participants within a society, and those that are denied this access, are mapped, built and sustained (Park, 2010: 3). Pacto’s work addresses access to cultural institutions and resources, and their practice creates new spaces outside of the traditional mechanisms of institutionalized culture in which to practice a relational aesthetics that opens up new possibilities for communication. In her 2010 essay Art as Social Practice: Mapping New Relations within the Social Interstice, Helen Park borrows terms from the field of philosophy to describe these types of artistic endeavors as processes of “becoming”, that in their collaborative manifestations are processes of “becoming-together”(2010:3).

Bourriard’s esoteric concept of art as interstice is reflected in more pragmatic way in research and writing about the potential of arts to develop social capital in a community. The term social capital was used by Bordieu to describe the power that comes from personal relationships and networks of influence and support (1986) and defined more recently by Putnam to refer to “connections among individuals- social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them.” (Putnam, 2000:19). In recent years the development of social capital has increasingly been seen as a necessary step in achieving healthy democracies and successful development (Putnam, 2000 and Fukuyama, 1999).

There is a large body of research that looks at the particular role of social capital in contexts of violence, work that is important to our understanding of the potential
impact of arts and cultural activities in the hyper-violent context that permeates contemporary Juárez. Social capital has the potential to either mitigate conflict or increase social fragmentation around issues of violence. (Moser and McIlwaine, 2004:158). Violence, says Berkman, “eats away at the delicate fabric holding communities together” (2007:5) and erodes relationships of trust. In a violent environment neighbors, policemen, and even community leaders all become potential threats (Berkman 2007:4). Moser and McIlwaine note that the absence of social capital is closely linked to fear. Fear of violence can grow in the home where trust and communication between family members can be broken or even absent, can cause restrictions in mobility, and have spatial and structural consequences within a community, as when people close themselves up in their homes, avoid certain areas of their neighborhoods or cities, etc. Caldeira’s study of narratives of violence in Sao Paulo Brazil adds greatly to our understanding of the ways in which violence encourages social segregation and distrust in society (2000). While she does not use the term social capital, she describes what happens in its absence when she explains how narratives of violence reinforce and expand existing social segregation, as when wealthier members of society chose to live in fortified enclaves distanced from the larger population. Caldeira explores the ways in which narratives of violence promote and justify the use of private and increasingly harsh state security forces, at the expense of human rights and in a manner that inevitably discriminates against the poorest members of society. She describes an “intricate relationship between violence,
signification and order in which narrative both counteracts and reproduces violence” (Caldeira, 2000:38).

Violence erodes productive organizations within a community. As levels of insecurity increase, levels of participation decrease. Violent attacks influence and distress providers and divert money and energy from other relevant social issues and causes. Members of productive organizations become additionally concerned about the danger of becoming a target for associating, or being accused of associating, with people from the wrong side of a conflict. Communities that experience high levels of political violence have particularly low levels of membership organizations, in part because fear of reprisal for speaking out and additionally from the simple fear that participants had in attending community meetings. Community leaders are often killed in conflicts, or leave the neighborhood upon threats of violence, leaving a leadership vacuum, and low levels of confidence in the existing organizations (Moser and McIlwaine, 2004:170).

Damage to social capital from long-term violence affects the institutional landscape of a community by transforming how existing productive organizations and networks function, but also, as Moser and McIlwaine describe in detail, by leading to the establishment of perverse organizations and networks. The term “perverse organizations” is used to describe criminal and other organizations including guerrilla and paramilitary groups, different types of gangs, thieves, drug dealers and users, and,

---

2 Some examples of violence towards community leaders that has occurred over the past two years have included the murder of sociologist and activist Manuel Arroyo in (May 2009), the murders of journalist Armando Rodriguez (November 2008) and photographer Luis Carlos Santiago (September 2010), the murder of activist Josephina Reyes (January 2010) and death threats made to human rights activist Gustavo de la Rosa (August 2009).
in some cases, bars and brothels. For many, joining a perverse organization gives a sense of belonging and identity, even while at the same time the groups existence raises levels of insecurity and increases violence in the community.

Numerous studies address the ways in which artistic activities; movements and processes have been identified as sites for the development of social capital (Guetzkow, 2010). The process of organizing a cultural activity teaches people social skills that are transferable to other situations. Finding community spaces, identifying key actors, soliciting economic resources, bringing people together through publicity and word of mouth, and positive shared experiences can all be transferred to other activities of civic importance within a community. The types of issues that the arts have addressed include a reexamination of history, the environment, land use, crime and violence, gender roles and relations, race, generations, war, health and diseases, the impact of technology and science, immigration and others (Korza, et al, 2005). Community-based artistic practice also has the potential to take issues from the level of local experience and connect them to national or universal goals, or take these larger goals from the national or international to the level of local experience (Korza, 2005).

Much of the literature about the positive societal benefits of arts and culture have focused on sites within the United States, and have not looked in depth at the role of arts in marginalized communities or in movements of resistance (an important exception is the work of Adams discussed below). In U.S. - based studies, participation in the arts has been broadly shown to cause a reduction in delinquency, to improve the skills and creative abilities of participants, to advance school performance, to create an alternative
to the kinds of perverse networks that spring up in the absence of positive influences and to contribute to neighborhood revitalization and economic development (Guetzkow, 2002). Guetzow compiled a chart based on an extensive contemporary literature review that is included here as an appendix to give an overview of the areas in which arts are believed to impact the community and the individual (Appendix 1). It is important to note, as does Guetzow, that evidence in these studies are primarily informed by feedback from individuals and largely based on anecdotes (2002:69). It has been difficult to measure community impact while relying on individual responses as the primary source of data, so while these studies show important benefits that arts provide to individuals, there is much work to be done in regards to their overall short and long-term effect on community processes.

Adams (2002) considers the role of art in both framing and resource mobilization in her study of women’s protests and organization in the shantytowns of Chile under the Pinochet dictatorship. There is a great deal of recent research regarding the effects of framing in social movements, focused primarily on social movements as sites for the production of meaning, perhaps the most prominent of which is the work of Snow and Benford. Snow and Benford define three core framing tasks in social movements: 1) the diagnosis of some event or aspect of life as problematic; 2) the creation of a proposed solution and 3) a call to arms or rationale for engaging in corrective action (Snow and Benford, 1988:198 and Adams, 2002:617). As individuals and social organizations struggle to respond meaningfully to a complex reality, artistic and creative processes offer the possibility of framing the most important issues at hand. The interpersonal ties
and organizational experience in participating in arts and culture activities can give individuals the skills and confidence to confront difficult realities.

Adams addresses five important shortcomings in framing literature that will become important in understanding the special role that movements based in arts and culture might have in contemporary Juárez, and how their work might differ from the work of other social movements. Adams asserts that 1) there is not much literature that explores how movements do framing work; 2) there is an implicit assumption that framing primarily occurs through verbal means; 3) literature about framing conceives it as a top-down action (leaders frame problems for group members); 4) there is an implication that framing happens when organizers are trying to make it happen, and doesn’t account for framing that occurs in other kinds of informal activities; and 5) that framing is usually understood to end with recruitment, and is not explored as an ongoing process of meaning-making (Adams, 2002:618).

In contrast to earlier literature, Adams discusses the complex process of socialization and the development of frames for understanding oppression and poverty and their relation to neoliberal policies under Pinochet through women’s participation in *arpillera* workshops. Women who until this point were leading isolated lives, began to participate in these craft workshops, where they began to develop a collective identity and a common framework with which to process their economic and political situations. This framework was developed through deliberate action by group organizers including talks, discussions, informative publications, and organized testimonials, but equally

---

3 Colorful three dimensional tapestries created by Chilean women that depicted scenes of daily life, including the oppressive conditions of life under dictator Pinochet
importantly developed in informal ways. The *arpilleras* depicted specific events of oppression or situations of poverty and suffering. As women made the *arpilleras* they would discuss these scenes, share grievances and exchange ideas in a safe environment, forming both the kind of social capital discussed above, but also a common framework in which to generate shared meaning that would eventually be transformed in many cases to collective social and political action.
CHAPTER 2: HISTORY

2.1 Origins of Pacto: Zona PRONAF and Cultural Activism in late 20th Century Juárez

In the interest of understanding how culture develops in a particular time and place, I will begin the story of Pacto por la Cultura has its roots in the development of the Zona PRONAF in Ciudad Juárez, and details a process of political maturation that was deeply marked by the social and economic reality of Ciudad Juárez. The story closely follows the unfolding of the development model pursued by the Mexican government that encouraged the expansion of the *maquiladora* industry in Ciudad Juárez, attracting hundreds of thousands of migrants to the city without creating adequate infrastructure or social policies to support them.

Image 1: Aerial View of Zona PRONAF, c. 1963. Photo courtesy of the Museo de Arte INBA, Ciudad Juárez.
In 1961, under the government of Mexican President López Mateos, Mexico launched the Programa Nacional Fronterizo, which aimed to integrate Mexico’s border region into its overall economic and political development plans, providing a “continental show window that extends from Tijuana to Matamoros” (Dillman, 1976). Mexico was influenced by a need for foreign currency, historical concerns for national respectability, and efforts to present a modern face of Mexico to the world (Ward, 2009). López Mateos put Chihuahuan businessman Antonio J. Bermudez in charge of the project. Bermudez had been both municipal president of Juárez (1942-46) and director of PEMEX (1946-58). He was a passionate critic of Mexico’s foreign economic dependency and was seen as uniquely qualified to promote the border region and to highlight Mexico’s industrial progress (Ward, 2009: 198). The PRONAF plan was meant to be implemented in cities all along the U.S. Mexican border but Ciudad Juárez ended up being its primary beneficiary (Ward 2009:201). Within Juárez, the heart of the project was the creation of a cultural, industrial and retail zone that would be called “Zona PRONAF” and that would serve as a gateway into Mexico from the United States.

Renowned Mexican architect Mario Pani designed the plans for the PRONAF development throughout the border, including in Ciudad Juárez. Rodriguez and Rivero identify the primary concern of project architects as promoting an “urban border proposal that would serve as a transitional space between the American city and the Mexican city, an urban center that establishes a primary gateway to a new international border crossing between the two cities” (2010:1). Zona PRONAF was set off from the historical center of ciudad Juárez, in what appears to be a deliberate plan to separate or
negate the existing city, which the planners saw as “complex, declining and dysfunctional.” (Rodriguez and Rivero, 7). Physically removed from the city center, and far away from both poor neighborhoods and the centers of alcohol, prostitution and gambling that had traditionally attracted border tourists, the new development was more directly connected both geographically and idealistically to its northern neighbors, turning its face towards the bi-national Chamizal park and the newly re-developed Bridge of the Americas. The dual goals of developing tourism and at the same time increasing Mexican exports to the United States were reflected in the plan of the PRONAF convention center designed in an ultra-modernist style by Pani and meant to display the superiority and affordability of Mexican industrial project. These goals were also present in the design of the INBA Museum of Art and History by Mexican modernist architect Pedro Ramirez Vasquez. The main building of the museum was designed in a modern conical shape that calls to mind Aztec or Mayan pyramids. It contained a circular path meant to showcase Mexico’s continual progress throughout history, presenting in chronological order successive stages of Mexican art and culture from pre-Hispanic times to the contemporary moment. Many of the items on display were replicas of the
originals, like the gigantic fiberglass Olmec heads, which were more than six feet in height and eight feet in diameter.

The annex, as described in a 1964 book promoting the project (from special collections add to bibliography), was divided into two sections, one dedicated to handicrafts and folk art, and another dedicated to a demonstration of industrial and commercial development in Modern Mexico. In addition to the convention hall and museum, there was a large and up to date Mexican market, where both low and high-end Mexican crafts were for sale. The entire area was surrounded by gardens, walkways, and a mirrored pool that extended around the museum itself, in addition to ample parking that allowed visitors from the United States to cross the bridge in automobiles and arrive directly into this controlled environment that promoted a national vision of cultural and economic progress which was geographically detached from the rest of the city. The first director of the museum was Felipe Lacouture Fornelli, who was sent to the border by the direction of INBA in Mexico City. Lacouture had pursued museum studies in various institutions across the United States, but this was his first official position in a
museum. José Diego Lizárraga followed him in his position. These first directors of the museum had close ties to Mexico City, and received funding, artwork and programming cues from the federal headquarters of INBA.

In the early days of the museum there was, according to Pacto members Willivaldo Delgadillo and Luis Maguregui⁴, some resistance and semi-public complaints from the artist community about the fact that the museum didn’t showcase local artists, but there was very little concrete organizing at the city level around this issue, or around any issues of culture.⁵ But at the same time during 70’s and early 80’s by all accounts the museum served as a gathering point for artists and others from throughout the city, who would get together in nearby cafes and open areas around the museum, attend concerts, theatre and outdoor showings of international cinema, and participate in other activities.

---

⁴ In an interview that took place in Juárez, March 18th, 2011
cultural events that were coordinated by Lacouture and Lizarraga and others.

Because there were very few cultural gathering spaces in the city at this point in time, the Zona PRONAF naturally attracted groups of artists from all disciplines, who would meet to exchange ideas, host informal sales of artwork and socialize in nearby restaurants, bars and café’s. Due to the lack of cultural spaces in Ciudad Juárez, Pani’s convention hall, which had only ever had limited success as a showcase for Mexican industry, was appropriated by the INBA during the 1970’s and became the Sala de Espectáculos INBA. It was used for musical concerts, theatre productions and high school graduations from around the city.

Several of the members of PACTO recall the Zona PRONAF as an area where many of today’s artists and activists came of age. Delgadillo called the museum and its surroundings “a place where the pursuit of culture was legitimized in Ciudad Juárez”.
The cultural groups and activities that began to develop around the museum and its associated events, were in many ways the precursors to contemporary groups like Pacto por la Cultura, and the roots of organized cultural activism in contemporary Juárez. Older members of Pacto describe at this point in history a noticeable change in the conversations and activities of cultural actors in the city, who were now beginning to define culture as “a cooperative activity” and who were also beginning at this time to develop their political agency. In the late 1980’s interest in PRONAF by the Mexican federal government had waned and the infrastructure of the Zona PRONAF itself was increasingly deteriorating. At the same time, cultural actors were increasingly identifying an impending political crisis that had been created by the rapid growth of maquiladora industries, and the failure of all levels of government to develop adequate social infrastructure to support the parallel growth in population. At the risk of oversimplifying the process of cultural and organizational maturation within Ciudad Juárez, there is a single event that took place at this point in history that signified a shift in the way in which cultural actors would frame their reality and begin to make demands from the city, state and federal government in relation to culture in Juárez. It is an action that nearly all of the members of Pacto point to as the beginnings of the kind of cultural activism that would define the group.

2.2 Toma del INBA

Throughout the late 1980’s the cultural community in Juárez was beginning a process of maturation evidenced by the increased number of cultural events at the city level that were organized by and that featured local artists, the increased number of
cultural and literary publications that were generated throughout the period and the formation of artists collectives to both support cultural work and to confront social issues like AIDS (Delgadillo, 2010:11). Many of the most active participants on this scene would later become leaders of Pacto. They were for the most part born in the late 50’s and early 60’s, a group that Delgadillo calls the “product of maquila modernity” (2010:13).

At some point, during the 1980’s land that belonged to the area Zona PRONAF, and that had previously belonged to the federal government, was given to a Mexican company called El Nervion in exchange for land owned by El Nervion in Mexico City. The city of Juárez under the Barrio administration reacted to this transaction by filing a suit (amparo) against the sale, which resulted in the sale eventually being halted by the Mexican courts. At this point the courts instated a land trust (fidecomiso), which gave responsibility for the management of the land to a board comprised of federal, state, and local government along with other local civic organizations like the Juárez Chamber of Commerce and the Universidad Autonoma de Ciudad Juárez. Several years later the city government under municipal president Jaime Bermudez decided to put large parts of the land up for sale to a private developer named Leopardo Mares. Lizzaraga, in charge of the INBA Museum of Art and History, managed to negotiate the museum’s exemption from the sale. But the sala del INBA, which by this point had become a

---

6 Much of the information in this section, covering approximately 1980 through early 2000’s is taken from conversations with Delgadillo and Magueregui and also from an unpublished, in-process document written by Willivardo Delgadillo De La Toma del INBA al Pacto por la Cultura. The document outlines, in much more detail than I have been able to include here, a history of the period constructed largely through memory. Some of the dates and organizational histories were also corroborated through the narratives of different members of Pacto.
popular site for graduations, music recitals and theater productions, was slated for destruction.\textsuperscript{7}

In 1990, on the day of the last event to take place at the Sala del INBA, an impromptu group of artists and activists decided to spend the night on the patio of the building in protest of its impending demolition. They were joined by a group of dancers who were part of the final performance at the INBA, and who had independently decided to spend the night, in their case more out of nostalgia than in protest. The sight of scores of people camping out in front of the building caught the attention of local journalists, who came to interview those who had stayed overnight. The group woke up to a headline in the paper the next morning saying that artists had taken over the INBA. As Delgadillo tells the story, it was in many ways that newspaper coverage that defined the act more than any pre-planned political organizing. The protest was soon joined by large numbers of activists from the PAN party, who had recently just lost elections at the city level and who were participating at least as much protest of the newly established PRI government, as for the rescue of the INBA. There was great public sympathy generated during this takeover, both through the activism of PANistas and because of the number of graduations and similar events that had taken place in the building, resulting in a large number of people from throughout the city who had a personal connection to the place. The occupation ended up lasting three months. The original sale fell through during this time, and the city negotiated a second sale that left the Sala

\textsuperscript{7} The history about this particular period is debated and unclear. I am including the best version I have been able to construct based on Delgadillo’s document (which is both in-progress and largely based on personal memory, and interviews with those members of Pacto who were active in the \textit{Toma del INBA}. I am including it here as useful background, but it should not be considered a definitive account of historical events.
del INBA intact, but that also allowed broad commercial development to happen around the sala itself, engulfing it in a strip mall and effectively closing off its primary entrance.

2.3 Demand for a Municipal Institute of Art and Cultures

The occupation of the Sala del INBA became what Delgadillo described as “a laboratory to generate cultural demands” at the city level. Cultural activist groups like CAI (Colectivo de Artistas y Intelectuales) were born of this movement and would remain active through the early 1990’s, developing the early political skills of artists who would later participate in Pacto. At this point members of CAI, along with other artists, intellectuals and activists, began to use their newfound political power to organize for the creation of a municipal center for arts and culture that would include broad input and direction from a citizen’s committee.

Throughout the 1990’s most of the cultural organizing at the city level revolved around this central demand, leading both to a series of local committees that were created to study the issue and to apply pressure towards local government for the creation of cultural policies and institutions. One of the interesting characteristics of these movements was the fact that although the members of these activists organizations were artists, writers and intellectuals, many with advanced degrees and/or significant successes in their field, they defined themselves as citizens in their dealings with the government, with the idea of giving their proposal the status of a citizen’s demand (Degladillo, 2010:5). The membership of these groups, however, would continue to retain an elite character, they were notably different both from the average citizen and even from other local artists with less education and career success. This
fact would become important both in their dealings with the government, and in later developments within the organization Movimiento Pacto por la Cultura.

During the 1990’s, in addition to and in support of activism directed around the creation of a city-level cultural institute, many members of the group were integral in constructing citywide forums on a variety of cultural topics. The first of these was *Foro Cultura Para Todos* (1991), which was undertaken to wrap up events and issues raised by the takeover of the Sala del INBA. The forum addressed the need for the creation of a city institute of culture, with the characteristics of citizen participation, development of public policies that were autonomous and not subject to changes in party leadership, and widespread participation in the phases of design, execution and evaluation of cultural policies and activities. Delgadillo points to this moment as the point in which arts and culture begins to become a legitimate political issue and part of the mainstream dialogue in Juárez. The first forum was followed by *Foro por un Instituto de Cultura Para Todos* (1994) which was organized in response to the city’s second Latin American Film Festival, which used a large percentage of the annual cultural budget to entertain actors and directors from around Latin America, treating them to lavish meals and accommodations. Again themes of broad participation and the need for the development of cultural policy were addressed, leading to the formation of *El Consejo Consultivo Para la Creacion de Institutio Municipal de Arte y Cultura*. In 1996 this same group of artists, academics and activists formed *Mesas de Dialogo para la Cultura* (1996). The dialogue during this period was characterized by a direct appeal to the city government to create an Institute of Art and Culture that would be governed by local
artists. By the late 1990’s the group was getting better at reaching people and was developing a more complex agenda. Through the work of these early committees, and the awareness raised by citywide forums on the issue of culture, cultural concerns were increasingly seen as important policy issues by a broad variety of actors. The 1996 forum was hosted by and within the city government and members of the organization had relatively easy access to the municipal president, Ramon Galindo Noriega as they pursued the idea of a municipal arts and culture committee. But as late as 1999, when the Universidad Autonoma de Ciudad Juárez organized another forum titled *Primera Jornada Sobre Processos Políticas y Publicas de Cultura* there was still no public policy produced, and there were still no concrete steps to creating a municipal institute of art and culture.

Beginning in the mid 1990’s increasing drastically in the early 2000’s, Juárez was experiencing increased local, national and international attention in relation to the Juárez femicides. Delgadillo notes that this process politicized many people, especially women, and put women with no previous experience with activism in the middle of powerful processes of organized resistance. This was a diverse group of activists with a diverse take on the situation of the femicides that was influenced by their class, cultural background and varying levels of education.

The *Consejo Ciudadano para la Creación del IMAC* was formed in October of 2002 and met through September of 2003 with the goal of creating a broad public policy that could be adopted by the Juárez government. Their central goal was still to create a municipal institute of arts and culture. The group included many of the artists who had
been active in cultural organizing from the Toma del INBA onwards (Willivaldo Delgadillo, Luis Magueregui, Perla de la Rosa, and others), and additionally some newcomers like academic and former head of the city libraries Zulma Mendez and cinematographer Angel Estrada, in addition to other academics like Hector Padilla, and the current director of the INBA Art Museum, Rosa Elva Vasquez. Their cultural diagnostic began with an assessment of the rapid growth of the city during the decade of the 1990’s, related to the maquiladora industry, which created a lack of infrastructure and services to the urban population. There were four primary points made 1) that there was a lack of adequate space for living, recreation and for the development of cultural activities; 2) there was a absence of policies for the social and cultural integration of the thousands of migrants that arrived to the city each year; 2) there was an increase in criminality and violence, especially against women, and rising levels of juvenile delinquency and drug use and sales; 4) there was an overall lack of infrastructure and organization in the area of culture throughout the city.

After a lack of organized response to the demands presented by this group of well-respected artists and academics, two things were becoming clear. The first was that organizers were having very little long-term success in their demands for a municipal institute of arts and culture, more than ten years after the demand was first made, the institute was no further along than it had been in the early 90’s. Secondly, although (as mentioned earlier) the group was identifying itself with the citizens and popular classes in Juárez, most of their activity was directed from an elite group of actors towards a city government that was largely unresponsive. They began to see an
need to involve a broader cross section of the society in its demands, and with this in mind wrote the “Pacto por la Cultura” from which they would take their name.

2.4 Creation of Movimiento Pacto por la Cultura

The first signing of the actual pact from which the group took its name, took place in the auditorium of the UACJ in 2004. The idea at the time was to get a broad group of citizens from Ciudad Juárez to sign the pact (described in detail in the following section) and to then archive those signatures to show the demand that existed for an instrument of cultural policy in the city. But organizers soon began to see that the tool was a politically effective way of communicating with a broader population, and began to use it in events and discussions citywide. It was during this time that Pacto began formally functioning as an independent organization. Leaders of the movement saw the need of creating a group that would not only respond to a political or policy challenge in a time of crisis or a pending change in government, as had been the case from 1990 forward, but rather to create a group that would be a consistent organizing force both for cultural policy in the city, and at the same time to begin to organize, articulate and disseminate cultural activity in the popular neighborhoods throughout the city. Cultural activists who had been involved with the creation of the document, began to call themselves “Movimiento Pacto por la Cultura” and began meeting, organizing and planning activities under that name.
2.5 Analysis of Original Documents from Movimiento Pacto por la Cultura

An interesting part of studying Pacto por la Cultura is that it is an organization that has been consistently self-reflective and prolific in the documentation of its views both as an organization and through the writings of various members of the group. Pacto has authored a number of important documents that outline its goals and philosophy, and its economic and social critique of the city. In this section I will analyze two core documents written by the group- the original “Pacto por la Cultura” which directly preceded the formation of the organization Movimiento Pacto por la Cultura, and “Refundando Juárez”, one of the earliest documents written by the group that contains both an analysis of the political, social and economic situation in Ciudad Juárez in the early 21st century, and additionally proposes a new understanding of the role of culture in that reality. I will use these documents as a starting point for understanding Pacto, and for contextualizing the subsequent interviews with members of the organization. The documents that I refer to here are included in the bibliography, and easily accessible online via Pacto’s website.

The central points in the mission and vision of the group, as stated on the public homepage of Pacto’s website, are to strengthen the social fabric of society in order to construct an imaginary without violence, transforming the cultural and social order in the city. Pacto proposes to do this through strengthening actors in civil society and working from a broad social consensus that uses the UNESCO model of development as an ideal. Their goal is “la refundación de la ciudad” or the re-founding of Ciudad Juárez,
ensuring that the population of Juárez has access to all of the goods and services offered by the State and the market.

The original public “pact” which was distributed at the local, national and international levels was not constructed exclusively or even primarily around issues of culture. It begins with a critique of the development model of Ciudad Juárez, and of an industrialization process that has left great gaps in the social and cultural infrastructure of the country. That is, like Gramsci, Pacto’s own theory and writing about culture is rooted in a critique of the system of production that has produced the current reality. The original pact asks signers to consider seven different points about the current reality of Juárez, and to publicly assume six commitments to building a new future. Few of these points of deal directly with the issue of culture, and it is not at all clear that culture in this document refers primarily to products of artistic or intellectual activity. Culture here is used in its broadest and most flexible sense, bringing to mind Williams’ observation that is the range and overlap of meaning that is most significant in the employment of the concept (1983: 91).
The original pact repeatedly addresses four primary concerns in the thirteen points that are presented: 1) a critique of the development model and rapid industrialization that led to Juárez’s current reality; 2) femicide, issues of gender, and violence (and in connection with femicide, addressing a lack of human rights and a dysfunctional justice system); 3) issues of culture, which, as noted above are not defined in detail but rather added into lists of development needs along with social and economic needs; and; 4) multiple calls for collaboration with a diverse group of actors from local, state, national and international government and civil society. The tone of the document is not radical or revolutionary. It is critical but collaborative. Pacto is asking for these issues to be studied more in-depth and for actors in civil society, both within government and without, to join together to form creative and long-lasting solutions to the problems facing Ciudad Juárez. In this sense, the document is very hopeful, and will seem more so when we contrast it with members’ comments on the topic just a few years later.

In the document Refundando Juárez (Refounding Juárez) which was written in the following year (2005) and details Pacto’s concerns in a more in-depth fashion, Pacto makes the first clear, written reference to their use of the concept of culture, a word which they employ in both “its broad and narrow sense”. In the broad sense, they consider culture an unexplored alternative perspective that can help “to visualize, respond to and reverse the process involved in the weakening of collective identities and capacities of human action”. In a narrow sense, they see culture and art as having the capacity to encourage individual and communities in social processes of self-
reflection on their condition, and see culture as a pedagogical tool for developing community relations. This relates strongly to Gramsci’s proposition to unite the common sense perspective of the subaltern classes with the evolved social and economic critique of sympathetic intellectuals to create a new kind of intellectual and engender a broad reengagement of the subaltern class with activities of intellectual and social production. This is also reflective of one of the functional roles of art, its ability to take issues from the local up to the universal and back again.

In *Refundando Juárez*, Pacto offers a critique of the current social situation in Juárez. They note the lack of infrastructure generated by the current economic model, specifically including here both the lack of cultural facilities and cultural policies. They also list rising violence as a primary concern, in particular in relation to narcotrafficking, crimes against women, youth socialization to violence and a general lack of credible research and diagnostics about the city’s current situation. The fact that many of the members were politicized by and active in organizations or movements that sought justice on the femicides ensured that this topic would be central to their critique.

This document, more so than the original pact itself, shows Pacto’s concerns with culture in its smaller sense, in relation to artistic production and dissemination. In this document Pacto makes a direct reference to the creation of the *Instituto Municipal de Arte y Culturas* (IMAC) as the context in which Pacto emerged. At the time this document was written, the members of Pacto were still in the process of shifting their goals from the creation of a municipal arts and culture agency towards a much larger project of social and economic renewal at the city level. There are a number of pages
dedicated to the importance of expanding cultural investment, and making the utilization of culture more efficient, including establishing synergy between cultural and economic sectors, and creating a solid plan of artistic formation for schools, communities and neighborhoods.

Throughout the document there are repeated critiques of the factional political structure, and the lack of transparency, efficiency and legitimacy of the current government. Most of the members of Pacto had been struggling over the course of a decade or more to push the city to create IMAC. During this decades-long process they faced first hand the difficulty of working with political appointments to the city’s culture office, many who did not have any experience in the field; with the lack of transparency and favoritism which characterized the spending of the city’s very limited cultural resources; the lack of opportunity for community voices and leadership in regards to public policies of culture; and the disruptive nature of the complete purging of the city government and its functionaries each time a new political leader or party was voted into office. As individual actors, Pacto’s experience was situated in the realm of cultural policies and politics, but this first hand knowledge of how this part of government functioned was easily transferrable to other areas of the governing structure and process that required systemic change. Their experience gave them a strong and knowledgeable place from which to launch their critique. After years of concentrated efforts, and a series of significant successes followed by even more significant setbacks, it became clear to many that it was impossible to achieve any long-term
advancement in their cultural goals without also advancing the role of civil society, and challenging the current process of government.

Pacto’s cultural project is solidly grounded in a critique of neoliberal economics and the conditions that they have generated in Ciudad Juárez, and their cultural propositions are tied to “social, cultural and economic rights”. In Refundando Juárez they call Ciudad Juárez “the clear expression and a national example of industrial processes linked to economic globalization, which generate a massive social demand and create difficult challenges facing the different levels of government in the areas of health, education, housing, culture, urban infrastructure and public safety” noting that “It is urgent to correct deficiencies or functional problems such as fragmentation of the urban structure, which results in social and spatial segregation and sharpens the extreme poverty in which a high percentage of population lives, the absence of policies for the cultural integration of migrants arriving in the city in search of employment and better living conditions than are found in their places of origin, and the failure, under utilization, and deterioration of infrastructure and cultural facilities in the city. Such are the problems which, again, are the result of structural factors that underlie the economic life of the city, the push to become a metropolis is lacking, paradoxically, the social and urban infrastructure needed to create an improved quality of life.”

Pacto’s interest in culture is not an interest in arts and culture as promoted by the Mexican state at the federal, state and local levels and that is often characterized by nationalist ideals of the Mexican imaginary, as evidenced by the money spent in the lavish 2010 celebrations of Mexico’s centennial and bicentennial, for one example. It is
also not an interest in culture that is about improving the image of the city, as in the recently organized Juárez en Vivo concert or the multiple concerts and events that are being organized by business interests, like Juárez Competativa, planned for October of 2011 and seeking to bring celebrities like Paul McCartney, Mark Zuckerberg and Lance Armstrong to the city of Juárez, in an effort to improve its international image and reputation. It is also not an interest in the rescue of romanticized “folk” cultures, which has been a historic project of both the federal government and international NGO’s in their activities throughout Mexico.

Pacto’s interest in culture is tied creating cultural policies and institutions that allow for the execution of cultural processes that both reflect and respond to the unique economic, political and social realities of Ciudad Juárez. They are interested in the ways in which “culture and art encourage individuals and communities towards social processes of self-reflection on their condition” and suggest that cultural activities can serve as a pedagogical tool to generate an assessment of and solutions for the economic, social and political conditions in which people live. Culture in this sense becomes an opportunity to create new intellectuals of the kind proposed by Gramsci, who can begin a slow process of converting their “common sense” into the processes of intellectual and cultural production for the goal of creating a new society. We will see that through their lived experiences both in the failure of institutions to respond to their demands, the encroaching effects of the negative outcomes of the development processes they have been critiquing (especially the effect of rising violence) and sustained relationships with the larger community, Pacto will gradually move from the
position of intellectuals critiquing governmental institutions and policies from within the system into a new position that strives to be more autonomous from dominant power structures and more connected with & responsive to the working classes. Pacto documents and philosophy suggest that cultural activities in the smaller sense of artistic and intellectual production can be central to the larger sense of creating new cultures, new ways of being and new ways of answering the question, “What is to be Done?”.
CHAPTER 3: INTERVIEW METHODOLOGY AND POSITIONALITY

From December of 2010- March of 2011, I conducted numerous face-to-face interviews with the twelve core members of Pacto por la Cultura. The interviews lasted from 30 minutes to upwards of four hours. Several of the group members were interviewed on more than one occasion when we could not accomplish interview goals in a single session.

I used a core set of questions (attached here as Appendix 3) for each interview. The questions began with a personal history and history of participation in Pacto, questions relating to the interviewees own concept of culture and their own understanding of Pacto’s mission, an exploration of activities related to Pacto that each member found most successful, and those that they found least successful. In many cases I veered from the outline of the question to follow narratives that spontaneously emerged from the conversation, and that reflected topics of interest to this document.

Interviews were conducted in Spanish in all but one case. The interviews were typed by me and were transcribed into Spanish with the assistance of Eliana Loya de la Cruz, a recent graduate from the sociology department of the Universidad Autonoma de Ciudad Juárez, and were then coded for key concepts and partially translated into English by me for use as quotes in this document.

Additional source material included original documents from Pacto por la Cultura and documents written by members of the organization, archival material from the Museo de INBA Ciudad Juárez, and archival material from members personal photo and video archives of Pacto activities and events.
This paper looks at the history of Pacto from the point of view of its members. As such it leaves out several potentially relevant sources of information about the group and its activities. I did not conduct any formal interviews with government officials or organizations from civil society that might have had contact with Pacto por la Cultura over the years. Also, importantly, I did not conduct interviews with people from marginalized communities around the city who have been participants in or beneficiaries of Pacto’s activities. These kinds of interviews would be a logical next step to further understanding the role of cultural activism in general, and the successes and failures of Pacto in particular, on the lives of the city. The commentaries will be notably biased in their absence.

The history of my own relationship with Pacto is largely informal. I have been acquainted with several members of the organization over the last two to three years. Because I lived in Juarez for a number of years in the early 1990’s and am currently active in activities relating to the visual arts, particularly on the campus of the Universidad Autonoma de Ciudad Juarez, I was in some ways a known entity to the group, and have a number of friends and colleagues who were able to contextualize my interest in the organization. An initial email sent by Willivaldo Delgadillo to the various members of the organization helped me to establish the contact I needed with the core members of the organization so that I could begin the formal interview process.
Most of the founding members of Movimiento Pacto por la Cultura were born in the fifties and sixties, making them, in the words of Delgadillo, a “product of maquila modernity” (2010:13). Their lives both chronologically and experientially follow the development of the maquiladora industry in Juárez. They or their families were brought to Juárez by its migratory pull, and their lives have been marked in different ways by the lack of social and educational infrastructure that characterizes the city to this day. Almost without exception every member of the group begins their narrative by citing their roots in the working class. Most of the members of Pacto came from families that were economically poor, and they have experienced in their own lives the very same problematic of Ciudad Juárez that would later form a central part of their analysis and critique. The issues they faced included the phenomenon of migration to the city, lack of access to cultural and educational infrastructure, lack of positive examples of
professional and lifestyle choices, and, in some cases, proximity to substance abuse and family violence. Angel Estrada was born in a small town in Camargo, and his mother migrated on her own to Juárez with Estrada and his two small brothers, arriving at the home of distant relatives in Juárez with nothing at all. He describes both the difficulty of the migration experience, and the processes of solidarity that experience generated throughout the city. “In spite of everything, there is a very strong sense of solidarity that I think has to do with this experience of migration. Each of us has either in our memory or in our imaginary these histories of having arrived.”

Several other members of the group described the difficulty of completing education, citing both the lack of opportunities and the lack of examples of community or family members who had reached advanced levels of education. Leobardo Alvarado says, “I had to get up at 5 or 6 in the morning to go to school. I got out of school at two in the afternoon and had to be at the maquila by 3:30. I left the maquila at one in the morning and then I was off again to school the next day.” Delgadillo and Estrada both had very little encouragement from family members to stay in school, and left at an early age (though in both cases to return several years later). Veronica Corchado relates that early experiences of proximity to family violence that would mark her sensitivity to the subject in later life. There were many other stories like these that members of the group spontaneously shared, situating their background solidly in what has largely been the normative experience for popular classes in Juárez in the second half of the twentieth century.
4. 2 Professional Formation

Despite the similarities that marked their early lives, members of Pacto have had a diverse range of professional and life experiences. This diversity is one of the first things that most members point to when asked about the strength of the organization, often speaking with great respect about the ways in which they have learned from other members of the group. But at the same time the group has tended to splinter along these lines under periods of stress. Many members of the group have completed advanced degrees and/or had significant successes in their respective fields. In 2004, Perla de la Rosa won the Ariel from the Mexican Academy of Film, considered the most prestigious award in the Mexican film industry. Angel Estrada’s 2006 documentary *Tierra Prometida*, about the life of a young maquiladora worker in Ciudad Juárez, won numerous awards in Mexico and internationally, including in Cuba, Spain and Argentina. Hector Padilla and Zulma Mendez both hold doctorate degrees, Willivaldo Delgadillo is an acclaimed and published writer, and Luis is an accomplished musician and a cultural administrator who has held numerous posts at the municipal level. Members like these had given the group the reputation at the city level of being the cultural elite of Juárez, even before they officially formed part of Movimiento Pacto por la Cultura.

There are other members of Pacto that have a more grass-roots formation, including Veronica Corchado, whose formation narrative includes organizing experiences with women and youth at the neighborhood level, including founding roles in the organizations Centro de Asesoria y Promocion Juvenil (CASA), a center for youth promotion in the Diaz Ordaz neighborhood and Salud y Bienestar Comunitario (SABIC),
an organization that provides traditional medicine and alternative therapies in marginalized communities. Sandra Ramirez had her earliest formation in the Comunidades Eclesiales de Base movement and its exercise of liberation theology and social organizing in the Juárez colonias. Omar Ojeda was a graffiti artist and founder of the artists collective Rescatando Una Cultura Muerte. Vladmir Fong, who works in a maquila, has been an active Marxist and labor organizer, and Leobardo Alvarado, a talented activist, writer and researcher, is largely self-taught, though he has recently returned to school at the university level. Although I am anecdotally aware of strong divisions and conflicts within the group, it is notable that in their formal interviews with me, all of the members of the group spoke with deep respect about the aptitude and perspective that other members of the organization brought to the table, pointedly appreciating both personal talents and life perspectives from writing and speaking ability to the ability to communicate with and organize vulnerable members of the community.

The professional formation of the different members of the organization can be grossly divided into two groups. The cultural elite, who have advanced degrees and/or significant professional success in their respective cultural disciplines and community organizers, whose personal and professional formation arise from a direct
relationship with marginalized people and through organized processes of community interaction.

4. 3 Early and Transformative Experiences With Culture

Almost without exception, and without being specifically prompted to do so, most of the members of Pacto por la Cultura narrate an early and transformative experience with culture as key to their development as people and as professionals. Corchado credits her experience in a pilot program of a secondary school run by Catholic nuns and clergy as having a formative experience on her youth, and exposing her to cultural experiences like murals, street theatre and student-run ecological campaigns. Padilla, who is a political scientist, recalls being from a very poor family that was relatively indistinct from other poor families in his *colonia* in the southwestern part of the city, other than the fact that his father engaged in a variety of artistic activities including painting, drawing and playing the guitar. Estrada was the youngest of three brothers in his family, and by his own account both a poor student and the most likely of his family to get into problems. He was taken to a television station on a field trip in secondary school. A cameraman saw his interest in what was going on in the studio, and told him that if he wanted to help he could come back on Saturdays and he would pay him something to help out around the studio. This was the beginning of Estrada’s training in film and video, and he stayed at the station (Canal 44) as a cameraman for a number of years. Delgadillo, a U.S. citizen, had dropped out of school at the age of 13 and would wander the streets of both El Paso and Juárez, going to movies, seeing concerts and interacting with photographers and others. He additionally remembers as a teenager
attending open-air showings of foreign films at the Museo de Arte INBA. Alvarado was an avid reader throughout his life, and began attending poetry readings organized at the city level as a young adult. Perla de la Rosa would wander around the area of the Zona PRONAF with friends at the age of 9 or 10. It was there that she came across free dance classes offered by in the basement of the Sala del INBA, which began her earliest engagement with performance. Later as a teenager she would belong to a theatre group that, in her words, “became like a family to me at the age in which you are looking for a group with which to identify, to give you protection.” These early experiences not only contributed to the personal formation of Pacto members, but also additionally accounts for a shared belief in culture as a transformative and life-giving experience that provides options and models alternative ways of living for vulnerable members of the population.
In their personal artistic and academic work, many members of Pacto are actively involved in the production of culture that deals with memory, history, or critiques of the city, using the tools and techniques of their particular disciplines. *Tierra Prometida*, the documentary by Angel Estrada that was mentioned earlier in this paper, chronicles the life of a young family *maquiladora* workers who live in Anapra, a colonia on the far west side of the city. His portrayal of their lives, the hardships of migrating to Juárez, and the daily struggle to make it as both as student and works on the factory line brought a human face to the problematic of Juarez and challenged the stereotype of the helpless
young woman who held international attention as being typical of the victims of Juárez femicide. As an academic, Hector Padilla regularly researches and produces papers that present a critical diagnosis of the city and its skewed development. Willivaldo Delgadillo’s 2000 book *La mirada desenterrada: Juárez y El Paso vistos por el cine (1896-1916)* provided a cultural history of Juárez through the lens of historic cinema. Perla de la Rosa, through her theatre group *Telon de Arena*, acted in, wrote and produced plays that dealt with themes rooted in the reality of the city, including issues related to femicide in Juárez.

The work of these members of Pacto has received national and in some cases even international recognition, and as such, forms part of mainstream or professional cultural production. Perla was one of the few members of Pacto to raise the question of quality in the production of culture, which was not one of my core questions, but which we did discuss at some length. She notes, “if we are only concerned with social action then we are no longer artists…it is not enough to represent reality in my work, I am obliged to present an aesthetic discourse that both reveals and attracts and that is technically capable of competing with other media, like the television. If I am not professional in this way, I will not be able to attract people and what I do will not have an impact.” Luis Magueregui, who has held numerous jobs in the administration of culture also referred to quality in the development of audiences and publics for artistic events.
5. 2 Community Participation by Individual Members

In another vein, some members of the organization have had long, deep and varied experiences in community processes. As mentioned earlier, some of these processes were rooted in the leftist and socially oriented practices of certain sectors of the Catholic church during the 1980’s and 1990’s in Ciudad Juárez like the Comunidades Eclesiales de Base, a movement in the church that was based on the liberation theology that was popular throughout Latin America from the 1960’s onward. Sandra Ramirez describes how many of these young organizers outgrew their connections with the church, a process that was exacerbated by the arrival of the conservative Bishop Renato Asencio Leon in 1994. Sandra Ramirez notes, “I began to question a lot of things about the church. At this time, they suddenly did not permit us to accompany young people from gangs, or girls from the neighborhood or the streets, and they wanted ‘Christ’ to return to the interior of the church. At that point I divorced from the church and began to participate more in social movements.” Ramirez, Corchado and Omar Ojeda all had formative processes in the organization CASA, a youth-directed non-profit organization in the colonia Diaz Ordaz in the western part of the city. Ojeda was additionally a member of an artist collective called Rescatando una Cultura Muerte and as such was active in the production of
murals, stencils and graffiti. Estrada, in addition to his cinematic work, describes a close relationship with Fundación Rarárumi (later Voces Indígenas) that brought him into regular and sustained contact with a community of indigenous people from the Sierra of Chihuahua who was living in Ciudad Juárez. This type of participation taught several of the group members important, sophisticated and sustained processes of insertion into community life, skills that would later become important in Pacto’s outreach.

5.3 Pacto’s Public Policy Focus

Pacto’s early organizing efforts, as previously discussed, came from a more than decade-long struggle to create the Instituto Municipal de Arte y Culturas (IMAC). Their demands were directed towards both the government and civil society through a series of actions and documents that were outlined earlier, and that included critiques of development and infrastructure alongside the need for the development of public policy relating to culture. The language in the critique and the mechanisms used to distribute
the Pacto (public signings by community members and government leaders) reflected a shared belief that the government should and could respond to their demands for institutional change. Pacto wanted culture to be recognized as a basic human right and for the development of cultural institutions and policies to be broadly recognized as a responsibility of the government. Padilla describes the origins of the group like this, “The vision from which we emerged from had a public policy focus, but also political practice, at least from my personal point of view. From the beginning we came from the perspective that there was a need for rules, institutions, etc, that could strengthen the cultural policies in the city. Moreover, in practical terms, the role we assumed was as a group that reflects, discusses and investigates both to create a diagnostic, but also as a sort of a direct action group. We turned therefore from working groups, to meetings with city authorities, to forums for the dissemination of our ideas, to the streets to begin to pressure towards our ideals.” At this point in their organizational development, Pacto had developed a strong critique of the city and its institutions but at the same time saw many opportunities to form alliances, and they had identified numerous individuals and institutions with which they could partner. The 2005 document *Refundando Juárez* addresses this sense of possibility for the advancement of democratic ideals in contemporary Mexican society. This belief would later be tarnished by the growing situation of insecurity, militarization and government corruption that has characterized Juárez in recent years.

This willingness and desire to work within existing governmental and civil society structures was reflected in the organizing of *Semana por Juárez en el D.F.: Voces por*
Las Mujeres which took place in October of 2005. Many members of Pacto were well connected on the national level, both because of their professional activities and through collaboration with sympathetic government officials like Guadalupe Morfín, who was the first head of the Commission to Prevent and Eradicate Violence Against Women, created by the Mexican Federal Government in 2004. Semana por Juárez en el D.F. was held at various governmental, academic and cultural centers throughout Mexico City and was largely directed at the discussion and analysis of the Juárez femicides, but as such was situated in a much larger and more nuanced critique of the city that Pacto had been promoting widely at the time. The week-long series of events included academic panels like Violencia Contra La Mujer en Juárez: Miradas Alternativas at the Universidad Autonoma de Mexico (UNAM) featuring Corchado along with numerous other local and national speakers; the presentation of the play Antigone: Voces que Incienden en El Desierto, written by Perla de la Rosa; Juárez en el Cine, in which Angel Estrada’s film Tierra Prometida was prominently featured, and, importantly, the public signing of the Pacto por Juárez which took place in the city’s Teatro Helenica.
Images 14-17: Activities in Mexico City during Semana por Juárez. Images courtesy of Movimiento Acto por la Cultura.
5.4 Pacto’s Community Initiatives

Early on in its activities as an organization, Pacto began to organize and participate in cultural activities in vulnerable communities throughout the city, under the name of Movimiento Pacto por la Cultura, and often in collaboration with other community organizations. Among the first of these were the Jornadas Pacto por la Cultura in 2005. During the Jornadas, members of Pacto por la Cultura in collaboration with community members and leaders of grassroots organizations, would choose a particular theme relating to the city and develop a series of cultural activities to be presented in different parts of the city. These activities were a diverse sampling of cultural events including film presentations, poetry readings, concerts, theatre productions, and a variety of workshops. They would often involve artists who were not part of Pacto por la Cultura, but who were invited to engage with the community under the umbrella of Pacto. An example of the way in which recognized artists would work with community members was a series of photography workshops for women held by
Chilean artist and Juárez resident Veronica Leiton. Leiton taught groups of women photography techniques so that the women could begin to document their daily lives with cameras. The resulting photographs were then put on public display. Members of Pacto por la Cultura, again in collaboration with other organizations and individuals, organized a youth orchestra based in Colonia Libertad and reaching out to the surrounding neighborhoods, where kids who would not have otherwise had access to musical instruction received instruments and training, performing publicly in their neighborhoods and in the city center.

Other community organizing efforts included Cultura en Tu Barrio, which took place on Saturdays in colonias throughout the west side of the city. Members of Pacto would invite artists from around the city to join them but also invited the participation of neighborhood talent resulting in the production of free, daylong cultural events open to the public in prominent open air spaces in these marginalized neighborhoods. The activities included workshops in arts and crafts, chess competitions, performances by dance groups, and musical performances in genres from hip hop, to rock, to classical
music. Corchado notes that these activities had the ability to transcend the sorts of territorial markers set by rival youth in neighboring colonias, and at least for the duration of the event to create safe and integrated spaces for community members to meet. Delgadillo additionally notes that these activities also had the benefit of allowing cultural actors to become visible as such both to members in their own community and to other cultural actors. For example youth that might regularly perform music in clubs downtown would have been seen as just another teen in their neighborhood, perhaps even perceived as delinquent. But by performing music on stage in the context of their own neighborhoods they both became visible and earned respect from community members, and made contact with other young artists they may have not known existed.

One of the activities that many members of the group refer to as one of the most successful and far-reaching efforts of the organization was the series of workshops and related publication of *Mi Vida en Juárez: Voces de Mujeres*. The project proposed a series of writing workshops for ordinary women throughout the city, including those that had low levels of education and/or no formal literary experience. Women from marginalized communities throughout the city were given a series of writing exercises and prompts, and through group work and individual literary assignments began writing about the daily experience of their lives. These products were work-shopped and then submitted to a citywide contest where they were judged by a panel of literary experts and winning entries were published in a book. The resulting book provided a rich overview of women’s experience in Juárez from a variety of perspectives, and as such created a platform for the visibility of this experience, which can be used both as a
reference and/or organizing tool by local, national and international individuals and organizations interested in women’s issues or the social and political context of Juárez at this particular moment in time, and, conceivably, by the women themselves in their own organizing efforts.

This activity by Pacto most closely reflects the possibility of artistic and cultural processes to frame problems, to move from an individual experience of a problem to larger analysis of a particular social reality (the concept of moving from local to universal) and to engage in a collective process of meaning-making in which the unaltered analysis of the “subaltern” has real possibilities for affecting the larger scale analysis of a shared reality.
CHAPTER 6: TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE ORGANIZATION

6.1 Formation of the *Asociación Civil*

Throughout much of the development and execution of the cultural activities described above, Pacto worked in collaboration with existing community organizations, and when needs for funding arose, they were solicited through and distributed by other organizations. As the depth and breadth of their work grew, the organization began to explore the possibility of formally incorporating as an *asociación civil* (a non-governmental organization whose closest legal equivalent in the United States would be a 501c-3). This change would drastically alter the way in which some members of the organization saw Pacto, given its origins as more of a public policy think tank and generator of analysis, which had morphed over the years into what Padilla had called a “direct action” political organization. There was some disagreement and tension that arose between members of the group during the process, but at this particular moment in their development, because of the success of the community efforts and the need to fund and finance those efforts if they were to continue to expand, they decided to move forward with the proposal and officially became an *asociación civil* in 2006 with the ability to receive funds, apply for grants and enjoy other rights (such as the acquisition of property) under Mexican law.

The creation and maintenance of the *asociación civil* required a different level of participation in Pacto than had been the norm in the past. While all members of the group had given time, energy and talent to realizing the activities described above, some members were more committed to the sustained engagement and development of
community processes than others. From various interviews it appears that those members of the organization that had more formal training and preparation, and presumably were more involved in either academic or artistic pursuits at a professional level, were the first to retreat from these processes, questioning the gradual development of the group from a sort of independent think-tank towards the model of an NGO. Applying for, managing and reporting on grants was a time-consuming activity, as was the continued execution of Pacto’s projects. The asociación civil and the projects that encouraged its formation and/or sprung from it required a different kind of participation from Pacto members. Many members of the organization were not prepared to manage funds, apply for grants, and have the kind of consistent and almost institutional presence required to manage multiple projects over the long term. Other members of the organization, most notably those with well-developed community organizational backgrounds, saw this expansion as integral to Pacto’s work, and to the expansion of cultural processes throughout the city.

This difference of opinion might not have led to a full-scale rupture between members without the increasingly paralyzing situation of violence that permeated the city from January 2008 onwards. Dialogue with government, which always was rooted in criticism and frustration with the lack of transparency, etc. was now becoming almost impossible as the government was unable to fulfill its most basic roles in providing security and well being for its citizens, and, in the opinion of some members of the group was launching an all out war on the population of Juárez. The work itself obviously became more difficult as well. De la Rosa questioned the possibility of inviting
community members to a public theatre performance that could, as in the case of a recent massacre at a Sunday soccer tournament \(^8\) end up in a violent incident. While it should be noted that some members of the organization felt that it was more important now than ever to engage communities in cultural activities, this was gradually becoming the minority opinion of the group.

6.2 Massacre at Villas de Salvarcar

![Image 21: The aftermath of the massacre at Villas de Salvarcar. Photo: AP/Raymundo Ruiz.](image)

---

\(^8\) www.elpasotimes.com/ci_14315072
On January 31, 2010, a group of gunmen burst into a party in the Juárez neighborhood of Villas de Salvarcar, and started a shooting spree that left 16 dead and 12 hospitalized. The dead ranged in age from 13-42 years old, and by all accounts were good students, accomplished athletes and valued members of their communities. The attack made waves throughout Juárez and around the world, notable even in a city where horrific violence had become the norm. Twelve days after the incident, Mexican President Felipe Calderon, feeling the sting of international outrage and under public attack for comments he made suggesting that the killings were the result of a confrontation between rival gangs, arrived in Ciudad Juárez to apologize to families of the victims and to take the first steps in launching the campaign “Todos Somos Juárez”. “Todos Somos Juárez” was an unprecedented and wide-scale effort by the federal government that consisted of 160 actions to address social and structural problems that contributed to violence in the city of Juárez. The program proposed 15 different mesas de dialogo (round table working groups) in areas including health, education, culture, sports, poverty, security and employment, inviting leaders from diverse segments of the population to participate in the development of government funded initiatives in response to the violence.

Pacto had historically pushed for serious collaboration by the federal government in the social and structural problems of the city for since its earliest activism. But in the context of Villas de Salvarcar it felt like blood money. In the opinion of many of the members of the organization it was too little too late. The widespread militarization and erosion of human rights throughout the city, combined with blatant corruption, lack of

9 http://www.todossomosjuarez.gob.mx
transparency, and the inability of the federal government to ensure the most basic right of safety and security for its people, meant in the eyes of many of the members of Pacto that the government was no longer capable of entering into a legitimate pact. It had lost all legitimacy. Pacto publicly announced its refusal to participate in the mesas de diálogo and to take any funds that came from Todos Somos Juárez. But this decision was not shared in its entirety by all members of the group, and was hotly debated behind closed doors.

Those members that had been most connected to community processes saw this interaction as an opportunity to push the agenda that Pacto had been developing throughout its five plus years of activism and action. Additionally, the needs in the poorest and most vulnerable sectors of the city were greater than ever. Members like Corchado raised the question as to how the group could turn its back on the opportunity to expand its agenda and programming, and to have a voice at the table as the government discussed and created social, educational and cultural policy for the city. Furthermore, some members of the group were receiving other types of government funds at the time to support their individual artistic production, raising questions as to why federal money was good for individual activities but not for the collective whole. The debate eventually led to a partial dissolution of the organization, as Pacto went into a formal and self-proclaimed “recess” early in 2010.

In my interviews with the organization members, the level of civility, respect, mutual admiration that is expressed in their retelling of these arguments and the explanation of these divisions was impressive to me. I was clearly an outsider, and they
clearly valued their relationships too much to speak in negative ways about one another in front of me. This speaks to a level of cohesion, hope and deep-seated mutual respect that is still present in the group despite divisions in opinion. Again, anecdotally and through personal friendships and off the record conversations, I am aware of painful and personal arguments that took place between group members over these issues, and they are issues that both individuals and the organization as a whole are still struggling with.

6.3 Emerging Ideological Differences

Members of the organization whose formation is rooted in community work have expressed a desire to continue doing that work. They are the minority in the group at the moment, but appear to be taking steps to create new associations and mechanisms that will support the sustainability of community cultural processes that they find not only relevant but also essential in responding to the current environment. While many members of Pacto appear to continue to struggle in defining the best possible role that Pacto could assume at this point in time, those members of the group most strongly situated in academic or artistic practice, have in a variety of ways expressed that they
feel 1) that the time is not right to enter into dialogue with any level of the government; 2) that there is little point and great risk for organizers and participants to continue to develop cultural activities in the current environment 3) that the best possible way for Pacto to be effective at the moment is to pull back and to enter into a series of reflections and critiques of the situation in Juárez at this particular point in time. Many members are involved in this type of research and analysis in this very moment, albeit in communication and dialogue with other like-minded actors and activists from a wide variety of organizations around the city. Although Pacto as an organization is officially in recess, the members continue to interact, both socially and in protest marches, organizational meetings and other events around the city. Nearly all members of the group still continue to self-identify as Pacto, and to a lesser degree still use that signature when organizing events or participating in public dialogue.
CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION “WHAT IS TO BE DONE?”

7.1 Shift from Insider to Outsider Perspective

The movement *Pacto por la Cultura* began as a group of relatively elite artists and intellectuals, albeit with working class roots, who were working from privileged positions within society to critique society, encouraging the development of cultural policies and institutions that while critical of the state, would have ultimately served to bring stability and prosperity to the city on a variety of levels. They engaged freely with actors in government and civil society in the achievement of their goals, as citizens laying out a series of demands to address the uneven development of the city, including the lack of social, educational and cultural infrastructure. Even the document *Refundando Juárez*, which at least nominally calls for a re-founding of the city, assumes the response and collaboration of a diverse set of actors within government and civil society, and does not overtly challenge the existing governing structure. The possibilities for change and the critique of existing society come from within society itself, and members of the group readily found allies with whom they could collaborate, from within the institutional structures as well as from without.

The moment of the formation of Movimiento Pacto por la Cultura as an organizing force, was partially borne of the frustration of more than a decade of failed attempts to create the IMAC, and a desire from the group to move away what were seeming like increasingly futile attempts to pressure the government to meet their demands and to engage their energies in creating a new relationship with society. They began to ask a question, not dissimilar to that posed by Gramsci, “How might a more
just and equitable order be brought about, and what is it about how people live their lives in particular times and places that advances or hampers progress towards this more equitable and just order? (2002:71). I believe that at this moment in their development as an organization that the members, while sensing and at times clearly articulating the need for a radical shift both in perspective and methodology, were not fully aware of the ways in which this would ultimately affect the organization. Equally important is the fact that although they had been almost eerily prescient of the dire consequences that would be brought about by the flawed development strategies of Ciudad Juárez, accurately predicting the resulting violence and social instability such policies would inevitably cause, like the rest of the city, they could never have known or understood the horrific and far reaching ways in which these problems would manifest themselves just a few years later.

The experience of living in the particular time and place of 21st century Ciudad Juárez caused a gradual radicalizing of the group’s agenda, processes that are likely to have affected other groups throughout the city in similar ways. In brief, the initial politicization of the organization came from lived experience in the chaotic and underdeveloped environment of late 20th century Juarez. It’s lack of infrastructure for living, lack opportunities for social, educational, cultural development. A second stage of the radicalization process occurred after years of failed attempts to negotiate with government officials in relation to cultural demands, and a resulting frustration with institutionalized political options. Pacto’s engagement with the community, relating to Padilla’s description of moving from forums of discussion to the streets, created another
shift in the groups thinking. Different members of the group were radicalized to varying degrees by direct contact with individuals in marginalized communities, and by the ways in which members like Corchado, Ramirez and Ojeda adopted and adapted cultural processes for use in the community at large. The final and most disturbing radicalization came with the extreme rise in violence from approximately January 2008 onwards, and is evidenced in the impact of events like the massacre at Villas de Salvarcar on the group’s functioning.

There has always been an inherent tension in Pacto’s project as a challenge to existing social, political and economic structures and as a project for the expansion of social capital to make existing reality better through the development of relationships and structures of support. These two projects, one that wields a strong critique and the other that is primarily pragmatic and functionalist are at times in conflict with one another. As an organization Pacto has at times manifested a dual personality. Some members of the group are essentially intellectuals, thinkers, social activists in
conversation with institutions and the powers that be at the local, state and national level. Other members of the group are considerably more grassroots, community organizers, they have their feet on the ground in poor neighborhoods, and are working daily throughout the city. There are moments when these two projects work in tandem, strengthening and informing one another, and moments in which there is a tension created by their very distinct theory and practice.

7.2 Employing Art and Culture to Engage Marginalized Communities

When Pacto first began doing work with and within marginalized communities throughout Juárez, they found, as Bourriard suggested, that art creates unique possibilities for exchange between individuals and community. The found that their work was appreciated and valued by community organizations that had a long history of building relationships with vulnerable populations because, as Corchado tells us, “Art gives multiple opportunities for dialogue,” and permits, again in her words, “a facility for creating conversations that does not exist in other ways”. By creating new spaces for cultural production outside of traditional mechanisms of institutionalized culture, Pacto was opening up new opportunities for communication and dialogue throughout the city. At the same time, they were building social capital, both as an organization and allowing for the development of new forms of social capital between residents of marginalized neighborhoods throughout the city. Though it is not the goal of this paper to quantifiably address the following issues, at least anecdotally Pacto’s work created safe spaces,
improved the ability and skills of participants, and created alternatives for vulnerable populations in the poorest areas of the city.

As mentioned earlier, projects like *Voces de las Mujeres: Mi Vida en Juárez*, have a very real, although still partially undeveloped ability to facilitate the local-universal dialogue around issues like women’s rights. The creation of the workshops for the project came from a concern both with addressing structural contributions to femicide and with exploring women’s experience in the specific situation of 21st century Juárez. There is great potential in using these stories to inform large-scale analysis of the city, both by Pacto and by students, researchers, and activists in areas of border studies, violence, women’s rights and more.

Although Pacto has shown creativity, persistence and political astuteness in pursuing their cultural agenda in the face of great adversity, they have never fully developed the potential of using cultural activity as a framing action. To briefly restate Benford and Snow’s three stages of framing, participants must 1) diagnose; 2) create and propose solutions and; 3) engage in concrete action towards those solutions. Adams work is most relevant in directly addressing these shortcomings of Pacto’s project, or perhaps more reasonably, in accurately describing the difficult position in which they find themselves at the present moment. To begin with their diagnosis of the city, though created from a place of great solidarity and commitment, has always essentially been a top-down diagnosis, and doesn’t always fully account for the informal and relational possibilities that arise from cultural activities as being significant contributors to their analysis of the problem. In this regard some members of the
organization have continued to experience the community-based work of Pacto to varying degrees as either the work of recruitment towards a population that will then understand and support broad cultural goals, or, perhaps more disturbingly at times, seeing that work as primarily *asistencial* (which I can only translate as something between charitable and social service-based work). This contrasts with Adams suggestion that cultural activities can be sites for organic processes of meaning making in collaboration with others. It is this kind of meaning-making that can than be transferred into the most significant kinds of social and political action. This project of meaning making again brings us back to Gramsci who reminds us “Creating a new culture does not only mean one’s own individual discoveries. It also, and most particularly, means the diffusion in critical form of truths already discovered, their ‘socialization’ as it were, and even making them the basis of vital action, an element of coordination and intellectual and moral order” (Gramsci, 1971; in Crehan, 2002:82). In this way cultural activities (in the smaller sense of artistic and intellectual production) can begin to answer the question of “What is to be done?”.

### 7.3 Effects of Current Violence on Pacto’s work

It is difficult if not impossible to document the ways in which the current violence and what most days seems to be the almost complete unraveling of the social fabric of the city have affected Pacto both as an organization and as individuals. The research on violence presented earlier in the paper, which I originally began to collect with some vague idea of how art would positively impact situations of violence, has sadly ended up
having more relevance in the ways in which violence has impacted the organization and functioning of Pacto itself. Berkman tells us that violence eats away at the delicate fabric holding communities together, and erodes relationships of trust (2007:5). This type of erosion is reflected both in Pacto’s inability to enter into dialogue with government and also notable in the exacerbation of tensions between organizations at the city level, and between members of the organization itself. Spatial and structural consequences of violence are reflected in concerns about the development and execution of cultural projects, as when de la Rosa addresses her fear of inviting people to a cultural event that could end in violence. In the first draft of this paper I wrote that while I was not aware of a Pacto member that had been a specific target of violence, all members were operating in a context of violence in which other community leaders have become victims, as in the murder of sociologist and activist Manuel Arroyo in (May 2009) and the murder of community activist Josephina Reyes (January 2010). This environment undoubtedly adds to the tension and stress of both internal and external dynamics, and this was referred to in a variety of ways by the interviewees. The morning after I finished the first draft I received an email saying that one of the members of Pacto was attacked at gunpoint while alone at her father’s house in Juarez, and held hostage while several individuals emptied the house of its contents. This generated among members of Pacto not only the sadness and outrage that you would feel for any friend in a situation like this, but also a process of questioning as to whether or not Pacto’s very visible participation in political and social organizing had anything to do with the attack. It is the fear and the questioning, and the lack of answers or accountability that is
absolutely paralyzing in this situation and is a clear, specific and painfully recent example of how the violence affects community processes.

Violence directs money and energy away from other relevant social issues and causes, and this is clearly evident in the shift in priorities in Pacto’s agenda, and the shift in priorities in civil society agenda in Juarez in general. Individual members of Pacto and the organization itself have been heavily involved in analysis, organizing against and protesting the violence and militarization in the city. Concerns for general human rights, widespread violence, and personal safety have become primary and delicate processes of cultural activity and community building has suffered as a result.

7.4 Divisions within Pacto: A Fork in the Road?

Both internal processes that have taken place within Pacto and the external pressures of the violent and unstable reality of the city have challenged the original proposal of the organization to pressure individuals and institutions within government and civil society to enter into commitment to a clear set of cultural goals. At the same time that this has caused a lack of clarity about mission and action, community processes have also liberated those goals from the supposition that they could only be reached within existing institutional or governmental structures. Those who have historically had closer ties to the community have more openly embraced the inherent power of cultural processes in the formation of a new society, or to put it in less grandiose terms, for the formation of alternatives for those who must live in existing society. The articulation between community cultural processes and intellectual and political activity has been a slower and somewhat murkier process for those members of
the groups whose formation comes primarily from more academic or institutionalized artistic practices. Some members of the group, facing both the violent and unstable landscape in Juárez and the total and complete corruption and de-legitimization of government at all levels, have suggested that now is a time to pull back to reflect and analyze rather than to take direct action in marginalized neighborhoods. This type of analysis is being exercised prudently and thoughtfully by some members of the organization, all of who remain in formal and informal contact with other like-minded individuals and organizations, and many of whom are involved in formal processes of dialogue, analysis and public protest. But it also is in danger of reflecting the retreat from action and decreased participation described by Moser and McIwaine as natural consequences of prolonged violence.

Is it possible that just as people retreat to physically safe and familiar spaces in situations of violence, that they also retreat to safe spaces in terms of theory and practice? As the violence has grown in Ciudad Juarez, the two factions of Pacto have become increasingly entrenched in positions that reflect their original formation processes. One of the core strengths of Pacto as an organization was the bridges that it built between the positions of analysis and action. In this case the radical position was not on the extremes of either position but rather in the interstice between the two positions. This interstice represents a public space, shared between the two positions but also requiring that people leave their safe spaces to meet in the middle. Is it possible that in the same way that public spaces are abandoned and diminished by a
climate of extreme violence that these theoretical meeting grounds are also under threat? It again raises Gramsci’s assertion that there is an inherent tension and difficulty for intellectuals to ever truly be able to enter into partnership with the subaltern classes in the creation of a new society, even if they come to realize at some level that their own liberation is dependent on it. It requires a high level of trust and a willingness to venture into unsafe territory, qualities which are diminished in a situation of prolonged violent conflict. In this formulation the radical space is not on either end of the competing arenas of theory and practice, but rather in the interstice between the two positions.

![DIVISIONS WITHIN PACTO: POLARIZATION AND THE RADICAL MIDDLE GROUND](Figure 4)
The relationship to and importance of the popular classes/community/subaltern was never fully articulated by Pacto, and as such has influenced the group in ways that are difficult for people to explain, and do not fit easily into the way that they see the organizational structures and processes. It is difficult for individuals to map out that relationship, and the answers I receive to questions about it suggest a struggle to process experiences, rather than articulate a clear ideology. In some ways this contact in marginalized neighborhoods throughout the city has been very powerful in changing the worldview of different members of the group, in other ways it has not yet been fully absorbed. The diagram below shows how the experience of cultural processes like Voces de las Mujeres might be fully articulated into a circle of analysis, cultural production and diffusion of that production, in an ideal situation.

![Diagram showing the cultural processes cycle](image)

Figure 5
The above process, which might have continued to evolve in ways that clarified the relationship between intellectuals-subaltern (to use Gramsci's terms) was cut short by pressures related to current context of violence. This context has so disoriented both organizations and individuals that it will take some time before people can re-invent and re-situate their organizing activities and their individual participation in the new reality. The reality has polarized members of the group, and disrupted fragile relationships of trust between not only Pacto and government organizations but also between members of the group that came from essentially very different ways of conceiving the world (institutional or political v. community-based).

Finally, the group has addressed the need to respond to the current situation with reflection, analysis and reformulation of ideas. Most members of the organization are imagining doing this in a sort of think tank where there connection to the "community" is through leaders of other organizations, rather than through grassroots processes. A few of the most community-oriented members are asking the very important question if this really is a time for this kind of processing and intellectual activity, then how do we generate popular processes that allow everyone to participate in that kind of activity? Cultural activities like the Voces de las Mujeres: Mi Vida en Juarez project that occur outside of institutions offer that possibility, but the current reality has proved to be hostile to those kinds of efforts.

Gramsci’s exploration of culture was part of his search to define those processes and strategies by which revolutions are actively created. Where Marxism (like neoliberalism) supposes uni-directionality and constant march towards progress,
Gramsci was aware that in the real world that the evolution towards a new world could move both forwards and backwards depending on the quality of the relationships between intellectuals and the subaltern, the cultural processes generated by those relationships, and the reality or historical moment in which those relationships exist. The current situation faced by Pacto has created struggles and formations that are complex and contradictory. Those members of the group that tended towards intellectual and political action have pulled back from regular contact with marginalized communities through cultural activities, and are focusing on refining and reformulating their critique of the new landscape of the city, and the role of government in responding to the current crisis. Those members of the group who have continued have contact with the community, and who continue to organize and implement projects that seek to use cultural activities as a tool for meaning-making and social change, are at the same time most willing to take a more pragmatic view of entering into relationship with the government, out of a real need to fund and grow programs that they feel are responding to the ways in which the current climate of violence affects individuals. This split threatens to polarize the historically fruitful relationship of institutional critique/political action and community presence and processes that has made Pacto por la Cultura such a compelling project. This fork in the road – between analysis and action is where Pacto finds itself in the current moment. It is not yet clear how the organization, or individual members within the organization, will proceed. The most recent organizing activity in Juarez, around the national call from poet Javier Sicilia for a National March for Peace in Ciudad Juarez on June 10th, 2011. Local efforts to organize on behalf of
this call were led in part by Pacto Members Veronica Corchado, Willivaldo Delgadillo and Zulma Mendez, all self-identifying under the umbrella of Pacto. Although the group has been formally in recess for more than a year, they are still seen as some of the most active and well-respected members of civil society in Juárez, and still identified as Pacto por la Cultura by other organizers and by the media.
CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

When cultural processes are borne from a position of political, social and economic critique of existing power structures and at the same time offer the opportunity for the creation of intellectual responses by the subaltern, they have power to generate new and powerful possibilities for forming relationships, generating broad-based intellectual activity that is not constricted by existing institutions of power, and proposing alternative ways of living and meaning-making. Members of Pacto came from working-class backgrounds and as such understood at a very basic and experiential level the problems of everyday life in Juarez. In the beginning they used this knowledge and at the same time applied their intellectual and creative talents towards a strong critique of the failed development model of the city, and contributed to the creation of policies to address that reality. They became increasingly radicalized in part by repeated failures to advance that agenda in the face of a corrupt, inefficient and constantly changing government. When frustration with this process moved them to temporarily set aside agendas for the creation of the Instituto Municipal de la Cultura, they began to take action in a much broader sphere resulting in a further radicalization of the groups mission and concept of culture.

The current volatile and hyper-violent reality of Ciudad Juarez, which includes oppressive militarization, widespread corruption, impunity and total inefficiency on the part of government and law enforcement agencies to respond to rampant crime and violence, has disoriented and traumatized both individuals and civil society, calling into question prior political and social agendas as people are increasingly living in survival
mode. In some ways the processes of radicalization within the organization of Pacto have continued to progress, even as the group itself has become polarized on issues of theory and practice. The majority of Pacto’s membership manifests its increasingly radical position by refusing to enter into any level of dialogue with the current government, who in their critique are at best inept, inefficient and unable to respond to the most basic needs of society, and at worst both corrupt and complicit in the current violence. At the same time they have also chosen to pull back from overt community engagement, as they work with other community leaders and intellectuals in creating an assessment of the situation and a plan for action.

On the other hand, those members of the organization who continue to be involved directly with community engagement, have themselves been radicalized in their work, deepening their commitment and solidarity with the disenfranchised and distressed population of marginalized colonias in Ciudad Juárez, who are facing a similar and arguably more severe disorientation due to the current crisis, and who also are struggling to find cultural, intellectual and organizational processes that will allow them to frame this new reality based on their lived experience and the “complex common sense” that cannot be entirely shared by the artists and intellectuals that head Pacto. The desire of this minority group within Pacto to continue to expand their community presence has created its own ideological inconsistencies in that the money that is most readily available to support these efforts comes directly from government initiatives, raising questions about the possibility of creating programs that truly
challenge existing structures, rather than propping them up and providing distractions from core issues and critiques.

If violence were to stop tomorrow, one could easily make recommendations to Pacto for strengthening the cycle of meaning making that occurs by the uniting of the visions of intellectuals and community organizers. The organization could begin to purposefully develop stronger and more reciprocal channels between the meaning making that happens at the level of political and intellectual analysis/professional cultural activity and the kinds of meaning making that happens, as Adams suggests, through grassroots involvement in cultural processes. However, the rising levels of violence and the volatility and instability of everyday life in Ciudad Juarez will challenge this kind of growth as a possibility and raise great uncertainty not only for organizations like Pacto, but for society as a whole.

As I mentioned in an earlier, members of Pacto continue for the most part to self identify as Pacto. Although the group informally disbanded when they went on “recess” after the incident at Villas de Salvarcar, they continue to participate in many of the same public events, political protests and processes of analysis with different organizations throughout the city. Pacto does not seem like a failed project, or even a project that has outlived its relevancy. It has been, like so many social projects throughout the city of Juárez, interrupted, truncated, disoriented by the current violence. The union of intellectual critique and broad-based participation in the dissemination of culture and engagement in cultural processes holds great possibility for the future of Juárez,
particularly in relationship to transformational framing and meaning-making in the face of the current reality.

The most glaring absences in this paper are the voices of community members who participated in Pacto’s programming and events. A logical next step would be to begin to identify and interview individuals and organizations that have had sustained contact with Pacto, and to begin to understand those cultural activities that had the most influence on their lives, how these activities impacted their worldview and their plans for living, and how they might continue to participate or to become co-creators/collaborators in the future. This type of research, and this type of cultural activity is naturally curtailed in the face of personal security issues that it raises both for the researcher and for the interviewees, and like so many projects will likely suffer in its progression as a result of that reality. The task for activists and researchers is to begin to identify avenues for progress, and alliances for the creation of a broad-based analysis and plans of action. It is not possible to set this work aside, but rather necessary to create mechanisms for the advancement of a new agenda that mitigate risk but that continue to challenge existing structures and injustices.
**APPENDIX 1: GUETZOW CHART POSSIBILITIES OF ART**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual</th>
<th>Community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Material/Health</strong></td>
<td><strong>Cognitive/Psych.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Builds interpersonal ties and promotes volunteering, which improves health</td>
<td>Increases sense of individual efficacy and self-esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increases opportunities for self-expression and enjoyment</td>
<td>Improves individuals’ sense of belonging or attachment to a community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduces delinquency in high-risk youth</td>
<td>Improves human capital: skills and creative abilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Direct Involvement</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increases opportunities for enjoyment</td>
<td>Increases cultural capital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relieves Stress</td>
<td>Enhances visuo-spatial reasoning (Mozart effect)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improves school performance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Audience Participation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increases individual opportunity and propensity to be involved in the arts</td>
<td>Increases propensity of community members to participate in the arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*This grid further develops a typology proposed by Kevin McCarthy (2002).*
APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

• Begin with a brief bio of the person including name, age, profession, educational background, city of origin, and city of residence.

• Pacto por la Cultura

• How long have you been with Pacto por la Cultura?

• Describe how you first got involved

• What is the primary mission of Pacto por la Cultura?

• What activities does Pacto por la Cultura undertake?

• What activities have you personally been involved in?

• Why did you get involved with Pacto por la Cultura?

• What do you personally hope to achieve through your involvement with Pacto por la Cultura?

• Tell me about events or activities related to Pacto por la Cultura that you feel were a great success.

• Tell me about events or activities related to Pacto por la Cultura that you feel were not successful.

• What benefit do you see Pacto por la Cultura and its activities having for society in general?

• What role does an average citizen of Juarez play in Pacto por la Cultura’s activities?

• Has Pacto por la Cultura’s role in the community changed between 2005-the present? If so how…

• Has the current climate of violence affected Pacto’s activities? If so how…

• What is the role of art in addressing social problems?
REFERENCES


(Original work published 1987)


Crehan, K. A. (2002). Gramsci, culture, and anthropology. Berkeley: University of
California Press.

Delgadillo, W. De la Toma del INBA a Pacto por la Cultura. *in progress work*, written January 2010, 1-34. Given to the author April 1, 2011.


Todos Somos Juárez - Reconstruyamos la ciudad. (n.d.). Website of Mexican Federal


