What We in the U.S. Can Learn from Argentina and Chile About Citizen Participation and Civic Education

by Ran Coble

EDITOR'S NOTE: Center Director Ran Coble has a long-standing interest in citizen participation and civic education in North Carolina and the nation. He sees evidence of a decline in civic engagement through such indicators as a decline in voter participation, fewer persons expressing a willingness to sit on a jury, less interest in the study of government and democracy on the part of students, and a perceived lack of public interest in public policy and civic affairs as measured by declining newspaper readership, polls expressing less confidence in government institutions, and other measures. In 2001, Coble was awarded an Eisenhower Fellowship. The Eisenhower Fellowship was established after World War II to bring foreign citizens to the United States to learn about U.S. society and government. More recently, the program has sponsored U.S. citizens to study how people in other cultures handle problems held in common with the U.S. Coble's fellowship enabled him to travel to Argentina and Chile to study efforts to educate and engage the citizenry of these younger democracies. Here is some of what he learned—excerpted from a longer report.

There is good evidence of a 40-year decline in citizen participation in many forms in the United States and North Carolina—from voting, to knowledge of public affairs, to simply reading a newspaper. Here are some indicators of this alarming decline, as catalogued by Harvard University professor Robert Putnam and others.

- From 1920, when women got the vote, through 1960, voter turnout in presidential elections rose at the rate of 1.6 percent every four years, but voter participation has declined from a high of 62.8 percent of *voting age* Americans in 1960 to 51.0 percent in 2000.
- The percentage of *registered* voters turning out for Presidential elections in North Carolina has steadily declined from 73 percent in 1992 to around 57 percent in 2000.
- With the exception of the 1992 election, the youngest category of voters consistently has the lowest turnout rates. In North Carolina, less than one-third of our 18 to 24-year-olds voted in 2000.
- Political knowledge and interest in public affairs is also down. "The average college graduate today knows little more about public affairs than did the average high school graduate in the 1940s," says Putnam. And, more than 20 percent of U.S. teenagers do not know that the U.S. declared independence from Britain, with 14 percent believing that the colonial ruler was France.
- About one-third of North Carolina students fail the end-of-course test for high school civics, and less than 10 percent are considered proficient.
- The 1999 Nation's Civics Report Card, a U.S. Department of Education assessment of civics knowledge in grades K–12, found that 75 percent of high school seniors were not proficient. North Carolina students scored in the bottom third, below the national average.
- A 1997 study by the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation showed that most students in North Carolina believe that learning about government and politics is irrelevant and boring. They do not perceive it as important to their future careers or their lives.
- The frequency of virtually every form of community involvement measured in Roper polls declined significantly, from the most common—petition signing (down 22 percent from 1973–74 to 1993–94) to the least common—running for office (down 16 percent).
- "Daily newspaper readership among people under thirty-five dropped from two-thirds in 1965 to one-third in 1990, at the same time that TV news viewership in this same age group fell from 52 percent to 41 percent," writes Putnam. "Today's under thirties pay less attention to the news and know less about current events than their elders do today or than people their age did two or three decades ago."
- In the last third of the century, Putnam says "active involvement in face-to-face organizations has plummeted, whether we consider organizational records, survey reports, time diaries, or consumer expenditures. . . . During the last third of the twentieth century formal membership in organizations in general has edged downward by perhaps 10–20 percent. More important, active involvement in clubs and other voluntary organizations has collapsed at an astonishing rate, more than halving most indices of participation within barely a few decades."
- Another indicator of citizenship—responding to the national census—shows decline. "Voluntary returns of mail census forms declined by more than a quarter between 1960 and 1990, with the lowest rates of return among young people, African Americans, and those detached from community institutions." Even the obligatory act of serving on juries evidences a rise in people simply not showing up when called.
- "In the 1990s roughly three in four Americans *didn't* trust government to do what is right most of the time."[1]

I selected the data above because they represent a possible list of many of the duties and responsibilities of a citizen in a democracy, for example,

- voting,
- answering the census,
- serving on juries,
- paying taxes,
- respecting and following the laws,
- educating yourself about politics and public policy issues and deliberating on issues facing one's community or country; and
- participating in solving community problems or service to others.

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What can be done to reverse this long-standing decline? A good source of ideas may be the younger, more experimental democracies of South America. I went to Argentina and Chile to study their efforts in citizen participation and civic education in May and June of 2001 under an Eisenhower Fellowship. I went for four reasons really. First, I had been to Argentina twice before in 1990 and 2000 and to Chile in 1993, and therefore knew a little more about these countries than others. Second, Argentina is the country with the third most Eisenhower Fellows in the world—behind only the United States and China, and Chile has 25 Fellows, each of whom has studied some issue in the United States and therefore likely would be a resource, a pool of talented people upon which I could draw. Third, in just 20 years of recovered democracy, Argentina has developed the largest nonprofit sector per capita in South America, and this seemed to indicate something was going on in civil society. Chile—though ruled by the military from 1973 to 1989—has the longest democratic history of any country in South America. And fourth, I had been very impressed in my previous visits to Argentina and Chile with the range of activity and experimentation in citizen participation and civic education. Something was going on.

A quick word about context. I was traveling in Argentina at a time when the economy had been in recession for almost four years. Nearly 20 percent of Argentina's budget goes toward paying off its debt, and in 2002, the country declared default on its $141 billion public debt. There is 22 percent unemployment, and in the last five years, 85 percent of the population saw its income drop by 20 to 40 percent. While I was there, the national airline went bankrupt, there were demonstrations in the streets almost every day, and former President Carlos Menem was arrested on corruption charges. A few months after I left, President Fernando de la Rua resigned, and the country had five Presidents in three months. At the same time in Chile, the Supreme Court ruled that former dictator General Augusto Pinochet could not be tried for human rights abuses during his regime from 1973 to 1990 because of his deteriorating health and mental dementia. Both countries continue to deal with legacies of military governments which tortured and killed their citizens in the 1970s and 1980s.

Most people in the United States associate Argentina with the tango, gaucho cowboys, the tennis players Guillermo Vilas and Gabriela Sabatini, the song, "Don't Cry For Me Argentina," and Evita Perón. I also associate Argentina with their great writers, and one of them, Jorge Luis Borges, captured the double feeling of loyalty to one's own country and of fondness for friends in another country. In "Another Poem of Gifts," Borges writes:

"I want to give thanks to the divine
Labyrinth of causes and effects
For the diversity of beings
That form this singular universe . . .
For love, which lets us see others
As God sees them, . . .
For the art of friendship . . .
For the bravery and happiness of others,
For my country, sensed in jasmine flowers . . ."[2]

In Argentina and Chile, I visited and conducted 85 interviews in 11 cities and towns, including interviews with 60 individuals or organizations in Argentina and 25 in Chile. These included nonprofits working in citizen participation and civic education, such as Poder Ciudadano and Conciencia in Argentina and Participa and Forja in Chile. They included neighborhood associations and grassroots efforts, such as Red Solidaria, and church organizations, such as Caritas in Argentina and Hogar de Cristo in Chile. They also included local and provincial government officials in Buenos Aires, Córdoba, Rosario, Mar del Plata, and Bariloche in Argentina, as well as Santiago, Las Condes, Huechuraba, and Temuco in Chile, as well as national officials in President Ricardo Lagos' office in Chile and the Ministry of Education in Argentina. They also included high-level military officers and some business people in banking, the media, and polling in Argentina and shipping and job training in Chile, as well as researchers and professors in universities and in think tanks (Novum Millenium, CIPPEC, CEDES, Libertad, and Global in Argentina and Jaime Guzman, Chile Veinte y Uno, the Center of Public Studies, and the UN Development Programme in Chile). Finally, I interviewed leaders at grantmaking foundations, such as the Navarro Viola Foundation and Kellogg Foundation office in Argentina, as well as fellows in other leadership programs (Kellogg International Fellows and Ashoka Fellows) in both Argentina and Chile.

Here are some capsule descriptions of the most significant programs and innovations in citizen participation and civic education—work I'd love to see replicated in North Carolina and the United States.

Efforts in Citizen Participation by Argentina's Nonprofit and Nongovernmental Organization (NGO) Sector

FUNDACIÓN PODER CIUDADANO
(Citizen Power Foundation)

In 1989, six Argentines founded a new nonprofit organization to promote citizen participation and social responsibility. The nonprofit's name, Poder Ciudadano (Citizen Power), was the subject of much discussion among the three women and three men who founded it. Marta Oyhanarte, now a Buenos Aires city legislator, proposed the name, but others objected, saying it sounded too strong and too authoritarian. But Oyhanarte replied, "No, citizens need to recognize that they have power," and the group agreed. In 1992, she published a book titled *How To Exercise Your Citizen Power.* In that book, she writes, "On October 30, 1983 [the date of Argentina's first elections in 10 years] we believed that democracy had triumphed, when in reality what had triumphed was the *idea* of democracy. We had to construct a real democracy starting from the essential element that constitutes it: '**the power of the citizen**. [Bold in the original]'"[3]

Twelve years later, Poder Ciudadano has a remarkable history of creating exemplary programs to foster citizen participation and responsibility and to hold government accountable, including the following:

- A Commitment Papers Program was instituted in the early 1990s to get government officials to commit to meet regularly with citizens. Public officials were asked to *listen* to citizens' ideas and concerns, not make speeches or answer questions in a way that made officials the sole experts, which is the way many public hearings in the United States are conducted. Poder Ciudadano then reported on how many public officials appeared and whether they actually listened.
- Today, the group promotes and trains citizens in using four mechanisms for participation—

Some famous figures in Argentine history on a balcony in La Boca, a colorful artists' neighborhood in Buenos Aires.

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how to gain access to information and how to use it, public hearings, ombudsmen, and *ampara*, or class action lawsuits. Poder Ciudadano's Francisco Cullen, a lawyer, says, "Public hearings provide a space for citizens to participate *before* a governmental body makes a final decision, so we promote this concept." The group monitors public hearings to see whether everyone who signs up to speak actually gets to speak, whether everyone is granted equal time, and whether experts are qualified to give an opinion. The group also promotes the creation of positions of ombudsmen to defend the rights of citizens at the city and national levels, as well as in some provinces. *Ampara* class actions are used to litigate public interest cases and help citizens exercise fundamental rights.

- In February 2001, the group initiated a project called "Participate in the Budget." The goal, says Poder Ciudadano's Carolina Varsky, is "to translate the city budget into common language" that any citizen can understand and ensure that public officials involve citizens in preparation of the budget. The ultimate goal is to provide citizen input on budget priorities in their district, propose new priorities, and then play an active role in execution of the budget.

There is no word in Spanish for "accountability," a hole in the language that may be an indicator of a hole in the fabric of Argentine democracy. Out of such a belief, Poder Ciudadano has a variety of programs designed to hold elected officials and government agencies accountable, including:

- Under its Transparent Elections Program, the group monitors compliance by mayoral candidates with the City of Buenos Aires' campaign finance law and issues reports to the media and the public. About 450 candidates are providing information on their contributions and expenditures.
- Poder Ciudadano is the Argentine chapter of Transparency International, which has national chapters in 75 countries around the world, including 14 in Latin America. Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index

Marta Oyhanarte, now a Buenos Aires city legislator, was one of the three women and three men who founded Poder Ciudadano (Citizen Power). She is the wife of a "disappeared" person.

Jane Kendall

Jane Kendall

Poder Ciudadano's Silvana Lauzán, with Ran Coble (left) and Carlos March, Poder's director (right)

measures perceived corruption among public officials, and the 2001 Index says Argentina is tied with China at 57th in a ranking of 91 countries, with number 91 the most corrupt.[4] The group was successful in getting President Fernando de la Rua's government to sign an agreement on monitoring of major infrastructure projects. The agreement under the Program for Transparent Contracting guarantees public hearings and sanctions against bribery. Also, as part of its anti-corruption program, Poder Ciudadano promotes a National Day for the Fight Against Corruption and is discussing the idea of creating a Democracy Ambulance.

- The group publishes a Data Bank on Argentine Politicians, which includes their educational and occupational backgrounds, financial statements, political activities, and organizational affiliations. The group also asks how available politicians are to meet with citizens and how many times the group had to call the officials for this data.
- To foster citizen participation among youth, Poder Ciudadano started a Classrooms Without Borders Program involving about 600 teachers in primary, secondary, and high schools. The program gives awards to the three schools that are the most innovative in inculcating civic values. One of the winners, a special school for disabled kids in Ezeiza, constructed a radio station inside the school. The production, technology, and broadcasts are all managed by the students, and the station is now "a social service voice for the community," says Poder Ciudadano's Silvana Lauzán.
- Another educational program for youth, the Young Negotiators Program, has trained more than 4,000 children in settling their own disputes and solving problems without violence in schools.

One of the biggest barriers to citizen participation is helping citizens overcome the belief that what they do won't make a difference. Indeed, that feeling of powerlessness is what brought her to this work in the first place, says Lauzán. A veteran worker at Poder Ciudadano since she was 16 years old, she adds, "I didn't want to feel so alone when I felt so angry."

To share citizen experiences in solving public problems, Poder Ciudadano now is moving into the media and creating Infocivica, a "civic news agency." Since October 2000, the group has produced short two-to-three-minute broadcasts that are inserted between regular TV programs and aired four times a day (between 7:00 and 8:00 a.m. and at 10:45 a.m., 4:45 p.m., and 7:45 p.m.), Monday through Friday, on Channel 6, a private TV channel. They show individuals, neighbors, and NGOs solving problems and making a difference in Argentine society. These "Moments of Citizen Power," as they are called, further the group's goal

of creating a tradition of participation and involvement in the public sphere. It is a tradition, says Francisco Cullen, that echoes those citizens described in Jorge Luis Borges' poem, "The Just":

"A man who cultivates his garden, as Voltaire wished.
He who is grateful for the existence of music.
He who takes pleasure in tracing an etymology.
Two workmen playing, in a café in the South, a silent game of chess.
The potter, contemplating a color and a form.
The typographer who sets this page well, though it may not please him.
A woman and a man, who read the last tercets of a certain canto.
He who strokes a sleeping animal.
He who justifies, or wishes to, a wrong done him.
He who is grateful for the existence of Stevenson.
He who prefers others to be right.
These people, unaware, are saving the world."[5]

FARN: Fundación Ambiente y Recursos Naturales (Foundation for the Environment and Natural Resources)

The problem in Argentina's new democracy, thought the founding lawyers of FARN in 1986, was the way public decisions were made. Environmental policy was the arena in which they chose to put public participation on the public agenda. Their goals are a three-pronged effort to seek public access to public information, access to government decisionmaking, and access to justice.

Only two jurisdictions in Argentina—Buenos Aires and Chubut—give the public access to public information, and there are no national laws analogous to the Freedom of Information Act in the United States or to state laws in the U.S. guaranteeing access to open meetings and public records. In addition to the lack of laws is a cultural norm where public officials refuse to provide copies of government documents or policies. Argentines need a system where citizens asking for information don't depend on how public officials feel that day, says FARN's deputy director, Daniel Ryan.

FARN's work in gaining citizen access to government decisionmaking focuses on improving the amount and quality of public participation in public hearings. In 1995, they published a Manual on Public Participation. This easy-to-read guide discusses the benefits of such participation and includes a draft rule cities can adopt on how to conduct a public hearing and maximize participation. Ryan points to the City of Buenos Aires as a jurisdiction that has misused the public hearing mechanism. Though the city has held 200 public hearings, Ryan says hearings are held on less important items such as changing the names of streets, but not on more important issues like a law that created a corporation to manage all public lands in the city.

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Daniel Ryan, FARN's deputy director

FARN conducts workshops for NGOs in Córdoba and Jujuy on how they can participate and take advantage of opportunities presented by public hearings. The workshops include roleplaying, advocacy strategies, and the pros and cons of public hearings. FARN also is training local government officials themselves in how to conduct public hearings. This is being done in small city halls in Patagonia in the south, and in Jujuy in the north. Now the group has been asked by some local governments in Jujuy and Puerto Madryn to draft regulations for conducting public hearings.

Another FARN effort includes Policy Dialogues where the group brings together the main stakeholders on an environmental issue, including

government officials, businesses, and NGOs. They first agree on a list of issues to discuss and then try to produce a specific policy agenda to carry out. For example, in Jujuy, the poorest region of Argentina, they have agreed on an agenda that includes land use, sustainable development and tourism, and the sustainability of democratic institutions and public participation. Future policy dialogues are planned in Bariloche, Córdoba, and Mar del Plata.

The third prong of FARN's citizen participation efforts is to seek legal access to justice for individual citizens and groups. FARN picks cases where the environmental issue is significant, the legal consequence is great, and the people are demanding their legal rights. FARN wants to create a network of lawyers interested in public interest environmental lawsuits. In its policy dialogues and public hearings, FARN is known for first getting the parties together to talk. But where enforcement of environmental laws is at stake or where corruption is an issue, litigation is FARN's back-up tool of choice.

Enlarging the Public in Public Participation

Bringing Women and Youth into the Civic Conversation

CONCIENCIA (Conscience, or Awareness)

After the Malvinas, or Falkland Islands War in 1982, Argentina started its return to democracy. However, as Dora Larese Roja de Scacciati puts it, "Everybody wanted to go back to democracy, but few of us knew how democracy worked." Scacciati is first vice president of Conciencia, a nonprofit founded in 1982 by María Rosa Segura de Martini and 21 other women. They chose to concentrate on civic participation by women because they thought the multiplying effect of women would be greater. Not only were they 51 percent of the population, but women also were mothers who could teach their children about democracy, and they were the large majority (80 percent) of the teachers. Women are looked upon as "the transmitters of the excellence of the culture and of societal values," says a Conciencia brochure.

Martini's brother was the head of Mary Kay Cosmetics in Argentina at the time, so the women decided to borrow the Mary Kay method of selling cosmetics and sell democracy instead. Each of the leaders invited 12 to 15 women to their homes for coffee and biscuits and asked them if they knew about the new Argentine Constitution, how to vote, and their opinions about needs of the country. Gradually, the group developed a seven-week course on democracy, holding the course in donated theater spaces throughout Buenos Aires, with 200 to 250 people in each location.

After the second year of classes and the first democratic elections, people didn't seem that interested in the Constitution any more, so Conciencia redirected its efforts to train women leaders for the new democracy. Then after a few more years, the needs of the country seemed to shift again, and the group began concentrating on the civic education of youth.

Conciencia now has 36 chapters in 22 provinces in Argentina, as well as chapters in Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela. To its credit, the group evaluates every program after six months and after a year or two years. For example, in its program on teaching students democratic values, they count how many teachers are initially working with the program after six

Mauricio, a student volunteer of Conciencia, (left to right), Dora Larese Roja de Scacciati, vice president, and Silvia Uranga, president

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months. One year later, they ask how many other teachers are trained to gauge the multiplying effect. They also ask the students themselves to evaluate the program.

In Project Citizen, the students examine a local area and decide on a project to fill a local need. The students are asked to talk to their fellow citizens, conduct research on what government is doing about the problem, and study what the press writes about it. Legislators and local officials are invited to be the judges of the projects. The students often end up with a close relationship with the mayor, learn to talk to the press, and always receive a prize of some sort—all to encourage future citizen involvement by youth. The program uses a curriculum originally developed in the United States but rarely used in U.S. schools because of the time and expense required to implement it.[6]

In Tigre, a municipality on the outskirts of Buenos Aires, a group of 7th, 8th, and 9th graders chose a project dealing with a local pig problem. A few families bred pigs but let the animals roam the streets. The pig waste got into a nearby waterway, so the kids' goal was to contain the pigs and clean the waterway. Conciencia's materials walk the youth through four steps: (1) first, analyze the problem and state why you chose it; (2) describe who you interviewed and what those people said; (3) describe the laws involved and at what level of government this problem can be treated; and (4) give the advantages and disadvantages of various solutions and what is proposed to be done. Later, the youth are urged to measure the consequences of their actions. Today, the pigs are in a pen, and the waste is out of the water.

Scacciati says there now are two big challenges now facing Conciencia and Argentina. "The biggest is for people to realize that the only way out for this country is education. People know how to put their ballot inside of a box, but they don't know how to choose," she says. The other challenge is for people in Argentina to recognize "that we are responsible. We are always throwing responsibility to other people or other organizations or other countries." With that in mind, Conciencia's next program is designed to get the people out of that condition and into the condition of responsibility. The program will be called Rescuing the Citizen.

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La Luciérnaga (Lightning Bug) works with street children, one of whom is shown here with the group's director, Oscar Arias (left).

Bringing the Poor into the Civic Conversation

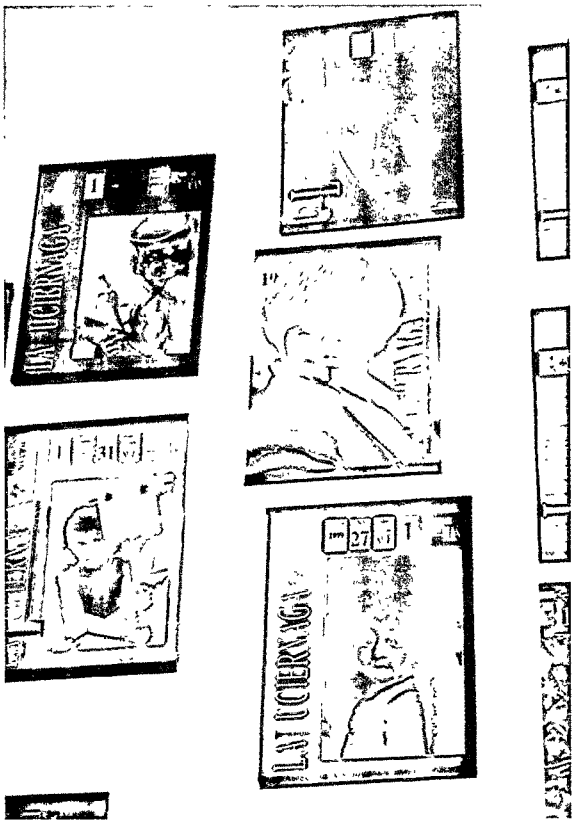
FUNDACIÓN LA LUCIÉRNAGA (Lightning Bug)

Many nonprofit groups in the United States provide services to the poor, but few attempt to bring them into public policy debates or encourage their participation as citizens. But that's what a nonprofit called La Luciérnaga (Lightning Bug) does in its work with street children. The group's director, Oscar Arias, shares the name of the Nobel Peace Prize-winning President of Costa Rica, but works with youth and adolescents from Córdoba's *villas miserias*, or misery villages. The group's motto, "To Beg Nevermore" is inscribed on their magazine, which is sold monthly in the streets for one peso by the youths, wearing their trademark short pants. Seventy-five percent of the sales revenue goes to the youth themselves, thereby providing "a respectable salary," says Arias, of about $15 a day and, most importantly, "work with dignity."

The other 25 percent of the proceeds goes to the nonprofit's program. One of those programs is the Little School of La Luciérnaga. Because many of these children have dropped out of school or been expelled, the nonprofit started a special school for them, especially emphasizing workshops in expression through literature, music, comics, and computers. Many of the best of these expressions find their way into the magazine. The 23-page April 2001 issue I bought on the street contains an interview with one of the youth, a cartoon, photos of the youths cleaning windshields in the streets, a box of statistics on youth in poverty, life stories of some of the youth, a short story in fiction, and an editorial entitled "Yes to work, no to exploitation."

Arias says the nonprofit also has an informal education program that provides free breakfasts. "But the cook is not a cook but an educator. It's a way to bring them to learn," he says. The breakfasts give the kids the daily spaces to share reflections on drugs, the violence in their families, or other problems, he adds. All told, Luciérnaga serves 400 homeless youth in Córdoba and four other cities, and the group now sells 45,000 magazines.

The magazine is one form of citizen participation because the articles—almost all written and published by the youth themselves—help educate the public on the causes of homelessness and problems of street youth. The stories help the public better understand the youth and think of them in a different way. For example, says Arias, when a teacher buys the magazine and reads a poem or a story, it makes her more sensitive to that youth; he is not just a number any more. "We believe a new link has been created between the community and the kids," he says.



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Cover photos of La Luciérnaga's magazine

The magazine also is a vehicle for the youth to put certain proposals before the public. In February 2001, the police arrested youths who were begging on the street to help their mothers who needed money to support their families. The mothers protested by blocking a street and were also arrested. The local newspaper interviewed Arias, who said the government shouldn't punish poverty but deal with what caused the mothers and youth to do this. "They had a right to survive," he said, "even in this form, and the solution is not jail but work." Arias asked 40 mothers if they'd negotiate with government, and they agreed. The result was two new programs, one called Madres Guapas and the other called Autorrescate, or Self-Rescue.

Madres Guapas literally means Handsome Mothers, a compliment, but it also carries the meaning of "willing to work," another example of

the Argentine talent for using the double meanings of the Spanish language. In this program, the mothers do community work for pay, which legitimizes their demand for work, says Arias. The mothers also agree that the kids will go to school and not beg in the street. The result so far, says Arias, is that 139 mothers and their 550 kids have "retired" from street life.

Another example of participation by the youth comes from Rodrigo Agrelo, a deputy and vice president of the House of Representatives for the province of Córdoba. Agrelo and fellow deputy Sofanor Novillo Corvalán introduced a bill to forbid the sale of a certain chemical glue to minors. The glue was normally used to stick rugs to floors, but poor youth were using the glue as a cheap high. An estimated 3,000 kids were using this drug, which can cause severe damage to the lungs and nervous system. La Luciérnaga youth went to the media and the legislature in support of the bill, and now it is law, says Agrelo. He says he admired the youth for doing this since it contradicted the public's views of street kids because they were the ones assumed to be using this drug.

One example of how La Luciérnaga turns street kids into citizens in five cities is a woman I'll call Teresa. When she was seven years old, she left home to live in the street with her two little brothers. They all begged or stole to survive. One day, a man came and told her he was going to take her to a home for street kids. Instead, it was a brothel, and she was forced into prostitution for three years. At the age of 10, she escaped, but in order to provide for her brothers, she still sold her body as a prostitute. The three of them lived under bridges. She began living with another boy, and they had children when she was 17.

About this time, someone put them in touch with La Luciérnaga. The group provided income through her sale of magazines and gave her a place to talk about her past and her problems. She and her boyfriend now had four kids to care for, plus her brothers, and some of the children were still begging in the street. They were among those arrested in the February 2001 demonstration, so Teresa is one of the mothers who negotiated with the local government for establishment of the Madres Guapas and Self-Rescue programs. With this new job, Teresa now has a little wood house of her own for the first time and a garden as well. Today, with her husband and a neighbor—all of whom sold Luciérnaga magazines—Teresa runs a dining room for 50 street kids in a neighborhood in a misery village. The government provides work, Luciérnaga provides the food, and Teresa provides the service.

Showing Citizens That They Can Solve Problems

"The first job of a citizen is to keep your mouth open."

—GUNTHER GRASS, GERMAN NOVELIST

AGRUPACIÓN DE VECINOS (Neighborhood Association) DE VICENTE LOPEZ

The Neighborhood Association in the Vicente Lopez suburb of Buenos Aires (with a population of about 360,000) was formed when a road was built through the neighborhood and destroyed a number of trees. Its purpose, says its president, Victor Bardeci, is to promote citizen participation and improve municipal management. I visited the group on the 567th consecutive Saturday it had met, a remarkable record.

The association has presented more than 70 proposed ordinances to local officials over its 11 years. Its successes include getting the city to create a position of ombudsman to be responsible for acting on citizen complaints. They also organized a demonstration with thousands of cars blocking the Pan American Highway to protest a natural gas pipeline that threatened green spaces in the area. They regularly attend city council meetings and have documented how many exceptions to city laws the council granted from 1992 to 1999, distributing 5,000 copies of this report. The group also has prepared a model ballot and voting manual and produces a data bank of information on local elected officials.

"We analyze what happens in our city and what can be improved," says member Roberto Kretschmayer during my visit. He continues, "At this moment, we are in a stage where our government said a lot of things about popular participation, but then they said go to another place to participate. We can say all things—we have total freedom—but nobody does anything about it. And this is due to the fact that our people are used to

living under military governments, and people don't get involved. Our mission is to change this way of life." Another member of the group laughs and quickly adds, "This is mission impossible."

The group meets from 4 to 7 p.m. on Saturdays in an old school, with its agenda posted on a blackboard. When many might be washing clothes or cars, going to a soccer match, or playing with children, these citizens have met to discuss and solve local problems, Saturday after Saturday, for almost 11 years.

FUNDACIÓN CIUDAD (City Foundation)

"If all things are devoid of matter
and if this populous Buenos Aires
comparable to an army in complexity
is no more than a dream
arrived at in magic by souls working together
there's a moment
in which the city's existence is at the brink of danger and disorder
and that is the trembling moment of dawn
when those who are dreaming the world are few
. . . But once more the world comes to its own rescue."[7]

—JORGE LUIS BORGES, "DAYBREAK"

Buenos Aires is one of the great cities of the world, and the riverfront is one of the city's great assets. It also is the focus of an innovative effort in citizen participation by Fundación Ciudad. The general coordinator of this nonprofit, María Gowland, says, "The waterfront is a great metaphor for knowing your rights, how to develop a place, how to discuss issues, and how to deliberate."

Fundación Ciudad uses community forums styled after those conducted by the Kettering Foundation in Dayton, Ohio, which produces guides on public policy issues outlining various options and solutions to the problems. Similarly, Fundación Ciudad has produced what they call a "base document" of facts and figures on ideas for development of the Metropolitan Waterfront. As a way of bringing lots of views into the civic conversation, the document includes boxed quotes from many citizens ("Dice la gente," or "the people say"), the media ("Dicen los medios"), and the agency managing the government's water program ("Dice la empresa Aguas Argentinas") throughout the report.[8] "The logic of the forums is 'first, listen to the people,'" says Gowland.

Over five years, more than 2,500 people have participated in Fundación Ciudad's forums. The group tries to bring in participants from all per-

The purpose of the Neighborhood Association in the Vicente Lopez suburb of Buenos Aires is to promote citizen participation and improve municipal management.

Ran Coble

spectives, including government officials in the executive and legislative branches, the well-to-do who live in the northern part of the waterfront, and the poor who live on the lower land which floods often. "Some come to fight, but we said this is a place for consensus-building," says Gowland.

One strength of the forums is that they give people an opportunity to discuss an issue over time, to listen and to reflect. To the group's credit, it published a later report which showed how citizens' views changed over time. In three columns, the report describes waterfront proposals reached by consensus in 1998, 2000, and 2001 and how these proposals were refined and improved upon reflection.[9] "This is great for Argentines because people here always want to win," says Gowland.

Like the nonprofit group FARN discussed above, Fundación Ciudad is an innovator in thinking about *processes* that encourage citizen participation. The group also thinks about *evaluation* of citizen participation. First, they evaluate the forum guides themselves and whether they can be understood by the average citizen. Second, they do pre- and post-forum polls to measure citizens' understanding of the issues. Third, they count the number of people who attend each forum, as well as those who sign up but don't attend. Fourth, they evaluate the diversity in each group and check whether there are people from nonprofits, government, and business (the most difficult group to get to attend, says Gowland) with young and old, students, and teachers. Finally, they evaluate whether the people's proposals are actually implemented into policy, which goes beyond the Kettering Foundation's process.

Fundación Ciudad was successful in placing the issue of Buenos Aires' metropolitan waterfront on the public agenda and helping shape the final plan. The group also was successful in getting the city and provincial legislatures to designate a special team of legislators to produce legislation for a region larger than the city but smaller than the province—thereby dealing with a problem of regionalism faced by many American communities.

Fundación Ciudad has undertaken three other initiatives—one with forums in Bariloche in southern Argentina, another with cable television, and a third with civic journalism. The initiative in Bariloche is a partnership with the Woodville School in conducting community forums in a ski resort area in the mountains. The group also publicizes its programs and educates the public on its cable TV show called "La Ciudad de Todos" (The City of All).

The civic journalism effort in 1996 was the first in Argentina. Civic journalism makes use of several methods to engage the public, including (a) using opinion polls to uncover issues important to the public; (b) giving more attention to solutions for problems discussed in regular news coverage; (c) providing information on how elected officials stand on issues; (d) organizing public meetings to discuss issues and solutions; and (e) informing readers and viewers on how to vote, contact their elected officials, and participate in the policy process.[10] Fundación Ciudad organized seminars on civic journalism in Córdoba and with the Argentine Press Association in Buenos Aires. The Córdoba effort resulted in a pre-election project with the local newspaper *La Voz del Interior.*

Red Solidaria (Solidarity Network)

> *As the old man walked the beach at dawn, he noticed a young man ahead of him picking up a starfish and flinging it to the sea.*
>
> *Finally catching up with the youth, he asked him why he was doing this. The answer was that the stranded starfish would die if left until the morning sun.*
>
> *"But the beach goes on for miles, and there are millions of starfish," countered the old man. "How can your effort make any difference?"*
>
> *The young man looked at the starfish in his hand and then threw it to safety in the waves. "It makes a difference to this one," he said.*
>
> —Anonymous

One of the most significant experiments in citizen participation is an effort to create a culture of solidarity by Juan Carr and others in the Solidarity Network. Carr had a highly developed sense of service early in life. As a student, he decided to study veterinary medicine in order to "put an end to child malnutrition by creating improvements in vegetable and animal production."[11] While at the university, he and a group of friends volunteered with a program providing housing for the homeless. However, after getting his degree and beginning work as a veterinarian in a pet clinic in the dog-lovers paradise of Argentina, he wasn't happy.

In an interview with *Apertura* magazine, he says, "On a February night in 1994, I felt restless and couldn't sleep, no matter how hard I tried. Sud-

denly, I grabbed hold of my wife and said: 'I've got it: The Solidarity Network!'"

He continues, "We knew that Argentina had suffered great pain during the military dictatorship, and we also realized that the Malvinas (Falklands) Islands War had instilled a sense of distrust in our people. We knew too, however, that the sense of solidarity of Argentine people was still intact. The only thing that had to be done was to give it some kind of order and coordinate it, so as to rebuild the chain of solidarity."[12]

Carr discussed this idea with four friends who met regularly to play soccer, and Red Solidaria, or the Solidarity Network, was born. It started in February 1995 with a phone line where people would call with a need—for food, clothing, a wheelchair, some medicine, a hearing aid, type O+ blood, or even an organ transplant. Today, it is still an unbelievably simple system of telephones, a transfer system, and computers—the telephones to receive the requests called in at one number, the transfer system to get the requests to the volunteer on duty at the time, and computers to log in the needs.

A group of about 28 volunteers each works a three-hour shift in their own homes. As a whole, the Network receives about 100 calls a day from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. Once a call comes in, the volunteer begins to search for a solution among the nearly 350 NGOs with whom they have working relationships. If they notice a pattern to a problem or a systemic need, they gather people in what they call an "*asemblea solidaria*," or solidarity assembly. Then they ask the community to participate.

Nationwide, the Network has obtained medication for 14,000 indigent cancer patients and collected food and clothing for 200,000 people affected by flooding in northern Argentina. But it is most proud of its work at the individual level in giving the personal touch. Belén Quellet, one of the network volunteers, tells of a group of students who needed books. Red Solidaria found a group of students who had used the same books the previous year, so the older students came back to the school and personally delivered the books.

In another school, a group of students began collecting clothes for the homeless. They took the clothes to a laundry run by youth with disabilities, who taught the students how to wash, iron, and prepare the clothes. Thus, the students learned more about those with disabilities and also were able to deliver clothes to the homeless that they had prepared personally. "These are baby steps in developing a culture of solidarity," says Quellet. "It may take 10 to 15 years."

In Jujuy, a woman called asking for glasses for her seven-year-old daughter. Meanwhile, a network volunteer in Buenos Aires accompanied friends who had been in a car accident to the hospital. The friend ran a shop that sold glasses and asked the volunteer if there was anything he could do to help. Shortly thereafter, the volunteer delivered the glasses to the woman in Jujuy. Quellet says, "The little girl just grabs the glasses, puts them on, and she can see, that was amazing. One by one then, it make sense."

This may sound like an Information and Referral Service in the United States, but it's not. Most such services simply refer a caller to an agency. They don't actually solve the problem. It

Belén Quellet of Red Solidaria

Ran Coble

also may sound like the Red Cross. But Red Solidaria has no paid staff, no hierarchy, does not accept donations itself, and has no stocks or supplies. It has no delivery mechanisms; it simply links the person with the need to the person who can answer the need and expects them to work it out somehow. Yes, the Network helps with disasters and arranges for blood donations, but there is something larger going on here. It's the network's goal of creating a culture of solidarity, so that everyone, not just the nonprofit and its volunteers or staff, feels responsible.

For example, Quellet describes the Network's efforts on behalf of a boy named Agostín who needed an expensive operation on his spinal cord in the United States. They began raising the $650,000 needed, not by approaching big donors but with a campaign called "Un Peso for Agostín" designed to get 650,000 people to give one peso each to save Agostín's life. One mother went to a shopping center with a picture of Agostín to raise money from passersby. There, some street children saw the picture, asked who Agostín was, and then started opening doors to taxis in the area and asking for contributions. They kept bringing the money back to the woman, asking, "Are we done yet? Do we still have a long way to go?" A businessman also contributed $200,000. And, an elderly pensioner called and said she hadn't received her monthly pension yet, but if they could wait, when she received it, she would send a peso. "We thought that was great," says Quellet. "She understood better than anybody what commitment was."

Quellet knows about commitment too. At 24, she flew to Calcutta, India, rang the bell at Mother Theresa's, and volunteered for one of the toughest assignments—to work with the dying. "We're getting rid of the notion of charity and going a step forward. Solidarity is an act of justice," says Quellet. "You see a need, and it's emotional. We're trying to convert that emotion into a commitment."

Simple traditions can sometimes explain values that are deep within a culture. The value of solidarity deep within Argentine culture is explained by Quellet with a simple example of what happens in Argentina when a child cries out on the beach, "I'm lost." Everyone on the beach nearby will start clapping, and the wave of clapping notifies mothers to locate their children. The mother who has lost her child then knows where to go on the beach to find the child.

Juan Carr and the four friends who founded the Solidarity Network still meet at that same soccer field once a week. Their vision for the future of the movement—and it truly is a movement—includes four new efforts. First, they asked a group of teachers and professionals to think about what was going on in Argentina. The Network asked the teachers to write up a project that doesn't have to do with money but with creating a culture of solidarity. Shortly thereafter, they had 24 teachers with 160 students working on 24 different social problems. Then, the teachers decided to double their efforts with classes in both April and August, which coincides with school semesters in the Southern hemisphere.

The second piece of their vision for the future is to create a network of teachers called the Red Docente de Cultura Solidaria. Quellet is the coordinator for this program, which recognizes that teachers hear about a lot of needs every day that have nothing to do with schooling. A child might say his father is sick, the mother has no insurance, the family has no food. The network wants to use teachers as "*referentes*," or people who simply notify others in the school or community of the need. This is not to turn the teachers into social workers but to recognize their natural leadership role in distributing and referring information, says Quellet.

The third plan for the future is a network of *Orientadores de la Comunidad*. This envisions one "orientor" per 1,000 inhabitants throughout Argentina who knows what to do when a child is missing, when the soup kitchen runs out of food, or a neighbor needs medication for cancer. The idea is to recruit people who know the community and naturally know what to do, such as teachers, nuns, priests, or social workers.

The fourth part of the vision is to spread the work throughout Argentina. Because of their success in Buenos Aires, the Network started getting calls from other provinces. They first expanded in Cipoletti along the Río Negro River in the south. Then another group of volunteers started working in Pilar on the northern outskirts of Buenos Aires. Then other groups followed in Azul, Córdoba, Rauch, Junín, and Bariloche.

Quellet's eyes light up when she talks about the final piece of the vision. She says, "We have a bigger dream that is "globalización solidaria." You know how everybody talks about the economic globalization. Well, we feel that solidarity can go global as well." She describes what the Solidarity

Free speech demonstrated on a walking mall in Buenos Aires.

Ran Coble

Network did in Argentina in response to the crisis in Kosovo with its thousands of refugees and warring factions of Christians and Muslims.

The Network went to La Cava, a poor neighborhood on the outskirts of Buenos Aires and told the teachers and children at a Catholic school about how the children of Kosovo were suffering and being displaced from their homes. Even though the children in La Cava lived in shantytowns, they immediately recognized that they at least had their own houses. The children started writing letters to Kosovo, but the teachers said this wouldn't work, that the people there couldn't understand Spanish. So, the children started drawing pictures. Then, they began collecting rice and cans of food.

A few weeks later, the Network gets a call from the school asking them to come pick up the food and take it to Kosovo. At the same time, an embassy official called and said they'd been receiving food donations too. The Network also approached a Jewish school and got them involved in a similar effort to collect food. Through the Internet, the Network found an NGO in Barcelona, Spain that had trucks delivering food to Kosovo. "If you can get it to Barcelona, we'll get it to Kosovo for you," they said. The Network talked to Aerolineas Argentinas airline and got them to fly the food to Madrid for free. Then an NGO in Madrid took it to Barcelona. Meanwhile, the Network went to a bank and got it to open up a bank account for donations and arranged for a one-peso-to-one-peso transfer to Spain in a campaign called "Un Peso y Una Lata Por Kosovo" (one peso and one can for Kosovo). All of this resulted in a shipment of 28 tons of food to Kosovo.

"So, we had the Catholics and the Jews together for the Muslims in Kosovo," says Quellet, "which was for us one of the signs for globalization. It is possible. And then we had the rich people at a bank and an airline together with the poor of La Cava for the Kosovo refugees. This was our example of *globalización solidaria.* It is possible."

Involving the Media in Encouraging Citizen Involvement

La Nación (The Nation) Newspaper

One of the exemplary features of Argentina's efforts in citizen participation is the role of the media in encouraging citizen participation. Newspapers around the U.S. and in North Carolina have attempted to encourage civic participation through efforts like the consortium of newspapers and television stations involved in "Your Voice, Your Vote," which polls N.C. citizens on issues important to them and attempts to have political candidates address those issues. But the Argentine efforts have a different flavor. The country's second largest newspaper, *La Nación,* with its circulation of 250,000, is a leader among the media, especially in its partnership with the Solidarity Network. Indeed, the newspaper has nominated Juan Carr for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Every day, the newspaper publishes what they call Solidarity Classified Ads. Just as you might see classified ads for job openings or cars for sale in any newspaper, *La Nación* publishes 30–35 solidarity classified ads a day, identifying needs around the country—for example, a hospital that needs a certain piece of equipment. The person who can answer this need calls a number at the newspaper, and the call is transferred to a cell phone at the Solidarity Network. Julio Saguier, president of *La Nación,* says the rate of response to these ads is "very high, more than 60 percent."

Every Monday, *La Nación* publishes a Solidarity Page with three or four brief articles about needs. For example, one might read, "Juan is five years old and needs this medication;" another might describe the work of a local NGO. In *La Nación,* this page is called "Página Solidaria" (Solidarity Page). The paper's chief rival, *Clarín,* with a circulation of about 500,000, has now started a similar page called "Gente Solidaria" (Solidarity People). The Solidarity Network provides the information to both newspapers.

Every Thursday, *La Nación* publishes another column highlighting three or four needs. This column is a supplement to the "En Casa" section of the paper.

Finally, once a month, *La Nación* devotes an entire 12-page section of the Sunday newspaper to one of five big themes—(1) children at risk; (2) drug use prevention; (3) solidarity testimonies, with special attention to schools and community (see pages 85–91 below in the civic education section); (4) promotion of voluntarism; and (5) promotion of social responsibility in businesses. So, for example, in the supplement on children at risk, the

newspaper might list all the organizations that work in this field, profile some of them, and perhaps most importantly, tell newspaper readers how they can get involved.

Saguier says, "We give some testimonies, saying to the people that everybody can do something for a kid who is at risk. We show that you don't have to be a priest, or a magician, or crazy to try to help the other ones. Everybody can help his neighbor. We show people who have a huge impact in the community in which they work. So we decided that it was a good thing to do because then people will try to copy them."

Saguier says the newspaper began this work a couple of years ago when they saw a poll by the nonprofit Fundación Compromiso showing that about 87 percent of the people said they wanted to give their time, their money, or their professional help to others, but that about 82 percent of these didn't know how to do this, how to get help to the people who needed it. "We decided to create that channel," says Saguier. "We are a newspaper, so we said, 'Why don't we do it with our newspaper? Why don't we do what we do every single day?' So we created in every day's newspaper the news about this big chapter of reality—people trying to help other people who need that help."

In addition to their partnership with Red Solidaria, *La Nación* also works with *Third Sector* magazine and the NGO umbrella group Foro del Sector Social. Radio and TV stations are beginning to broadcast solidarity stories too. The effect is that when Red Solidaria gets a problem they find difficult to solve, they can resort to *La Nación* or the broadcast media to widen the search for citizen participation in a solution. Meanwhile, Poder Ciudadano's "Moments of Citizen Power" also are being aired four times a day, Monday through Friday, between regular TV programs.

Tercer Sector and Other Magazines Encouraging Involvement

Many of the exemplary efforts of the media in encouraging citizen involvement can be traced back to Alicia Cytrynblum, editor of *Third Sector* magazine. Cytrynblum also is the general editor for the *La Nación* supplements and writes a weekly

A special Sunday section of* La Nación *newspaper encourages citizen participation in the schools.

LA NACION | Buenos Aires, domingo 18 de marzo de

Escuelas solidarias

APRENDER Y BRINDARSE A LA COMUNIDAD, UN EJEMPLO PARA TODOS

ciones más allá del pizarrón: una herramienta para el cambio

Jane Kendall

Ran Coble with Alicia Cytrynblum, editor of Tercer Sector, and staff

column about NGOs for *Veintidós* magazine, an anti-establishment political weekly. She notes that magazines in Argentina were pioneers in drawing attention to citizen involvement through NGOs.[13] The business magazine *Apertura, Para Ti, Veintidós,* and the women's magazine *Luna* all feature NGO activities.

Tercer Sector magazine was first published in 1995. Cytrynblum says her father, who had worked at *Clarín* for 15 years, realized that there were no reflections of these [NGO and citizen-based] activities. With his help through his role as president of the Aviso Foundation and with the help of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Cytrynblum started *Third Sector* (the third sector is the nonprofit or NGO sector, along with the business and government sectors). At first, she says, people thought the magazine's name was "Third Sex" and that it was a gay magazine, "but gradually they caught on." In terms of citizen participation and NGOs, she says, "It's a good place to show the people how to help."

She says the bimonthly magazine is targeted both to people who work at NGOs and to the general public. For the NGO readers, there are regular departments in the magazine on fundraising, how NGOs are using the Internet, business involvement in communities, NGOs' work in various provinces, and notices of new books, seminars, scholarships, or services. *Tercer Sector* also regularly includes a four-page insert of news from the Foro del Sector Social about that organization's work to build the nonprofit sector. For the general public, there might be features on celebrities like Argentine pro golfer Eduardo "Gato" Romero and his work with charities, an article on how citizens solved a problem in their community, or an interview with an elected official who also volunteers with an NGO. The overall goal is to raise awareness of the nonprofit sector and, says Cytrynblum, to "challenge people—you can do this."

Third Sector magazine has a very professional look and has been self-supporting the last two years. It now is sold on newsstands. But there also are newcomers to the world of publications about nonprofits and citizen involvement, such as *Mundo Solidario* in Buenos Aires and *Ciudadanos* in Córdoba. *Mundo Solidario* (Solidarity World) is a 32-page newspaper about "organizations with social ends." It began in September 2000 and focuses on NGOs, the arts, health, legislation, and human rights. *Ciudadanos* (Citizens) "the magazine of civil society"—is produced by students at the Catholic University of Córdoba. The first issue was published in October 2000 with a cover story entitled "What is the Third Sector?" A later issue examined urban poverty and tax reductions and featured an interview with a local businessman

about the business and nonprofit sectors.

Apertura normally is a business magazine like *Business Week* in the United States. However, once a year, it devotes an entire issue to the nonprofit sector entitled "Enterprise and Community." Half of the profits of this issue go to Fundación Conpromiso, a nonprofit that works to improve the sector with training, evaluation, and strategic planning efforts. The 156-page October 1999 issue of *Apertura* was in Spanish and English and contained sections on companies with foundations, legal and ethical issues affecting the nonprofit sector, fundraising, profiles of pioneers in the sector, such as Conciencia, and numerous case studies of nonprofits, such as FARN, the Solidarity Network, and Fundación Cruzada Patagónica. The 204-page 2000 issue focused on the theme of social responsibility in the business sector and featured a guide to corporate giving programs, business involvement in the schools, and *La Nación's* solidarity classified ads, as well as articles on nonprofit books, courses, and tax laws.

There probably are more business magazines in the United States than in Argentina, but I don't know of a single one that devotes an entire issue each year to the nonprofit sector. And, though publications such as *The Chronicle of Philanthropy, Nonprofit World,* and *Foundation News and Commentary* all are exemplary newspapers and magazines on the nonprofit sector in the United States, the Argentine publications described above are a degree wider in their scope of coverage. *Foundation News* focuses exclusively on grantmaking foundations, and *Nonprofit World* focuses more on the nonprofits themselves. *The Chronicle* has the widest lens but still emphasizes the philanthropic side of the sector. All are written for professionals and volunteers in the field, while *Tercer Sector* also is written for the general public and assumes a more public role in encouraging citizen involvement, sponsoring public forums, making copies available for sale on newsstands, and acting in partnerships with *La Nación* newspaper and the Foro del Sector Social. This would be akin to one of the U.S. publications selling on newsstands and partnering with *The Washington Post*, Independent Sector, and the National Council of Nonprofit Associations. Finally, all U.S. publications focus almost exclusively on the United States, while *Tercer Sector* may look at citizen organizations in Ireland, Spain, or the U.S. in any given issue.[14]

An Argentine in front of the offices of the nonprofit Fundación Cruzada Patagónica in Junín de los Andes

Jane Kendall

Efforts by Argentine Governments To Encourage Citizen Participation

Because citizens are disillusioned with government and political parties, they have turned much of their energy to participation through nonprofits, but many local and regional governments are experimenting with citizen participation efforts too. One of the leaders among local governments is the City of Córdoba, the second largest city in Argentina with a population of 1.2 million. It is an auto manufacturing center, a university town, and the historical center of resistance to rule from Buenos Aires.

Government Partnerships with Nonprofits in Córdoba

La Casa del Tercer Sector (The House of the Third Sector)

In 2000, Mayor German Kammerath of Córdoba decided to ask nonprofits to help the city work on alleviating poverty. After an "open call" to all NGOs, the mayor appointed 70 NGO representatives to a Solidarity Council. He appointed Hector Morcillo, a trade union leader from the food sector, as President of the Council. The Council of NGOs then initiated four programs: (1) a human development program, which cares for 3,500 children in kindergarten while their mothers work; (2) eight day care homes for 2,500 elderly people; (3) Habitat Popular, a housing project designed to lessen the need for misery villages; and (4) a Social Promotion Office to measure the impact of the nonprofit programs and monitor their progress.

Later that year, the mayor found an abandoned house on a corner full of weeds and decided to create La Casa del Tercer Sector (The House of the Third Sector), which opened in August 2000. Inside, there are large and small meeting rooms, telephones, and computers for free use. Workshops are held on Thursday and Friday on fundraising, use of computers, and forming and dealing with nonprofit boards of directors. The house is open from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. with workshops usually held in the afternoons, and volunteers working there in the afternoons and on Saturdays. On Saturdays, the house becomes a meeting space for Boy Scouts, church groups, and other nonprofits that do not have their own meeting space.

Part of the idea for this house is to increase the capacity of the nonprofit sector, what Solidarity Council member Alberto Tandor calls their "capacitation," or training program. This program helps NGOs define their mission, decide what type of services to provide, and develop a vision of the future in a three-year strategic plan. The NGOs develop marketing and fundraising plans, of which at least 33 percent must come from the nonprofit itself, says Tandor. The NGO also has to promote the use of volunteers and have a plan of evaluation for projects. The visual symbol for the house is a picture of two hands cupped together with a bright light shining from within. The slogan reads, "We help those who help [the nonprofits]."

Solidarity Council member Silvina Brussino says there are 520 nonprofits in Córdoba province, 133 of which work on poverty. The Council produced a directory of these nonprofits and is encouraging increased professionalization of NGOs and increased volunteerism. Brussino says they also have mapped poverty in the city and found 169,502 people with "unsatisfied basic necessities."

The Bank of Social Projects

The mayor and Solidarity Council next initiated what they call a "Bank of Social Projects." Again in an open call to the community, the city invited any organization to present social projects that needed to be done in the community, and 83 institutions presented 127 projects for consideration, says Council President Morcillo. The conditions are that the NGOs have to account for the funds, 70 percent of the funds have to be spent on services, and 30 percent can be spent on administration or training—a fairly high level as government requirements go, but a level which reflects the city's commitment to increasing the capacity of the nonprofits to serve. The city then appropriated $1.5 million to the Council for allocation through the Bank of Social Projects.

Polling the Public To Decide Budget and Policy Priorities

These partnerships between the city and nonprofits of the House of the Third Sector, the Solidarity Council, and the Bank represent citizen participation in themselves, but the city has widened the net of participation to the public at large through the use of polls of the public. When each

citizen receives his tax form, at the bottom are three to five questions about possible themes the Bank of Social Projects is considering funding in that cycle. The citizen turns in his responses with the tax form. In the United States, one might see "needs assessments" of business and nonprofit leaders conducted by local United Ways or opinion polls conducted by candidates running for office. Córdoba's innovation is to ask citizens their opinions on problems that need attention in their city and then have the Solidarity Council use the answers in allocating funds to address those needs. And, in terms of enlarging the "public" in public participation, Rodrigo Agrelo, a deputy and Vice President of the Córdoba Province House of Representatives, says, "Poor people give more importance to the poll and answer it more often."

In the latest poll, the possible projects were categorized into six themes—infants and child development, street children, addictions, family violence, gender problems, and poverty and environment. Citizens were asked to choose the category they'd recommend for funding by the Bank of Social Projects. Respondents were allowed to focus on one area or prioritize their top three. This question results in a ranking of social needs and funding priorities for the Solidarity Council. In earlier polls, the council found that the categories needed to be simple and easy to understand, finding that terms like "social action" or "social capital" confused the public. Another poll question asks the citizens to evaluate the quality of services on a scale of one to ten.

Agrelo next wants to establish a Bank of Solidarity Hours, where citizens can donate hours of time volunteering on various social projects. Thus, there would be one place to go to volunteer, and NGOs could go to the bank and say, "We need two people for two hours to accompany these grandfathers and grandmothers to the grocery store or pharmacy." "It is a way to grow the social capital," he says. Agrelo and Sofanor Novillo Corvalán, who also is a provincial legislator, want to create a School of Volunteers to train people in volunteerism.

The Solidarity Action Fund

In addition to the Bank of Social Projects, the city has established a Solidarity Action Fund, funded through deductions from the salaries of legislators and municipal employees. With this additional fund of $1.8 million, the city will support "community institutions that have a strong impact," says Agrelo, such as nonprofits, civil associations in health and autism, or libraries. "We are convinced that the state alone has been inefficient. NGOs are more efficient in solving problems," he says.

Neighborhood Councils

Finally, the City of Córdoba has established Neighborhood Councils to encourage citizen participation. These councils make recommendations on priorities for infrastructure projects in their neighborhoods. The mayor has announced that part of the city's budget will be allocated to these

Rodrigo Agrelo, left, a deputy and Vice President of the Córdoba Province House of Representatives, with members of the city's Solidarity Council at La Casa del Tercer Sector and author Ran Coble

Neighborhood Councils for their infrastructure needs. Thus, the local government is giving citizens at least seven ways to participate—through Children's Councils, the Casa del Tercer Sector, the Solidarity Council, the Bank of Social Projects, polls on allocations of bank funds, the Solidarity Action Fund, and the Neighborhood Councils. It is a serious effort by local government at citizen involvement.

Involving Nonprofits in Government Inspections

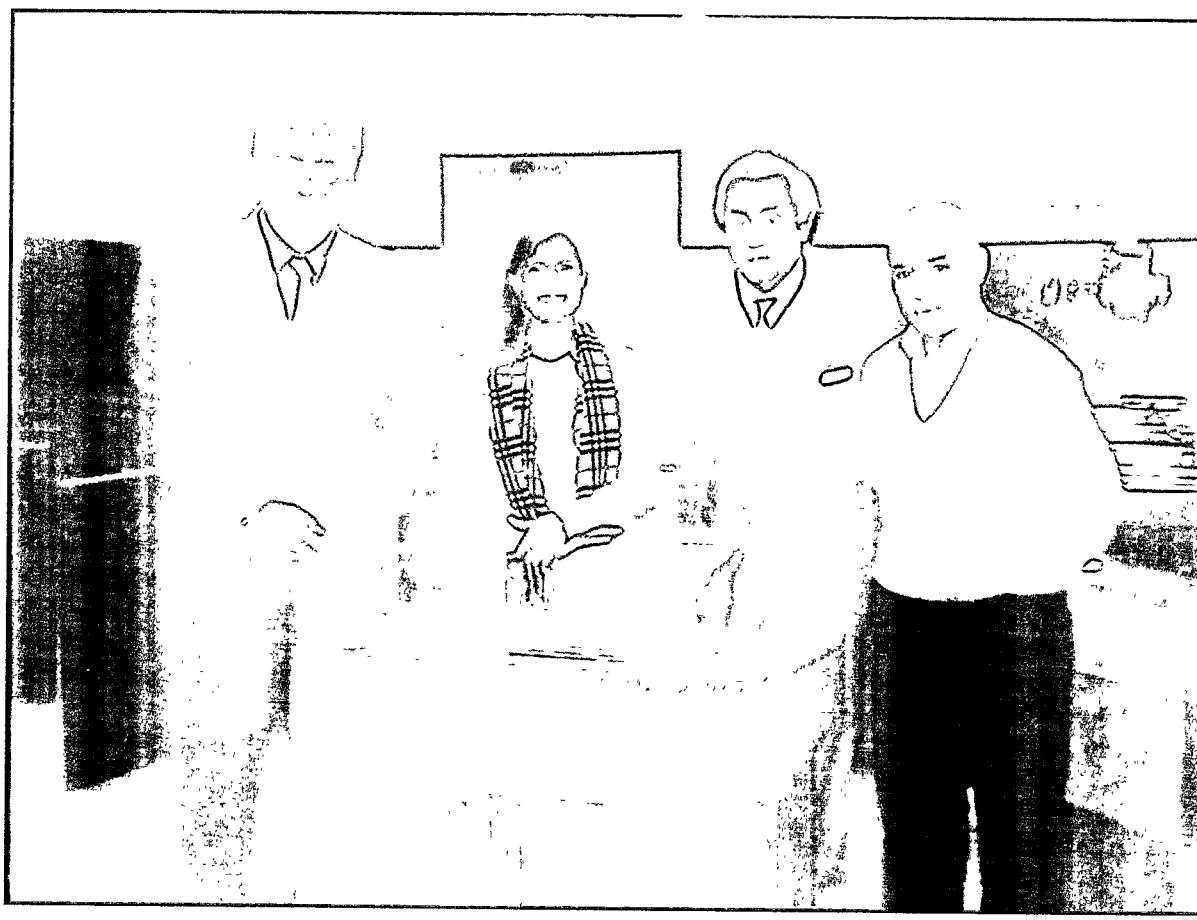
In Argentina, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are included in the government's inspections of industrial facilities for compliance with environmental regulations. To prevent corruption between inspection officials and regulated industries, the government has created a policy of inviting an NGO representative to participate as an observer during inspections.

Using a list of interested NGOs, the agency notifies one NGO at least one day in advance of an intended inspection. To ensure that the regulated industry does not have advance warning of an inspection, the NGO is informed only that an inspection will occur. It doesn't receive the name and address of the facility until the inspection team is on its way to the facility. During the inspection, the NGO can observe, but it is not directly involved in any questioning or sampling.[15] Still, this is a good tool for involving citizens in government inspections and reducing citizen suspicion of government corruption.

The 25th Chair in Mar del Plata

Symbols are important in encouraging citizen participation, and the coastal city of Mar del Plata has initiated a great symbol for welcoming citizen participation. In this beach resort town of about 600,000 residents, the city council has 24 members. But when you go to a council meeting, there is a 25th chair reserved for the Citizen of the Day. This person has a seat at the table with other council members and can participate in discussions and

Council Members around the 25th Chair in Mar Del Plata Council Chambers



Jane Kendall

bring new issues before the council. Any resident of the city can sign up to be the Citizen of the Day and sit in that 25th chair, and there is usually a waiting list of 30 to 40 at a time. Individuals sign up, as do NGO spokespersons, neighborhood groups, researchers, and others. One person came and asked for a spinal transplant. Another time, an expert in historic preservation came and talked about accepting a certain building in an historic area. "In every public session of the council, we have the 25th chair," says Council President Roberto Oscar Pagni.

Like Córdoba's mayor and city council, the four Mar del Plata council members I talked with were dissatisfied with current mechanisms of citizen participation and searching for new channels, as Councilman Ernesto Argüeso puts it. Councilwoman Graciela Liana Aronovich adds that the council has even conducted a poll of citizens on whether they would support raising taxes by 3 pesos to create funds for public works projects. In Brazil, she says, citizens participate in the preparation of city budgets and help establish priorities [and see the sections on Córdoba above and Las Condes, Chile below].

Council President Pagni also notes that the council has established a Website for the council as a whole and that each council member is accessible by email. On the council's Website are notices of meetings, contracts to be let, information on the city's finances, and links to the provincial and national government Websites.

Argentine culture is an important factor in citizen participation, say these council members. Councilman Eduardo Romanin says there is a high desire for citizen participation in Argentina. "The Argentine people like to be protagonists, to be the center of attention," he says. As he talks, a demonstration of hundreds of university students marches down the street on a Friday evening, with cheers, speeches, percussion, and music in a demonstration against rising tuition and fees at what once were free public universities.

Council President Pagni adds, "In Argentina, we have 38 million [the population of the country] Presidents, 38 million technical football [soccer] directors, and 38 million cooks. It is our national sport to give opinions. We find it hard to *do* things." Pagni notes that the act of voting itself is citizen participation, since each member of the council had to get about 25,000 to 30,000 votes every two years to win a seat on the council. "People say it's just a formality to vote, but 30,000 people had to act, so I don't think this is a formality. It is a profound act," he says.

At this level, the council members know encouraging citizen participation is not easy. One important factor is transparency, says Aronovich. Another is that citizens have to see some successes result from their participation. They have to believe "their lives will be changed in some meaningful way," says Argüeso. Romanin adds, "If you ring the bell and you obtain something, you are satisfied. But if you ring the bell and nothing happens, you stop ringing the bell and look for another way."

Civic Education: Exemplary Efforts in Argentina

"If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be . . . I know of no safe repository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion by education."

—*THOMAS JEFFERSON*

What Is Civic Education?

One way citizens become involved and engaged is through civic education. This is particularly important for youth because, to a large extent, citizen involvement is a habit that you develop when you are young.

Civic education in a democracy means different things to different people. For some in the U.S., it means gaining basic *knowledge* of democratic systems of government, the Constitution and Bill of Rights, separation of powers between branches of government, and division of responsibilities between different levels of government. For others, it means inculcating youth with *values*, ethics, attitudes, and character traits essential to a democracy, such as honesty, integrity, kindness, responsibility, and respect. Still others view civic education as development of a set of *skills* citizens need in working together and solving civic problems, such as

public speaking, listening, negotiating, resolving conflict, policy research, and planning. Finally, some see civic education as actual *practice* in the duties of citizenship, such as voting, answering the census, serving on juries, giving to charity, volunteering, writing elected officials, or even running for office. And of course there are those who see civic education as all of the above, such as the N.C. Civic Education Consortium at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Institute of Government.

In 2001, the North Carolina General Assembly considered this issue, and enacted a law called the Student Citizenship Act. The legislature encouraged the State Board of Education to include the following in all high schools' civic and citizenship education curricula:

"a. That students write to a local, State, or federal elected official about an issue that is important to them;
b. Instruction on the importance of voting and otherwise participating in the democratic process;
c. Information about current events and governmental structure; and
d. Information about the democratic process and how laws are made."[16]

At the international level, the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement evaluated 90,000 14-year-olds in 28 countries on their civic knowledge, engagement, and attitudes. The Netherlands-based organization measured:

"■ students' knowledge of democratic principles;
■ their skills in interpreting political communication, such as campaign leaflets and political cartoons;
■ their concepts of democracy and citizenship;
■ their attitudes related to trust in institutions, the nation's opportunities for immigrants, and women's political rights; and
■ their expected participation in civic-related activities."[17]

The United States ranked only sixth among the 28 nations studied. The new democracy of Poland ranked first, and other new democracies such as the Czech Republic and Slovakia also were among the top ten. The only two South American countries studied, Chile and Colombia, finished in the bottom two spots.

Over the last 20 years, the educational system in the United States has focused on increasing

A normal day of demonstrations in the streets near the Pink House and offices of the Argentine President

Ran Coble

accountability on educational achievement. With the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education said there was "a rising tide of mediocrity" in American schools and that our children were falling behind their peers in other developed nations and would not be prepared to lead the U.S. economy or government in the years ahead.[18] This report sparked educational reform efforts in virtually every state, with increased testing of students and renewed emphasis being given to reading, writing, math, and science. The unintended consequence has been that civic education has suffered. It is not considered vital to a child's success in work or in higher education, though it is vital to the success of democracy.

In addition, I believe that one of the United States' great weaknesses is the inability of our people to conceive how people in another country might view our actions or motives. What is exemplary about much of Argentina's work in civic education is the recurrent theme of learning how to see public issues and the world through others' eyes. The other recurring theme is the value for service to others and sense of solidarity that pervades the Argentine civic education programs. You may find examples of similar programs in the United States, but they do not always receive the commitment of time and resources that they need to succeed. The range of the efforts in Argentina is impressive, and the commitment of the people is strong. This bodes well for Argentina's civic future.

Exemplary Programs in Civic Education in Argentina

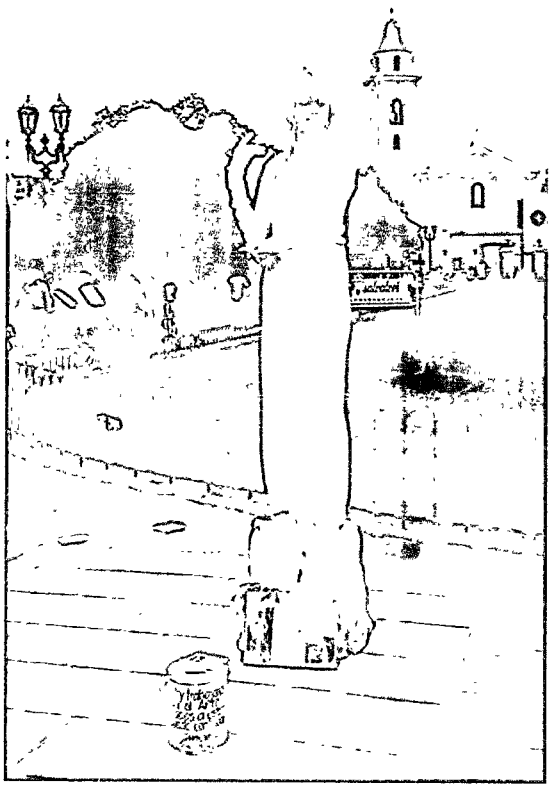
Conciencia's Programs in Schools, Educating Students in Values, the Model UN, Federalism, and Public Budgets

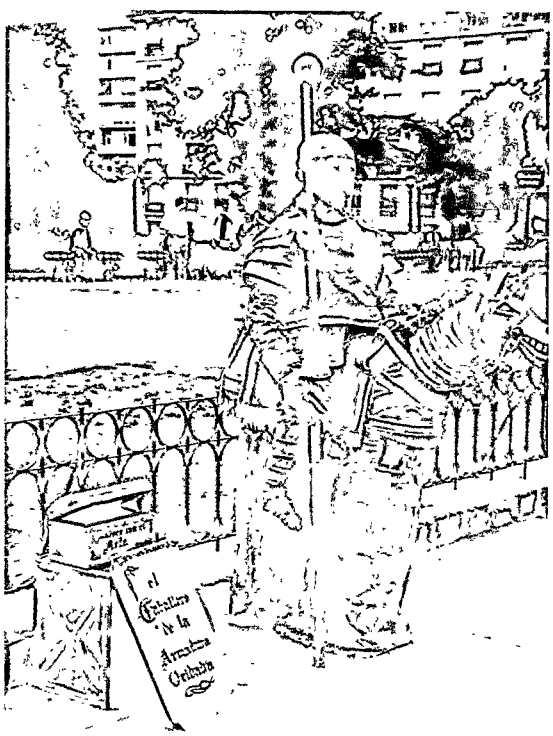
In addition to the Project Citizen program designed to foster citizen participation among youth (see page 66 above), Conciencia also offers five exemplary civic education programs. The students in these programs consistently learn to see public issues through the eyes of others—whether through the eyes of someone from another economic background, in another school, with different values, in another country, or at another level of government.

The Schools Program—In its Programa Colegios, or Schools Program, Conciencia chooses five public schools and five private schools, and two teachers, two students, and one parent in each school to discuss the subject of leadership in a democracy. Conciencia's first vice-president, Dora Larese Roja de Scacciati, says, "The public schools in Argentina are very, very poor, and they lack everything. On the other side, many of the private schools are very rich, and they have every single element they need." "But," she continues, "the students of the public schools have more experience in life than the pupils from the private schools, so it was a very good exchange. Suddenly, the students from the private schools learned how you can live with this amount of money, with no television, with no computers, with no cellular [phones]. Generally, the private schools were the hosts . . . so the students of the public schools could see what existed. . . . They learned what they could achieve if they decided to study and go on the side of education."

Educating Students in Values—From this beginning, Conciencia started a program called Educating Students in Values because, Scacciati says, "Everybody began to be very sure of what democracy was. If you ask the students at the schools what democracy is, they would be able to recite some wonderful paragraph from the constitution. But seeing how they acted, you realized they knew very little about conduct, about how to behave in a democracy—that democracy was not only a word and was not only free elections. And so we decided that what we need is ways of being, values, attitudes." Scacciati adds, "It was so hard to go through [Argentina's] different military processes, then when the military processes end, the population decides they only have rights, and it's very difficult to make them understand they also have responsibilities. Because it's like a pendulum, you know, they decide, 'No, now it's my turn,' and it takes a very long time to come back. So we decided to push this pendulum a bit through a different program."

The Model United Nations Assembly Program—From here, Conciencia began to institute interactive programs to counter what Scacciati says is an authoritarian streak in the Argentine people. "And this, you can see a lot with the teachers. The teachers want their pupils to believe in what they believe," she says. Conciencia's Model United Nations Program helps students "discover they can think by themselves. They discover they





Jane Kendall

Living statues that move for money in the streets of Buenos Aries

can speak by themselves. They can say what they want to say."

In the UN Program, each school learns about the history, culture, values, and views of another country—not of Argentina—and learns to represent and defend the point of view of that other country on such issues as immigration, the environment, or women's rights.

Scacciati says, "The result sought, aside from turning them [the students] into good citizens and future political leaders, is that they enter the globalized world. All this yields results, because one day in the future their country will benefit from it."[19]

At this point, two students who volunteer at Conciencia enter the room, and I ask Mauricio, 20, what the Model UN Program meant to him. "Everything," he replies. He goes on to explain how one year he represented France with its liberal view of women's rights, and in the next model, represented Iran with its more conservative view. "I have a new vision of what the world is and what the world means," he says.

In a national competition last year, 15,000 high school students participated in Conciencia's UN program. The winning school was a Jewish school that represented Libya. After the events of September 11, 2001, I believe this kind of civic education is going to be increasingly important in helping all of us see and understand things from the perspective of other countries and other cultures.

The Federalism Program—In Conciencia's Federalism Program, university students represent different provinces instead of different countries. Instead of role-playing as ambassadors, they act as provincial governors. Argentina is almost as long as the United States is wide, and the difference between the poor regions of the northwest and the wealthy areas of Olivos outside Buenos Aires or Bariloche in the south is wide—akin to contrasting Mississippi and California in the United States. In this program, the students debate issues affecting the whole country, such as economic development or education, but from the perspective of a province not their own.

Until recently, North Carolina had a Youth Legislative Assembly program like this, but students represented their home county among the state's 100 counties. This may have helped make our students prouder of their roots and stronger advocates for their region, but the Argentine process helps students see issues from another region's perspective. The North Carolina program fell victim to budget cuts brought on by the state's fiscal difficulties, though some individual schools operate programs on their own.

The Public Budget Program—In Conciencia's Public Budget Program, students learn "how to get involved in the public budget," says Andrea, the other Conciencia student volunteer. Participants choose among different projects in education, Social Security, health, or economic development, and evaluate public expenditures in those areas. They go to the legislature and "spend time trying to find out what they do with the money."

"Our basic and fundamental idea is to create a good citizen who will behave as such. That is what is missing in our country," says Scacciati. "That is why our programs focus more on people acquiring skills than on the actual subject of the programs. . . ."[20]

The Ministry of Education's Program of Civic Education

During the years of rule by the military, the name of the subject of civic education in schools was changed to Moral and Civic Education, with an emphasis on traditional family values and support for institutions like the military and Catholic Church. "I was a civic education teacher then, but I was teaching science fiction," says Nieves Tapia, now general coordinator for the National Program for School and Community in Argentina's Ministry of Education. "I was teaching what it would be like if we had a Congress, an independent judiciary, and free speech."

Today, the Argentine civic education curriculum combines two important elements—an Ethics and Citizen Formation Program and a Service-Learning Program. It is this combination of theory and practice, of reflection and doing, and of values and service to the community that I think is worth learning from.

The Ministry's Program of Ethics and Citizen Formation

Laura Clérico works in the Ministry's program of Ethics and Citizen Formation. She says the curriculum is designed to present ethical dilemmas and then help the students reflect on the consequences. Formerly, the curriculum simply transmitted what the law said—the military law—and there was no room for students to think. "It was impossible to

teach in a system which doesn't allow alternatives," she says.

Now, it is very important to teach ethics "in dialogue, to recognize the other," she continues. "The school provides a lot of opportunities—for example, when conflict appears on the playground—and we use this as an opportunity to learn."

The ministry's program description says that its goals are to:

- form citizens able to participate in a pluralistic and democratic society;
- form autonomous, critical, and reflective persons able to make their own decisions and able to develop their own life plans;
- promote dialogue, "argumentation," and participation; and
- give students the tools to make their own decisions and to elaborate moral and political judgments.[21] This may include human rights education, environmental education, or consumer education.

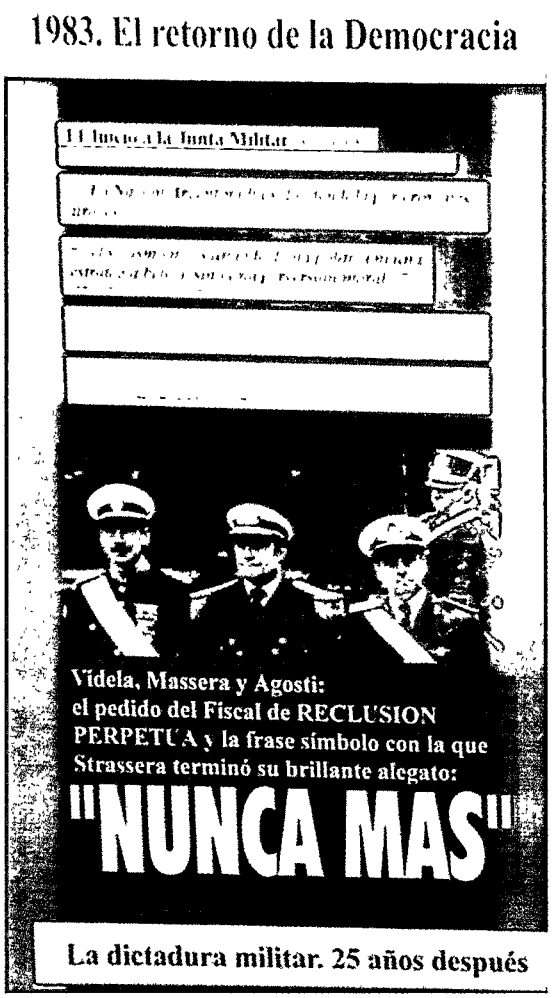
I ask Clérico if there is an event or story that captures the tenor of civic education in Argentina. She thinks a minute and then proposes that we look at what the students produced in an exhibition on human rights held in March 2001. She opens five scrapbooks of posters, poems, photographs, drawings, and song lyrics depicting how the students viewed human rights under "the last military dictatorship." One poster reads, "Censorship was like a wall in our minds" over a picture of bricks in a wall. Another collage asks, "Who were the guilty?" One poem ends with "No Olvidar" (don't forget) in big letters, while another uses native rock singer Charly García's lyrics in "Alice in Wonderland" as a metaphor for Argentina. "Alice comes here and cannot understand the lack of a rational world," explains Clérico. Another more upbeat poem asks, "Why do we sing?" and answers that Argentines sing in relation to their history and to keep the memory alive. "To keep these things in our memory is very important," says Clérico as she gives me a copy of *Nunca Màs* (Never Again), the 1984 report of a national commission which investigated the disappearance of thousands of Argentine citizens during the Dirty War. *Nunca Más* and a picture of the generals is depicted in one student's poster behind her.

A student poster addresses the return of democracy to Argentina in 1983.

The Ministry's School and Community Service-Learning Program

"Any sports coach will tell you that it is impossible to teach how to play football, baseball, or any game just sitting in a classroom. Even if you teach the rules, the students will not learn how to play. For years, we have been trying to teach young people to be good citizens giving them only the rules to be followed. Asking students to learn by heart the Preamble of our Constitution did not prevent us from having decades of military governments. In giving young students the opportunity to serve their communities in a real, concrete way, we provide them with a unique occasion to be 'in the field' and learn how to do what needs to be done. Thus, we encourage them to act as good citizens now, not only to be 'a promise for the future.'"[22]

—School and Community Program, Argentina Ministry of Education



Ran Coble

Nieves Tapia, general coordinator for the School and Community Program in Argentina's Ministry of Education, says service-learning helps young people improve their learning and be better persons and active citizens. As defined by the Ministry, "student community service is service-learning only when:

- Activities are planned to provide valuable service and formal learning that can be evaluated;
- Service activities . . . are clearly connected with curriculum contents; and
- Young people provide real answers to real needs—service has been requested by recipients."[23]

The school is one of the most important places to form the habit of citizenship, says Tapia. And, the Argentine public has more confidence in public schools as solvers of social problems than any institution other than the Catholic Church. In a September 1998 Gallup poll, 56 percent of the public expressed "a lot of confidence" or "enough confidence" in the public schools as problem-solvers—ahead of state universities, the army, municipalities, small businesses, the federal government, unions, and political parties. Only four groups held the confidence of the majority of a cynical public. By 2001, Gallup Argentina polls showed schools leading (at 63 percent) all other institutions—including the Catholic Church—in the public's confidence in ability to solve social problems.[24]

At least one-tenth of Argentina's 37,000 schools have service-learning programs. In 2000, the country began giving a Presidential Award to honor schools for actual work done in the community, and 3,003 schools nominated Solidarity Projects for the award. The three first-prize winners receive $5,000 each, a computer for the school, and training scholarships for teachers and students. Seven schools receive honorable mention awards of $2,000, a computer, and scholarships.

One of the prize winners was in a small town in Santa Fe province called Ramona, where eighth graders in a chemistry class saw a video about water pollution and decided to test their city's water supply to find out what chemicals were in its water. To their surprise, they found arsenic. They decided to go tell the city council and found out that the council had known about the problem for 10 years but hadn't done anything because they didn't want to raise taxes. So the students went public with the news and started advocating for clean water. By the time the students were in the 12th grade, the city council had built a new water system. And, together with a local hospital and two national universities, the council organized a health prevention plan and a treatment program for people with arsenic poisoning.

Ran Coble

Nieves Tapia, front, at the Ministry of Education

Another prize went to a group of five-year-olds in a kindergarten in Neuquén. The children were worried about the lack of trees in the arid area and decided that each time a baby was born in the local hospital, they would give the family a tree to plant in the family's garden. When former President Fernando de la Rua, a grandfather himself, presented the award to the kindergarten, two little girls gave him a tree to plant too.

The discussion of Red Solidaria above (see pages 70–74) shows how important the concept of solidarity is to Argentines' success in citizen involvement efforts. But it is also important in their

service-learning efforts. Magdalena Lanús, who works in service-learning training in the Ministry says, "Solidarity is a very big value, it is a way of working with others." She says they work with 588 NGOs but won't work with just any NGO. The NGO has to be transparent to the public and respect the school. Solidarity is not charity, she says. For example, a food bank that only gives away food and doesn't develop a long-term relationship would not qualify to work with the program. Nor would an NGO that appears briefly in a community. "It is not a one-time relationship," she says. "It's a way of facing life." In launching the national awards, President de la Rua said, "Teaching the principles of solidarity is an essential component of education."

This cultural value for solidarity among the Argentine people is a contrast with values sometimes expressed in schools in the United States, such as multiculturism. The late Albert Shanker, former president of the American Federation of Teachers, says multiculturism is dangerous for a democratic multi-ethnic society because it encourages people "to think of themselves not as individuals, but primarily in terms of their membership in groups." By focusing on differences instead of common ground, Shanker said, this kind of education does not increase tolerance; instead, it feeds racial and ethnic tensions and erodes civil society, which requires a sense of the common good, a recognition that we are all members of the human race.[25]

* * *

Bariloche is 1,000 miles southwest of Buenos Aires, a beautiful town with a lake in front and mountains that rise behind. Its ski resorts, alpine chalets, and chocolate shops give it the feel of Switzerland, but it is also home to two exemplary service-learning projects—one at a school for well-to-do students and the other at a very poor school.

Woodville School is located on the slope of Mount Otto and has about 520 students of mostly middle and upper class origins, from kindergarten through high school. It is a bilingual school teaching Spanish and English. In a resort community with many foreign visitors, it is noteworthy that the school offers its knowledge of English as a resource to the community (called English for Everyone) through teaching, translations, and training.

I visited the school, however, because of its work in sponsoring community forums on a variety of issues. In 1999 and 2000, Woodville School hosted forums on drugs and addictions and encouraged the different generations to talk in an atmosphere of openness and honesty. "When the kids are talking about themselves or their friends using drugs, what they're living through, well, you get it in the raw," says Edward Shaw, a naturalist, biologist, and teacher at Woodville. "But I never cease to be amazed at the capacity of adolescents to identify issues, speak eloquently, and come up with solutions. We underestimate the role of children." In June 2001, I attended a forum with about 70 people who gave up a Saturday to discuss issues in sustainable development, an important issue in a resort town about to be overwhelmed by tourist industry growth. Clearly relishing the dialogue, Shaw says, "You know the saying, wherever there are two Argentines, there are three opinions."

Jane Kendall

Woodville School headmaster Stephen Cohen

School headmaster Stephen Cohen sees the forums as vehicles for citizen participation. Argentines had been afraid to participate in the 1970s, but the return to democracy "opened the floodgates," he says. Now there is a lot bubbling up beneath the surface, and he wants to use the forums as a way to connect the school to the community and to talk about local problems. The next forum topic is tourism, where they hope to link students with economic developers, travel agents, waiters in restaurants, and hotel workers.

High above downtown Bariloche are misery villages in a very poor barrio. The roads are rutted and unpaved, the houses have tin roofs or siding,

and the few cars look like they might have made their last run. Eight or nine people might live in one house, and young girls have children as early as age 13 or 14. In this setting sits one of the Presidential Service-Learning Award-winning schools, Taller de Capacitación Integral Enrique Angelleli.

"The view of this area in town was that it was an area of drugs and robbery. There was a culture of begging, and this is not good for a person," says Gustavo Gennuso, director of the school. So in 1996, Gennuso and a group of students discussed the problems facing the area and whether they had anything to contribute to others. They decided that even though they were poor, they still had something to give. So they voted on who they wanted to help and decided on the old people—"the ancients" as they call them.

At first, the old people were suspicious of the youths—thinking they wanted to rob them. But gradually the youths gained their trust by fixing holes in the roofs, repairing broken windows, splitting wood for fires, and running errands to the grocery store. The youth made visits and "took data on which houses didn't have windows with glass and where there was a hole in the roof," says Gennuso. "Our work is to educate, so this is important. They ask the ancients what they needed, and the ancient gets to speak."

"No one is so rich that he does not need another's help, no one so poor as not to be useful in some way to his fellow man."

—POPE LEO XIII

They made decisions on what to do. The male carpentry students repaired the roofs and floors and made beds, tables, and furniture. The female students repaired ancients' clothes. The social sciences students surveyed who was eligible for government pensions. The language students taught elders how to write government agencies or the electric power company. Now the relationship is so close that the ancients call themselves the grandparents of these kids.

When the school won the national second prize, three students and two teachers flew to the capital for the ceremony. It was the students' first flight ever. One of the students, 18-year-old Ana Pereira, said, "Before, I couldn't speak. My mama would send me to borrow a cup of sugar, and I would take half an hour to gather my strength and knock on the door of my neighbor. Now I am going to the Municipality to ask for electric light for

A public forum at Woodville

Jane Kendall

Jane Kendall

Children at Angelleli school in Bariloche

the grandparents." When Pereira and the others finished their presentation before a crowd of 400 in Buenos Aires, the students who won third prize voted to give their $5,000 in prize money to the Angelleli school. The first prize winners said they were too moved by the presentation of the impoverished students to speak. When the students returned to Bariloche, the ancients and other students met them cheering at the airport. "This prize was very good," says Gennuso, "because now the other students want to participate."

Some of the ancients since have died, and this is hard for the children, he says, because there is no public funeral service and no money for plots in a cemetery. So the youth have decided they want to write a history of the ancients to make the point that even the life of an ancient in this poor place has value. The students also dream of building a garden and a Day House for the Grandparents where they can come three to five hours a day and be with the children.

The slogan for the Angelleli project is, "No one is so poor that he doesn't have anything to give." Or in Ana Pereira's words, "At first, the grandparents would hardly open their doors to us. After a year, they permitted us to enter and fed us mate.[26] If you ask them now, they will tell you that I am one granddaughter more."[27]

* * *

On the eastern side of Argentina, opposite Bariloche but still 600 miles south of Buenos Aires, lies the river city of Viedma, site of another service-learning success. Ethel di Leo, a history teacher, began the school year with a group of students who were repeating the course for the second or third time. The students were aggressive, and police had been called several times. The students viewed themselves as "not having the brains" to do the work and envisioned their futures as domestic servants or loading bags of onions at local farms. Discussing Christopher Columbus or the Renaissance in a history class was a waste of time.[28]

However, di Leo picked up on student comments that "while we are here at school, there are kids in the neighborhood that go hungry." She suggested they present a project to set up a bakery in the neighboring primary school, which many of them had attended, so that children there would

have something to eat. After some debate, the students decided to request funds and began to hold meetings to choose a name ("Youth in Progress"), design a logo, and organize a search for donations.

With the help of their teachers, the students wrote up the project description, objectives, schedule, and even a budget that included computations of the value-added tax. They also decided on work criteria, including a requirement that missing more than one meeting would exclude the absentee from the project.

The enthusiasm for the project carried over into the classroom, and the history course now includes a section called "Getting To Know Our Province" of Río Negro. As with the bakery project, the students wrote up a statement of objectives, conducted interviews, and drew up an itinerary which concluded with a visit to the Valley of the Río Negro (Black River).

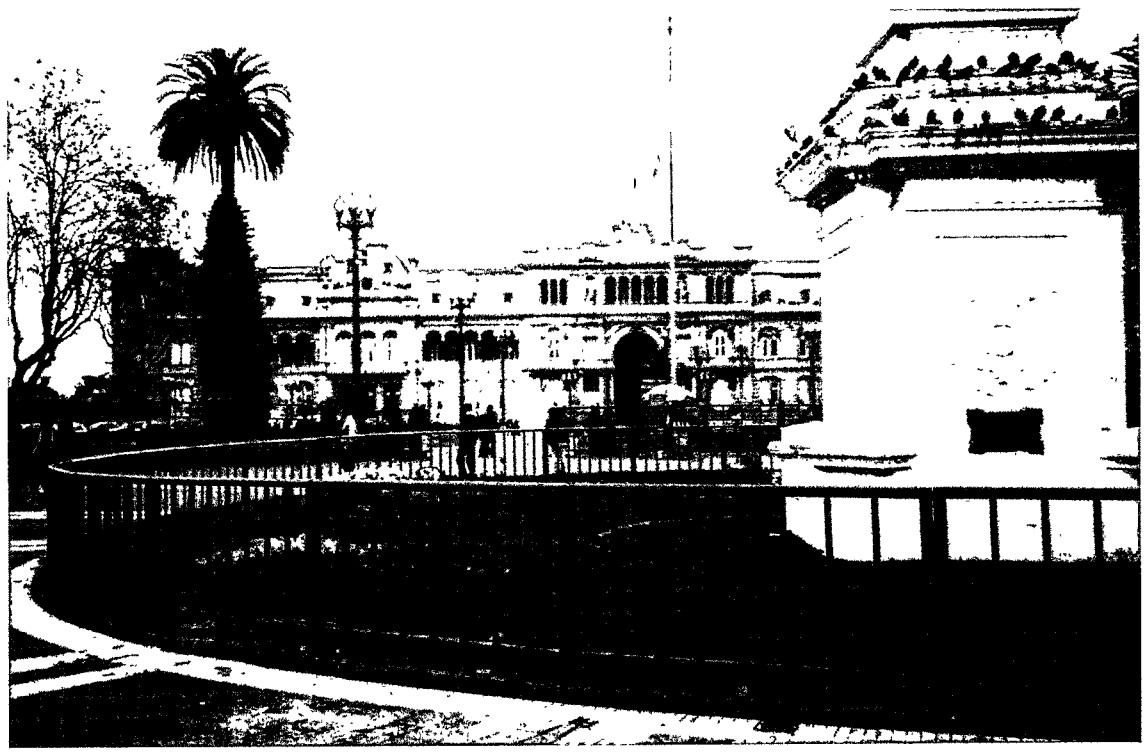
By the end of the school year, the violence and misconduct had disappeared, but funds for the bakery had not appeared. Still, the students helped one another study for exams, and all but one made it into the next grade.

Then they were notified that funds had been earmarked for their project in a competition with other projects from the entire country. The $4,800 award was used to buy bakery equipment. One student received training to become a baker, and others helped organize and manage the bakery. The Solidarity Bakery opened on November 26, 1998, and the children at the primary school now can take home bread every day for their own families or exchange it for flour with other deprived families. The group of students who had been dangerously close to appearing in the "crimes" section of the newspaper instead were featured as donors of bread at their new bakery. As the Ministry of Education write-up puts it, "Service learning can turn out to be an exceptional opportunity to experience one's own capacity to transform reality."[29]

* * *

I think service learning is the link between civic education and citizen participation. It solves three important problems in turning the young into good citizens: (1) it helps develop good civic habits while students are young; (2) it helps students see that they can make a difference in the world; and (3) it helps students make the connection between private experience and public policy and gets them involved in the public sphere. The combination of *learning* and *serving* is a great example of civic education that prepares youth for a lifetime of active citizenship.

The Pink House Presidential Palace is the site of many civic demonstrations.



Ran Coble

Efforts in Citizen Participation and Civic Education by Chile's Nonprofits and NGO Sector

"It is a territory so small that on the map it ends up seeming like a beach between cordillera and sea, a parenthesis of space whimsically situated between two centaur-like powers. . . ."

"The land is reduced, inferior to the spirit of its people."

"Praised be the national spirit that allows cooperation in our sacred task of forming the eternal vertebrae of a nation, without hate. . . ."

—FROM "CHILE" BY GABRIELA MISTRAL[30]

PARTICIPA (Participation)

It seems fitting that a description of efforts in citizen participation and civic education in Chile should begin with the group called Participa. The group's history also illustrates how successful citizen participation and civic education efforts change with the needs of the people. Participa's efforts began with the 1988 plebiscite on whether to grant General Augusto Pinochet another eight years in power. Participa's executive director, Monica Jiménez, served as a member of the Committee for Free and Fair Elections, whose task was "to develop confidence in the people in their power." At the beginning of the campaign, only 3 million people were registered to vote. After the committee recruited 7,000 volunteers and worked in 168 municipalities in Chile, 8 million registered to vote, and on October 5, 1988, a 54 percent majority voted "No" to Pinochet, thereby putting Chile on the path back to democracy.

After this, Jiménez thought she would return to her job as dean of the school of social work at Catholic University, but she saw that people were afraid because Pinochet still was head of the Army. So she remained at Participa and began organizing public forums across the country in advance of the Presidential and Congressional elections. Using the biggest theater in each town, Participa organized public forums with candidates from all political parties. They developed materials to explain what democracy is, the duties and rights of citizens in a democracy, and the difference between authoritarian and democratic governments. "We don't use this as much today," she says. "It's so basic."

When newly elected President Patricio Aylwin took office in March 1990, he asked Jiménez to serve on the National Commission for Truth and Reconciliation, and that occupied her for a year. Then Participa began working with teachers of history and civics to produce a textbook on civic education. They produced a television program aired on Saturdays and Sundays called "How To Live in a Democracy." And, they began directing their efforts toward groups with lower levels of civic involvement, targeting youth and women in particular.

Participa next initiated an effort to help get women into politics with a School for Women's Leadership. They invited all the political parties to send their best women. With youth, they recognized that young people like to play games, so they developed Monopoly-style board games. One game teaches about the three branches of government. In another, the players decide on a public issue to discuss beforehand—for example, drug policy. Then a player rolls the dice, moves three spaces, and may land on a picture of a policeman. "What would the policeman think about drug policy?" the other players ask. Then someone else rolls the dice, moves five spaces, and lands on a picture of a coca farmer. "What would the coca farmer think about drug policy?" The game is a wonderful way to talk about public issues and to help youth develop an appreciation for the viewpoints of others, a key part of civic education and a key skill in a democracy.

As a decade of restored democracy came to an end, Jiménez says the people at Participa noticed a change in citizen behavior and attitudes. "They don't like to participate in politics any more," she says. "They prefer to participate in organizations that are closer to their families and organizations that resolve some problem they have." For example, the citizens have moved to participation in religious, environmental, and human rights organizations. "They don't realize that this is politics too," she laughs.

Participa now is working on three new projects to meet the citizens where they are. The first project recognizes that the federal government is now more receptive to citizen participation and has rules to encourage participation in such areas as the environment. So Participa has developed a manual for citizen participation. They invite all the actors on a public issue to general meetings, which draw 100 to 250 people, says Jiménez. The question might be the garbage of the city, and the participants may include the political authorities, the neighborhood, environmentalists, the garbage collectors, and the owners of the trucks that collect the garbage. Sometimes in groups with like interests, sometimes in mixed groups, the people talk for two days and try to reach consensus on what to do.

A second project, "Aprender" (To Learn), is located in one of the poorest neighborhoods in Santiago. Aprender has collaborated with a home-builder and local entrepreneur to build a new high school and works with students from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., as well as with parents and adults in the afternoons and on Saturdays.

Participa's executive director, Monica Jiménez

Ran Coble

In a third project, The University Builds the Country, Participa is working to expand the concept of social responsibility in Chile's universities. Jiménez says this project came about when she noticed that as the universities began to receive less government money, many of the teachers and students were forgetting their social responsibilities. "Because they're not receiving their education free anymore, they believe they don't have any responsibility to society," she says. "But people who receive more should give more," she says, alluding to the Bibical parable of the talents. She meets with university leaders and students in Santiago and Temuco in the south and asks them what the universities can do for the country in five areas—the social, economic, political, cultural, and environmental dimensions. Universities in North Carolina and the United States could learn much from this call to public service.

Participa's slogans for its various programs—"You Can Build The Country," "You Can Change the Society"—are designed to use language to build realities, says Jiménez. "Anything you dream or verbalize, you can do," she says. Its logo of people joining hands in an arc around a yellow globe or sun represents the idea that when citizens join together, "one by one, people start believing they can make the difference."

Hogar de Cristo (Home of Christ)

Chile is a heavily Catholic country (77 percent), so it is natural to look for examples of citizen participation in the religious part of its nonprofit sector as well. Hogar de Cristo (Home of Christ) was founded in 1944 by Padre Alberto Hurtado. Hurtado published a highly controversial book called *Is Chile a Catholic Country?*, which asked how such poverty and educational and health problems could exist in a truly religious country. Hogar de Cristo is an NGO separate from the Catholic Church. Its mission is to serve the poorest of the poor in their own environment. It operates more than 600 centers serving 22,000 people a day throughout Chile, Peru, and Ecuador. Hogar de Cristo has programs in health, housing, and personal assistance (food, medicine, clothes) and provides services to children, orphans, at-risk youth, drug addicts, people with disabilities, and the elderly. It operates mobile health clinics, as well as night shelters for the homeless in Chile. More and more, the organization is conducting research on social problems and trying to influence public policy. It has spun off new NGOs, including the

Chilean Eisenhower Fellow Cesar Vicuña (left), with Hogar de Cristo's Benito Baranda, Paulo Egenau, and Ran Coble

Chilean Foundation for the Solution of Poverty, which makes systematic studies of poverty and made proposals to the government in 14 different areas.

Social Director Benito Baranda and Coordinator of the Social Risk Area, Paulo Egenau, say there are three levels of citizen participation in Hogar de Cristo. At the first level, Hogar de Cristo works for "participation by the poor in their own solutions." In a local slum in Santiago, the group works in organizing 1,000–2,000 people, saying, "You have something to say here," and "then they take control," says Egenau. At the second level is public involvement, such as the donations of money, the ads donated by a public relations company, and research time contributed by local universities. Though the average gift is only $3–4 a month, public donations total about 55 percent of Hogar de Cristo's $35 million budget. At the third level are the volunteers who give their time and ideas. For example, a doctor donates the first two hours of his work day each Monday to treat the sick, and the idea for the mobile health clinics came from a volunteer.

Volunteer Coordinator Veronica Monroy oversees a network of 5,000 volunteers for Hogar de Cristo in Chile, 2,000 in Santiago alone. Monroy outlines three functions served by the volunteers. First, they do service work, such as helping build small wooden box shelters. Second, volunteers promote the concept of solidarity among the Chilean people—"we're trying to draw out the positive, the integrity, the dignity of people when volunteering." Third, the volunteers are educating the public about what Hogar de Cristo is doing, about the reality of poverty, and about the responsibility of all Chileans to deal with this poverty.

Monroy started as a volunteer herself. After volunteering as a university student, she moved further south in Chile and founded a *filial*, or affiliate, again as a volunteer. She had another job as a social worker but kept volunteering so much that Hogar de Cristo finally asked her to take a full-time position. "I believe in my heart in volunteering—in my heart," she emphasizes. "I saw the immense potential. It makes a great difference in the volunteers' lives too. It has an effect on the people and things that surround that volunteer. We are all stones thrown into the pool of water."[31]

FORJA (Forge)

Two of the biggest barriers to citizen participation are lack of access to government informa-

tion and citizens' belief that government officials are corrupt and therefore that citizen participation will not make a difference. Chile's Forja, an acronym for Formación Jurídica para la Acción (Legal Formation for Action, with the acronym translating as Forge) is a nonprofit that works to lower both of these barriers.

Forja is the Chilean chapter of Transparency International, which has national chapters in 75 countries around the world, including 14 in Latin America. Poder Ciudadano, for example (discussed above on pages 61–64), is the Argentina chapter. The Chilean group has three areas of action—(1) access to justice, (2) citizen actions for the public interest, and (3) transparency and probity in acting honestly with public funds. Forja's president, Sebastian Cox, defines citizen participation as "the chance to be there and the chance to influence decisions." Thus, the group's program in access to justice is designed to educate citizens about their rights—civil, economic, cultural, and environmental—and not just to know these rights but to exercise them. To this end, they have created what they call "juridical extension committees" in 30 of Chile's 342 municipalities, training 360 local leaders in how to help people exercise their rights. They also are involved in creating civil associations that inform the poor and homeless of their civil rights. One municipality said these associations were illegal but lost the case to Forja. And, the group has a project which advocates for the use of conflict resolution as an alternative to gaining access to Chile's congested courts.

The second area of action for Forja involves citizen actions for the public interest. Here, the group looks for responsibilities of the government under laws that aren't being fulfilled. For example, an appellate court had ordered a cell phone company to stop building antennas near private homes because of the microwave danger to people's health. When the company did not comply, Forja organized 200 people into a neighborhood committee, supplied the lawyers, and helped develop a communications strategy to enforce the court's injunction. Forja and the neighborhood committee also were successful in getting the municipality to enact an ordinance regulating the antennas. In another case, Forja worked with a community to close an unauthorized landfill and look for an alternative site for the garbage.

The third area of action is the best known—that of encouraging openness, or transparency, in government and preventing corruption. Since 1995, Transparency International has published an international Corruption Perceptions Index, which measures perceived levels of corruption among public officials. The index is based on 14 surveys from 10 independent sources (such as the World Bank and PricewaterhouseCoopers) of elected officials, businesspeople, foreign investors, and academics. Typically, those surveyed are asked, "Do you know of any case of corruption?" In the 2001

Javier, Andrea Fernandez, and Sebastian Cox of Forja, with the author

Fernando Rojas

rankings of 91 countries, Finland and Denmark were ranked as least corrupt, with the United States tied for 16th, Chile close behind and tied for 18th, and Argentina more than halfway down and tied with China at 57th. The most corrupt nations were Bangladesh (the worst), Nigeria, Uganda, and Indonesia.[32]

In Chile, Forja is working with both the private sector and with government to reduce corruption. Business is seen as a key partner in the fight against public corruption (because bribes and payoffs add to the cost of doing business and undermine the efficacy of legal contracts), so Forja is working with business to adapt Chilean law to the Inter-American Convention Against Corruption. This convention includes both criminal sanctions and preventive measures, including criminalization of offenses such as illicit enrichment, cooperation among nations on investigations and judicial proceedings, and extradition.

Forja also has worked with business and government to diagnose what it calls "areas at future risk of corruption." It convened a group familiar with 14 areas of government activity and came up with procedures that would prevent the likelihood of corruption when hiring people, purchasing materials, putting government contracts out for bid, and so forth. This is important in countries like Chile and Argentina, where the transition back to democracy from authoritarianism carries opportunities for mischief. As Transparency International's Kamal Hossain says, "Experience shows that there is an increase in opportunities for corruption during the process of transition. Many strategic decisions still need to be taken by the state with regard to the pace of privatization and deregulation. Opportunities to grant favors abound involving grants of licenses, grants of valuable public land and natural resources, and the award of mega-projects to private investors, domestic and foreign, in areas previously reserved to the public sector such as power, telecommunications, transportation, and physical infrastructure. . . . What then emerges is a 'free for all.'"[33]

In the States, our main tools in helping citizens gain access to information are sunshine laws—open meetings and public records laws. Open meetings laws allow citizens to attend meetings by elected officials and other government bodies, while public records laws give citizens the right to copies of government documents, records, and reports. The national Freedom of Information Act is an example of such a law, and almost all 50 states have enacted such laws too. Our only tool in combating perceptions of corruption usually has been criminal prosecution in the courts, so Forja's work in identifying situations of risk and developing preventive measures should be of interest in the U.S.

Efforts by Chilean Governments To Encourage Citizen Participation

Efforts at the National Level

The 1999 campaign for Chile's presidency was so close that a runoff was needed to decide the outcome in January 2000 between the eventual winner, Ricardo Lagos, and Joaquín Lavín, now mayor of Santiago. Both Lagos and Lavín are responsible for some exciting developments in citizen participation in Chile.

During the campaign, Lagos made a commitment to work with civil society organizations. After taking office in March 2000, President Lagos appointed a 28-member Citizen Council for the Strengthening of Civil Society. The council met for six months and produced a report in December 2000 with proposals to the president in the following four areas: (1) the legal and regulatory framework for civil society organizations; (2) public and private funding for these institutions; (3) strategies to strengthen and modernize the management of these organizations; and (4) other forms of cooperation between the State and civil society. By May 2001, the president had responded to the proposals with a magnificent 15-page *Plan for Strengthening Civil Society*, one of the best roadmaps for citizen participation and for partnerships between government and nonprofits that I've seen.

The very first sentence of the report reads, "One of the distinctive features we wish to give the Third Government of the *Concertación* (alliance of center and center-left parties) is to achieve greater and better citizen involvement." The report goes on to say, "Our country and our future require there to be a strong relationship and frank dialogue between the State and civil society. . . . Civil society also ensures a balance between citizens' rights and duties, resulting in a sense of reciprocity that makes us feel jointly involved in a common cause. . . . Continual improvement of the work of the State requires greater citizen control on the actions of the public powers."[34]

The first action taken by President Lagos was a Presidential Instruction for Citizen Participation, an executive order governing all employees who work in government and instructions on how to relate to citizens. It's fundamental principles are:

> "**Deferential treatment**, based on the dignity of all individuals and on the duty of service of the public sector. **Transparency of performance**, through greater communication and openness with the citizenry. **Equal opportunity to participate**, creating conditions to enable the access of the more vulnerable sectors. **Respect for the independence and diversity of the civil society organization**, avoiding any kind of discrimination and manipulation. **Focus on the citizenry**, favoring the participation of the end recipients of policies, programs, and services, i.e., the users, consumers, beneficiaries, etc." [bold in the original][35]

Under the three-year plan, President Lagos first promises to seek changes in Chile's legal and regulatory framework, including expediting the process required to obtain legal status as a nonprofit (estimated by Juan Francisco Lecaros of the nonprofit Corporación Simón de Cirene to take about eight months) and changing tax laws to grant benefits to nonprofits. The plan also says, "It is the government's top priority for citizens to participate in this discussion," signaling that citizen participation will be part of the process for developing ways to increase citizen participation. The plan also makes specific promises relative to community neighborhood organizations, including enhancing the effectiveness of local ordinances for citizen participation and enhancing the participation of local organizations in municipal decisions.

The steps proposed for federal funding of citizen organizations are ambitious. Already in existence are the Solidarity and Social Investment Fund and the Fund of the Americas. The former fund has been used to finance more than 12,000 "microprojects of lower-income sectors throughout the country." The latter is a joint initiative created by the governments of Chile and the United States. Both provide funds for services to implement public policies. But the President also plans to create two new funds for citizen organizations. One, the Mixed (from public and private contributions) Fund for Institutional Development, is aimed not just at starting new projects or delivering services—as we usually do in the U.S.—but at strengthening the citizen organizations themselves and helping ensure their long-term viability. This fund is to be managed by a combination of government, donor, and civil society representatives. The second new fund, the Neighborhood Development Fund, will provide direct funding to local organizations, so again there is a national component and local component to the strategy. This money will come from a percentage of the additional resources expected from a revaluation of real property that took effect in 2002. Lastly, within a year, the government promises to submit changes in the tax laws that will be designed to increase charitable giving by individuals and by businesses. Current tax law provides no tax incentives for individuals to give, and corporations get tax deductions only for contributions in a small range of areas.

To strengthen the civil society organizations, the government not only proposes the two new funds above, but also plans a nationwide study "of the current demand for training and technical assistance" by the different types of civil society organizations, as well as a register of providers of training and technical assistance services, by

Juan Francisco Lecaros of Corporación Simón de Cirene

Ran Coble

Jorge Navarrete is advisor for citizen participation to Chile's President Ricardo Lagos. He is shown here with Ran Coble before a poster of Chilean poet Nicanor Parra.

geographical area and subject taught. The resulting Training and Technical Assistance Program is intended to benefit 5,000 community organizations and more than 400 non-governmental organizations, corporations, and foundations.

The President's plan also promotes creation of an interactive Website where nonprofits can exchange information and experiences. A national public registry of all civil society organizations will be produced, and Community Infocenters are planned at the local level. All of this is "aimed at enforcing the principle of equal access to information" and "closing the digital gap" at the local level.

Another piece of the plan to strengthen the nonprofit sector is the government's wish "to further and encourage a culture of solidarity in our country." The vehicle here is to take steps to encourage volunteer work, which will include creating volunteer centers to act as intermediaries between individual volunteers (the supply) and those organizations needing volunteers (the demand) and to train institutions in how to use volunteers.

Finally, President Lagos' plan outlines proposals for other forms of cooperation between the government and civil society. This includes having each ministry, or department, meet with civil society organizations annually to evaluate their work together and plan priorities for the following year. Each ministry is charged with:

- including citizen participation elements in planning their policies and public programs;
- proposing regulatory and legislative changes to strengthen citizen participation;
- providing "the greatest amount of information possible" to citizens;
- increasing the participation of women; and
- including citizen participation in the *evaluation* of government policies and programs—"in particular in the evaluation of the recipients of such policies and programs." In determining the winners of the National Award for Quality in Public Services, new consideration will be given to the relationship between the government agency and citizens.

Interestingly, Chile does not have a national organization that can speak for the nonprofit sector, such as Independent Sector or the National Council of Nonprofit Associations in the United States or the Foro del Sector Social in Argentina. Nor does it have a publication creating sector awareness and discussing countrywide nonprofit issues, such as *The Chronicle of Philanthropy* or *Nonprofit World* in the United States or *Tercer Sector* magazine in Argentina. The Chilean President's plan ends with an expression of interest in establishing a National Civil Society Forum as a setting for future discussion and meetings between the government and representatives of civil society.

One of the driving forces behind this exemplary plan for increased citizen participation in Chile is Jorge Navarrete, director of the Division of Social Organizations in the Ministry of the Secretary General of the Government. Only 30 years old, he already has served two presidents. A lawyer by training, he has an office in the presidential

palace, La Moneda, with posters of Matisse paintings, the Chilean poet Nicanor Parra, and various Paris scenes on his office walls. His commitment to implementing this plan for citizen participation and strengthening civil society is impressive. When I ask him what most worries him and what most excites him in this job, he says he is worried by the "authoritarian culture, the vertical, client-oriented society that is part of Chile's recent past under the military government." But what excites him is the "idea that the citizen is now reaching his proper destiny and will get responsibility for his proper destiny."

A few days earlier, Soledad Teixidó of the nonprofit PROhumana had responded to a similar question by saying that what encouraged her most about developments in citizen participation in Chile was the symbolic act of President Lagos opening the doors of La Moneda to the public. The presidential palace had been closed to the public for 17 years under Pinochet, she said, but now, "The people have the right to be in public buildings again. It is only a symbol, but an important one."

Similarly, Navarrete offers three images to express his hopes for increased citizen participation. He says, "The first image is of it raining for a long time. The second image is that after the rain, the sun came up. Third, a rainbow appeared. We know that the rainbow exists—that it is at the end. We have to walk, and it is far—very, very far. But we know where it is, and we are going that way. And we have to make the effort."

Soledad Teixidó of PROhumana

Ran Coble

Efforts at the Local Government Level

President Lagos' opponent for the Chilean presidency in 1999 was Joaquín Lavín, now mayor of Santiago and then mayor of the smaller municipality of Las Condes. And it is in this small municipality on the east side of Santiago that some of the most innovative experiments in citizen participation have taken place. In effect, Chilean political rivals are competing for who can come up with the most and best methods of citizen participation. In Las Condes, the citizens are invited to participate in four ways—in regular *surveys on their views on public issues*, in *polls to make small decisions* like naming streets, in *surveys to make larger decisions about the allocation of public funds*, and in *evaluating* the quality of city services.

In 1993, Mayor Lavín polled the citizens of Las Condes about what they thought the priorities should be among various alternative projects—a new municipal building to consolidate all the services and departments in one place, a municipal theater, a gym for sports, programs to control drugs, citizen safety projects, and infrastructure needs such as streets and underpasses. The technical staff of the municipality anticipated the surveys would result in top billing for the municipal building and theater, but instead the citizens voted to give top priority to the drug programs, citizen safety projects, and streets and underpasses. The mayor and city council decided to go with the citizens' votes and allocated the money accordingly.

Subsequently, citizens were asked to choose among alternative sex education programs, a controversial topic in a Catholic country. Then the city asked the public for their views on the municipal building plan, including which areas to designate commercial and which residential. Chilean law requires municipalities to solicit citizens' views on building plans, but most mayors just display a proposed map in city hall and make little real effort to involve citizens. Las Condes made it easy to become involved, providing paper ballots placed in locations with high volumes of foot traffic such as supermarkets, churches, and subway entrances. They advertised the proposals, held 10 public meetings, and placed a big tent with maps and ballots in

front of city hall. "You could say that the object of our citizen participation efforts is to get people inside the tent," says María Inés Suarez, director of the Education and Health Corporation for the municipality.

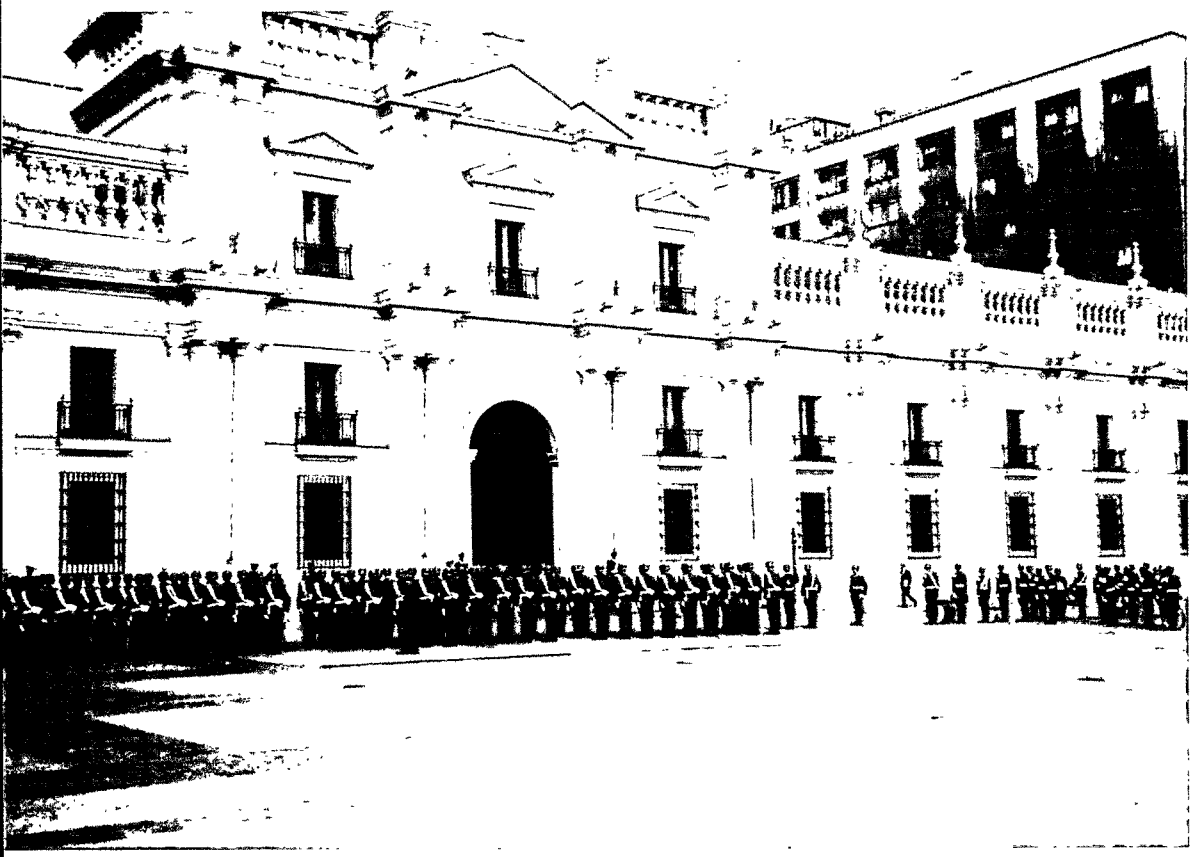
Some polls are used to give "small decisions" to the citizens on such issues as naming streets, the direction of one-way streets, and names for schools—decisions that don't involve money. However, other polls are used to allocate a substantial part of the municipality's budget. About 40 percent of the area's budget is discretionary and not mandated by the national government. The citizens have a lot of say in allocating funds within this part of the budget. For example, they are asked for their views in putting together the annual plans in health and education, including questions asking about the most significant health problems and priorities among possible solutions. In one poll, the citizens said access to health care was the most significant problem. They also identified several solutions, including a system of appointments for particular hours made by telephone, as well as a system of mini-health centers spread throughout the area, instead of centralized hospitals. The municipality implemented these suggestions, and in the next poll, access to health care dropped from the top of the list of health problems.

Once a year, residents pay a "circulation tax" based on the value of their cars. You can pay the tax almost anywhere in metropolitan Santiago, so the municipality of Las Condes advertised to "pay your tax here," thereby gaining a little extra revenue. At the same time, however, Las Condes asked taxpayers where to invest that revenue. Even more importantly, the municipality later sent a letter back to the taxpayers telling them the results of the survey *and* how the money was spent in accordance with their wishes.

This leads to still another purpose of the citizen participation in Las Condes—to evaluate government programs and services. In health, for example, on one day, all the citizens visiting all local health facilities were asked questions about their health needs and the attention and care they received that day. The poll results showed that people were having to get up at 4 a.m. to wait in long lines for health services, wait 10 months for surgeries in local hospitals, and that they had three to four health problems at a time, not one. This led the city to establish a system of appointments at certain hours by telephone and design a special type of insurance for heads of poor households that would lead to treatment within a week.

Leonardo Galvez, Luz María Vergara, and María Inés Suarez, municipal officials of Las Condes, and Fernando Rojas, translator

Ran Coble



Ran Coble

La Moneda Presidential Palace in Santiago, Chile with the military forming for a ceremony.

When Lavín ran for mayor of Las Condes the first time, he won with a plurality of 40 percent of the vote. After instituting these citizen participation measures, he won his bid for re-election with 80 percent of the vote. "After this, Las Condes municipality cannot do anything without asking the people," laughs Luz María Vergara, a lawyer for the municipality. "People ask you to ask them their opinion. They want to decide. They want to say, 'Hey, what are you going to do with the money?' So you just change the culture and make things the other way around."

Local officials in the United States considering such extensive efforts at participation might raise at least two objections—time and money. The Chileans say their process may delay decisions by a month, but now they have their process down pat and computers allow them to have the poll results the day of the vote, like an election. And, even though it takes a while longer to design and take the poll, they say the decision sticks, which actually may save time over the long run. As to money, the Chileans say they get lots of free media in advertising the polls, the ballots are printed on cheap paper, and again, the costs of making a decision against the wishes of the people is more costly in the long run. And, the other bottom line is that local officials want to be re-elected and this process increases that likelihood. What about the danger of the tyranny of the majority, I ask? What if the polls result in a majority voting to give funds to popular groups such as children but not to unpopular groups such as those with AIDS—even if the AIDS problem is more serious and widespread at the time? The Chileans acknowledge this possibility but remind me that the citizens are voting only on part of the budget and that municipal officials must use their own knowledge and facts in evaluating problems and distributing the rest of the funds. They also say you have to raise the bar gradually, giving people easier decisions like naming streets at first, with the tougher decisions on allocating funds coming later. Still, says Suarez, this kind of citizen participation "leads to better solutions, and you get a better commitment from the people."

"No one is the homeland. Nor are the symbols.

. . .

The homeland, friends, is a continuous act
As the world is continuous . . .

. . .

No one is the homeland, but we should all
Be worthy of that ancient oath
Which those gentlemen swore—
To be something they didn't know, to be Argentines;

. . .

No one is the homeland—it is all of us
May that clear, mysterious fire burn
Without ceasing, in my breast and yours."

—FROM "ODE WRITTEN IN 1966," COMPOSED BY ARGENTINA'S JORGE LUIS BORGES FOR THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF ARGENTINA'S DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

". . . so I went back to my newspaper and read on, like any good citizen."

—CHILE'S PABLO NERUDA, "THE FIRE"

"I believe that we are lost in America, but I believe we shall be found. . . . I think the true discovery of America is before us. I think the true fulfillment of our spirit, of our people, of our mighty and immortal land, is yet to come. I think the true discovery of our own democracy is still before us. And I think that all these things are certain as the morning, as inevitable as noon."

—NORTH CAROLINA'S THOMAS WOLFE, *YOU CAN'T GO HOME AGAIN*

I love my country and my state—for what they are and for what they can be. Travel in other countries helps me see my own country and state more clearly—their strengths and their weaknesses, and more importantly, their possibilities. So close your eyes for a moment and imagine. . . .

Local Government

- Imagine city councils and boards of county commissioners with 25th Chairs for the Citizen of the Day like Mar del Plata and with councils of children like Córdoba's to help foster children's dreams.
- Imagine city-sponsored Houses for Nonprofits and with a designated citizens fund for a Bank of Social Projects, like Córdoba's.
- Imagine cities which use polls, surveys, and the Internet to involve citizens first in making small decisions like naming streets and schools and later in larger decisions like allocating a portion of the city's budget, as Las Condes and Córdoba do.

State Government

- Imagine a Governor who follows President Ricardo Lagos' example with a Plan to Strengthen Citizen Participation for every department in state government and citizen participation used to develop the plan.
- Imagine a Governor and State Board of Elections who imitate Participa and Poder Ciudadano's work and decide that increasing our low voter participation rate is one of our top priorities and work with the State Board of Elections to get youth in the habit of voting until we are First in America.
- Imagine a Superintendent of Public Instruction and State Board of Education who follow the Argentine Ministry of Education's example and decide that good citizens are as important as end-of-grade test scores and implement Service-Learning Programs in every school in North Carolina.
- Imagine that North Carolina develops a Governor's Award to honor schools for work done in the community in service-learning and civic education—similar to the Presidential Award in Argentina—which awards cash prizes and scholarships for winning students and provides grants to enhance service-learning programs for winning schools.
- Imagine that same Superintendent and State Board working with Exploris Middle School,

Raleigh Charter, and other schools to develop a UN Assembly Program like Conciencia's so that our youth learn how people in other countries view us and the world.

- Imagine North Carolina's five law schools imitating the University of Palermo in fostering legal literacy for citizens and nonprofits and taking on a number of public interest law cases.
- Imagine our 16 public universities following Participa's The University Builds the Country example with citizens and nonprofits and asking what they can do for North Carolina in public service.

The News Media

- Imagine the WUNC statewide public television network televising a new weekly half-hour program called "Good News" to show how citizen and nonprofits are making a difference and solving problems in their communities.
- Imagine WRAL-TV in Raleigh, WSOC-TV in Charlotte, WFMY-TV in High Point, WNCT-TV in Greenville, WWAY-TV in Wilmington, and other TV stations all broadcasting two-to-three minute inserts of "Moments of Citizen Power" between regular TV programs like Poder Ciudadano showing citizens succeeding in solving problems and affecting public policy.
- Imagine *The News and Observer*, *The Charlotte Observer*, the Greensboro *News and Record,* and other newspapers across North Carolina following *La Nacion's* lead and publishing free daily classified ads of people's needs in their communities, publishing weekly Thursday supplements devoted to three or four key state issues (maybe based on their "Your Voice Your Vote" polls), and publishing a monthly Sunday special section on one of these big issues showing how citizens can get involved in working on them.

The Business Community

- Imagine that N.C. Citizens for Business and Industry followed *Apertura* magazine's lead and worked with the N.C. Center for Nonprofits to devote one issue of NCCBI's *North Carolina* magazine a year to the nonprofit sector, with stories of business/nonprofit partnerships, profiles of corporate giving programs, and discussions of corporate social responsibility.

The Nonprofit Sector

- Imagine that the N.C. Center for Nonprofits followed the example of the Russian Agency for Social Information and started a wire news service of stories on nonprofits that could be distributed to all media outlets.
- Imagine that Urban Ministries and other nonprofit organizations that serve the poor followed La Luciérnaga's example and involved street children and homeless youth in producing a magazine that made the problems of the poor real to the average citizen, with the sales revenue going to help solve the problem.
- Imagine North Carolina's 997 grantmaking foundations issuing Requests for Proposals to try any of these ideas.
- Imagine our own Juan Carr—call him John Kerr—out there somewhere right now with a group of friends and cell phones deciding to change the face of citizen participation and civic education in North Carolina—and winning a Nobel Prize for it in 2012.

If you can imagine them, the dreams become real.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, Simon & Schuster (New York, NY 2000), pp. 32–33, 35, 41 and 45, 36 and 63, 142, and 47. The survey about lack of knowledge of history of the U.S. by teenagers is from a 2001 survey by the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, released on July 4, 2001. The data about North Carolina is from the Civic Education Consortium, Institute of Government, UNC-Chapel Hill, NC.

[2] Jorge Luis Borges, "Another Poem of Gifts," in *Selected Poems 1923–1967*, Penguin Books (New York, NY:1972), pp. 218–223.

[3] Marta Oyhanarte, *Cómo Ejercer Su Poder Ciudadano*, Tesis-Grupo Editorial Norma (Buenos Aires: 1992), p. 22.

[4] Transparency International, *Annual Report 2000*, Berlin, Germany, p. 7.

[5] Jorge Luis Borges, "The Just," in *Selected Poems*, Viking Penguin (New York, NY: 1999), p. 449.

[6] Project Citizen is based on a 15-year-old program of the same name developed in the United States, according to Debra Henzey of the North Carolina Civic Education Consortium, a program of the Institute of Government at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The curriculum was developed by the Center for Civic Education in California and funded by Congress. "It has been used in many places throughout the U.S., but rarely in schools because it is perceived as too time-consuming and materials are expensive for teachers to buy," says Henzey.

[7] Borges, *Selected Poems 1923–1967*, note 2 above, pp. 25 and 27.

[8] Fundación Ciudad, "*Foro El Agua en Buenos Aires*, 1999, Buenos Aires, Argentina, pp. 25–29, for example.