

Governing the Countryside

Microsocial Analysis and Institutional Construction in Late Eighteenth-Century Río de la Plata

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To Juan Carlos Garavaglia, a dear teacher and friend, *in memoriam*.

The early years of the eighteenth century ushered in a long process of transformation in the government of the territories held by the Hispanic Monarchy around the globe. On the advice of his grandfather Louis XIV, King of France, Philip V of Spain (r. 1700–1746) set up new administrative institutions and introduced hitherto unheard-of forms of communication.¹ He broke with the territorial policy favored by the previous dynasty, which had turned the empire into a vast and vulnerable political archipelago.² The Council of the Indies, the second most important body within the polysynodal model after the Council of Castile, was slowly stripped of its governing functions, placed in charge of administering justice when it was not reduced to simply playing an advisory role. Among the alternative models of government in circulation on both sides of the Pyrenees was the

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1. Francisco Javier Guillamón Álvarez and Julio David Muñoz Rodríguez, *Educando al príncipe. Correspondencia privada de Luis XIV a Felipe V durante la guerra de Sucesión* (Rosario: Prohistoria Ediciones, 2008).

2. José Javier Ruiz Ibáñez and Bernard Vincent, *Los siglos XVI–XVII. Política y sociedad* (Madrid: Síntesis, 2007); John H. Elliott, *España, Europa y el mundo de ultramar, 1500–1800* (Madrid: Taurus, 2010). Philip V radically reformed the Council of the Indies in 1706: Guillermo Burgos Lejonagoitia, *Gobernar las Indias. Venalidad y méritos en la provisión de cargos americanos, 1701–1746* (Almería: Universidad de Almería, 2014), 83.

intendancy.³ Jean Orry, a French businessman sent to Madrid to introduce financial reforms in his role as comptroller general to Philip V, was in favor of importing this system to Spain. His suggestion was endorsed by the Council of State in 1711 and applied by Philip V within the borders of the Iberian Peninsula.⁴

The difficulties inherent to governing vast regions that were distant from one another and little known despite the efforts expended to administer them were not unique to the Hispanic Monarchy nor to the age of the Enlightenment. Since the late fifteenth century the movement of agents, goods, and legal instruments as well as shared political experiences had become increasingly important with the territorial expansion of monarchies and confederations such as the United Provinces. A connected history draws on the analysis of these exchanges, attempting to understand what non-European sources say about relationships with Europeans and their supposed intrinsic modernity.⁵ In the sixteenth century, the creation of cities had been the Hispanic Monarchy's preferred strategy for governing the American world; these entities were endowed by their founders with vast jurisdictions far larger than those delineated on the Iberian Peninsula.⁶ Two centuries later, when Charles III (r. 1759–1788) sought to transpose the model of political organization recommended by his great-grandfather onto the whole empire,⁷ he discovered that his American subjects lived mostly scattered across vast rural areas where few of his agents ventured.⁸ What was the relationship between the rulers and the governed in these places?⁹ To what extent did the legal and political culture of their time

3. We should not however assume that these ideas traveled only in one direction, from France to Spain. See Anne Dubet and José Javier Ruiz Ibáñez, eds., *Las monarquías española y francesa, siglos XVI–XVIII. Dos modelos políticos?* (Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2010).

4. Fabrice Abbad and Didier Ozanam, *Les intendants espagnols du XVIII^e siècle* (Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 1992); Pablo Fernández Albaladejo, ed., *Los Borbones. Dinastía y memoria de nación en la España del siglo XVIII* (Madrid: Marcial Pons/Casa de Velázquez, 2001).

5. Romain Bertrand, "Histoire globale, histoires connectées," in *Le tournant global des sciences sociales*, ed. Alain Caillé and Stéphane Dufoix (Paris: La Découverte, 2013), 44–66; Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia," *Modern Asian Studies* 31, no. 3 (1997): 735–62.

6. Darío G. Barriera, *Ouvert des portes sur la terre. Microanalyse de la construction d'un espace politique. Santa Fe, 1573–1640* [2013], trans. François Godicheau (Toulouse: Presses universitaires du Midi, 2016).

7. Luis Navarro García, *Las reformas borbónicas en América. El plan de intendencias y su aplicación* (Seville: Universidad de Sevilla, 1995).

8. Its geographical features aside, the American countryside consisted of areas devoid of villages. It started where the urban network of "towns and cities" ended and was separate from the "Indian villages," which had their own government made up of Spaniards and natives. According to a report by the Count of Floridablanca entitled *Estado general de la población de España en el año de 1787*, 70 percent of the Iberian Peninsula's population engaged in agro-pastoral activities. See Gonzalo Anes, *Economía y sociedad en la Asturias del Antiguo Régimen* (Barcelona: Ariel, 1988).

9. The term "governed" is used here in the sense defined by Partha Chatterjee, *The Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

influence their practices? What were the means used by these various actors to assert themselves, to construct and administer these places in keeping with the jurisdictional regime, that divine devolution of *auctoritas* and *potestas*? These questions will guide us in this small-scale analysis, based on microhistorical principles, of an essential aspect of the Bourbon reform agenda: the modes of governing large rural areas.¹⁰

Microanalysis as an Instrument for Understanding Social and Institutional Phenomena

It is not the purpose of this article to assess the degree to which the Bourbon reforms were applied within a given part of the Monarchy's empire,¹¹ nor to examine their limitations.¹² Following the historiography of composite monarchies, which has shown the shortcomings of using binary concepts—center/periphery or global/local—to conceive the functioning of an imperial whole, it is useful to adopt a decentered viewpoint and consider this issue *starting from* a particular space and not *within* a predetermined area.¹³ Recent historiographical approaches both encourage and compel us to apply a microanalytical perspective to the universal problem posed by the accelerated circulation of goods and individuals within

10. In the early nineteenth century, after the Argentinian War of Independence, liberals deemed rural populations “ungovernable”: Antonio Annino, *Silencios y disputas en la historia de Hispanoamérica* (Bogotá: Universidad Externado de Colombia/Taurus, 2014). Liberal historiographers still claim that caudillism and clientelism are a reflection of these rural populations' rustic character. For a critique of this school of thought, see Raúl O. Fradkin and Jorge Gelman, *Juan Manuel de Rosas. La construcción de un liderazgo político* (Buenos Aires: EDHASA, 2015).

11. See the synthesis by Horst Pietschmann, “Un testimonio del impacto del reformismo borbónico en Nueva España. La representación del intendente de Puebla de los Angeles de 27 de junio de 1792,” *Jahrbuch für Geschichte Lateinamerikas* 31 (1994): 1–38. David Brading and John Lynch's readings of these reforms were gradually abandoned: the former saw these measures as “a revolution in government,” the latter as “a second conquest.” In the 1990s, François-Xavier Guerra and Antonio Annino's interpretations of the phenomenon became predominant and classic. On Río de la Plata, see José M. Mariluz Urquijo, ed., *Estudios sobre la real ordenanza de intendentes del Río de la Plata* (Buenos Aires: Instituto de investigaciones de historia del derecho, 1995).

12. Rafael Diego-Fernández de Sotelo et al., eds., *De reinos y subdelegaciones. Nuevos escenarios para un nuevo orden en la América borbónica* (Zamora: El Colegio de Michoacán, 2014).

13. Bartolomé Yun Casalilla, ed., *Las redes del imperio. Élités sociales en la articulación de la Monarquía hispánica, 1492–1714* (Madrid/Seville: Marcial Pons/Universidad Pablo de Olavide, 2009); Pedro Cardim et al., eds., *Polycentric Monarchies: How Did Early Modern Spain and Portugal Achieve and Maintain a Global Economy?* (Portland: Sussex Academic Press, 2012); Ana Crespo Solana, ed., “Empires: Concepts and New Research on the Hispanic World, 16th–18th Centuries,” special issue, *Culture and History Digital Journal* 3, no. 1 (2014).

imperial spaces that were undergoing profound economic transformations.¹⁴ When Charles III led the great reform of intendants from 1762 until his death in 1788, he came up against two novel problems. First, across the American territory agricultural production was concentrated in the hands of small and medium-sized Creole farmers who monopolized resources.¹⁵ Second, the legal arsenal meant to curb these offenses had become obsolete and inadequate, at least in the estimation of those who considered themselves disadvantaged by this evolution.

The growing presence in the countryside and on the roads of an unaffiliated population that was barely integrated into Spanish social structures also gave rise to concerns.¹⁶ Despite its otherness, for the past two centuries this population had accumulated experience in the art of negotiating its obedience and had learnt to deal with the authorities.¹⁷ The administration of justice in rural spaces was essential since it helped maintain the *pax publica* through the figure of the local governor-judge (*juez-gobernador*). Often hailing from the area where he officiated, this judge would frequently also be in charge of collecting ordinary and extraordinary tax payments. Although not provided for by the Royal Ordinances on Intendants,¹⁸ this role was

14. The history of local justices, both rural and urban, is crucial to understanding these issues. See Felipe Castro Gutiérrez, *Nueva ley y nuevo rey. Reformas borbónicas y rebelión popular en Nueva España* (Zamora: El Colegio de Michoacán, 1996); Sergio Serulnikov, *Conflictos sociales e insurrección en el mundo colonial andino. El norte de Potosí en el siglo XVIII* (Buenos Aires: Fondo de cultura económica, 2006); Federica Morelli, *Territorio o nación. Reforma y disolución del espacio imperial en Ecuador, 1765–1830* (Madrid: Centro de estudios políticos y constitucionales, 2005); Juan Carlos Garavaglia, *San Antonio de Areco, 1680–1880. Un pueblo de la campaña, del Antiguo Régimen a la modernidad argentina* (Rosario: Prohistoria Ediciones, 2009); María Paula Polimene, ed., *Autoridades y prácticas judiciales en el Antiguo Régimen. Problemas jurisdiccionales en el Río de la Plata, Córdoba, Tucumán, Cuyo y Chile* (Rosario: Prohistoria Ediciones, 2011); Jordana Dym, “El poder en la Nueva Guatemala. La disputa sobre los Alcaldes de barrio,” *Cuadernos de literatura* 14, no. 28 (2010): 196–229; Julián Andrei Velasco Pedraza, *Justicia para los vasallos de su majestad. Administración de justicia en la villa de San Gil, siglo XVIII* (Bogotá: Editorial universidad del Rosario, 2015). The microhistorical perspective has drawn heavily on network theory: Jean-Pierre Dedieu and Zacarias Moutoukias, “L’approche de la théorie des réseaux sociaux,” in *Réseaux, familles et pouvoirs dans le monde ibérique à la fin de l’Ancien Régime*, ed. Juan Luis Castellano and Jean-Pierre Dedieu (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 1998), 7–30; Michel Bertrand, *Grandeur et misère de l’office. Les officiers de finances de Nouvelle-Espagne, XVII^e–XVIII^e siècles* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1999).

15. Juan Carlos Garavaglia and Jorge Gelman, “Mucha tierra y poca gente. Un nuevo balance historiográfico de la historia rural platense (1750–1850),” *Historia agraria* 15 (1998): 29–50.

16. On the identification of outsiders with the poor, see Simona Cerutti, *Étrangers. Étude d’une condition d’incertitude dans une société d’Ancien Régime* (Montrouge: Bayard, 2012).

17. Juan Carlos Garavaglia, “Alcaldes de la hermandad et juges de paix à Buenos Aires (XVIII^e–XIX^e siècle),” *Études rurales* 149/150 (1999): 99–110; the organization of justice in rural Buenos Aires during the colonial expansion into indigenous areas is addressed by Fradkin and de Gelman in several articles published in the same issue of *Études rurales*. On the concept of negotiated obedience, see Jean-Paul Zúñiga, ed., *Negociar la obediencia. Autoridad y consentimiento en el mundo ibérico en la Edad Moderna* (Granada: Comares, 2013).

18. I am referring here to the Buenos Aires ordinances: *Real Ordenanza para el establecimiento e instrucción de Intendentes de Ejército y Provincia en el Virreinato de Buenos Aires del 28 de enero de 1782* (Madrid: Imprenta Real, 1783). The same phenomena were noted in

not exceptional. Rural judges multiplied in different ways and under different names in the territories targeted by the reforms: from the Canaries to the Philippines, and from the Viceroyalty of New Granada to that of Río de la Plata.¹⁹ This diversity of arrangements for governing rural areas stemmed from an absence of codification and formal prescriptions. Rural judges were at times appointed by municipal councils (*cabildos*), at others by the governor-intendants or their subdelegates (*subdelegados*),²⁰ who used them to weaken the municipalities.²¹

An explanatory model has long held that the intendants implemented the program of ordinances (*ordenanzas*) with varying degrees of difficulty and in the face of various obstacles,²² particularly the refusal of certain municipal bodies²³ to endorse these reforms.²⁴ The microanalytical method envisaged here will allow us to review this narrative by retracing the process of institutional creation that took place between 1784 and 1789 at the level of a vast rural county (*partido*) that stretched south of the city of Santa Fe (in present-day Argentina). To this end, we need to reconstruct the experiences of the individuals involved in this undertaking and the extent of their

New Spain (1786) where the implementation of the ordinances nevertheless caused conflicts between city dwellers, villagers, hacienda owners, and intendants' subdelegates.

19. On New Spain, see Diego-Fernández de Sotelo, *De reinos y subdelegaciones*. On Chile, see Lucrecia Enríquez, "Los jueces diputados y los distritos judiciales borbónicos en Chile (1786–1818)," *Revista chilena de derecho* 43, no. 2 (2016): 643–68.

20. The Royal Ordinances on Intendants ascribed governor-intendants to each intendancy, assisted by subdelegates. Specializing in military and financial matters, the latter were at the head of subdelegations (*subdelegaciones*), that is, cities endowed with royal treasuries.

21. Francisco Javier Guillamón Álvarez, *Las reformas de la administración local durante el reinado de Carlos III* (Madrid: Instituto de estudios de administración local, 1980). Besides Federica Morelli and Julián Velasco Pedraza on New Granada, see Jorge Conde Calderón, "La administración de justicia en las sociedades rurales del Nuevo Reino de Granada, 1739–1803," *Historia crítica* 49 (2013): 35–54; María Victoria Montoya Gómez, "La jurisdicción de los jueces pedáneos en la administración de justicia a nivel local. La ciudad de Antioquia, 1750–1809," *Anuario colombiano de historia social y de la cultura* 39, no. 2 (2012): 19–40. On the Philippines, see Luis Ángel Sánchez Gómez, "Gobierno y administración del territorio en Filipinas (1565–1898)," in *Poblar la inmensidad. Sociedades, conflictividad y representación en los márgenes del imperio hispánico (siglos XV–XIX)*, ed. Salvador Bernabéu Albert (Madrid/Barcelona: CSIC/Ediciones Rubeo, 2010). On Río de la Plata, see Carlos Mario Storni, *Investigaciones sobre la historia del derecho rural argentino. Españoles, criollos, indios y gauderios en la llanura pampeana* (Buenos Aires: Instituto de investigaciones de historia del derecho, 1997).

22. Edberto Óscar Acevedo, "La causa de policía (o gobierno)," in Mariluz Urquijo, *Estudios sobre la real ordenanza de intendentes*, 43–82, in particular p. 63.

23. On the Andean region, see Sergio Serulnikov, "La Insurrección Tupamarista. Historias e historiografías," *2010 Historia* (February 9, 2015): 1–12, https://rodrigomorenog.files.wordpress.com/2015/07/serulnikov-la-insurreccion3b3n-tupamarista-historias-e-historio-grafc3adas-20_10-historia.pdf.

24. For instance, the one concerning the withdrawal of the ability to elect ordinary alcaldes, or local officials. Archivo general de la provincia de Santa Fe (hereafter "AGSF"), Varios documentos, 1634–1816, carton 20, fol. 10: following protests from the Sante Fe municipal council, Viceroy Arredondo restored this prerogative in 1791.

relational resources.²⁵ It is not surprising that this topic has been little explored by historians: neither the conflicts engendered by this institutional process nor the solution adopted to quell them was provided for in the legislation. Since historiography has long remained silent on this subject, we need to look especially closely at the sources that maintained the dialogue between the actors involved: *vecinos rurales*, representatives, municipal councils, and the viceroy/intendant.²⁶

Governing Vast Territories and Scattered Populations

From its conquest in the sixteenth century, the “gigantic province”²⁷ of Paraguay had been a source of pride for the Hispanic Monarchy. Nevertheless, its government posed a challenge with an uncertain outcome. Unlike in other regions such as Mexico or Peru, its indigenous populations constantly moved around based on their relations with their neighbors, wars, climatic events, or the availability of local resources. The Catholic Monarchy conducted the conquest using tools whose flexibility made it possible to negotiate with the natives of the subjected regions.²⁸ To assure its hegemony, it followed a policy of grouping them into Indian reductions (*reducciones de Indios*) so they could be “policed.”²⁹ Even when this population was presented as a group of devoutly Christian vassals or “friendly Indians” who had renounced the status of infidels, the desire to monitor them remained.

25. The ideas of Jacques Revel and Bernard Lepetit have been a source of inspiration: Jacques Revel, “L’institution et le social,” in *Les formes de l’expérience. Une autre histoire sociale*, ed. Bernard Lepetit (Paris: Albin Michel, 1995), 63–84; Bernard Lepetit, *Carnet de croquis. Sur la connaissance historique* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1999). See also Giovanni Levi, *Inheriting Power: The Story of an Exorcist* [1985], trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

26. These sources can be found in different archive collections: Archivo general de la Nación, Buenos Aires (hereafter “AGN”), Archivo general de la provincia de Santa Fe, Archivo del departamento de estudios etnográficos y coloniales de Santa Fe, and Archivos parroquiales de Santa Fe y Coronda. [*Vecinos* were the main inhabitants of a city, members of the principal families, whose legal status made them active members of the polity. For a definition, see Geneviève Verdo, “Organizing Sovereign Provinces in Independent America: The Republic of Córdoba, 1776–1827,” *Annales HSS (English Edition)* 69, no. 2 (2014): 223–53, here p. 225. In the present article, the author uses the term *vecinos rurales*—employed by the actors themselves—to describe the residents of rural areas who were trying to establish their political power over the hinterland of the city—*Les Annales*].

27. Although used by contemporaries, this phrase was popularized by Justo Prieto, *Paraguay, la provincia gigante de las Indias. Análisis espectral de una pequeña nación mediterránea* (Buenos Aires: El Ateneo, 1951).

28. James Lockhart, *The Nahuas after the Conquest: A Social and Cultural History of the Indians of Central Mexico, Sixteenth through Eighteenth Centuries* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992).

29. In Paraguay and Río de la Plata Jesuits played a central role in this process of “domesticating” local populations.

Mixed marriages, the failure of certain reductions, and the threat posed by the nations that had not been subjected raised the same issue: How to govern communities scattered over vast territories?

The corpora of legal texts in the Judeo-Christian tradition reflected the rulers' recurrent concern with solving the equation linking territorial expansion, population distribution, and jurisdictional exercise.³⁰ Later, the Hispanic Monarchy translated into its language governmental arrangements inherited from Roman and Islamic law codes. However, their formulation varied over time. In the eighteenth century population growth, border tensions with the British, the Portuguese, and non-Christianized indigenous groups, the Jesuits' expulsion in 1767, and the affirmation of the agricultural character of these areas exacerbated these issues. The physical presence of officers of the law and royal agents in this territory became an essential question.

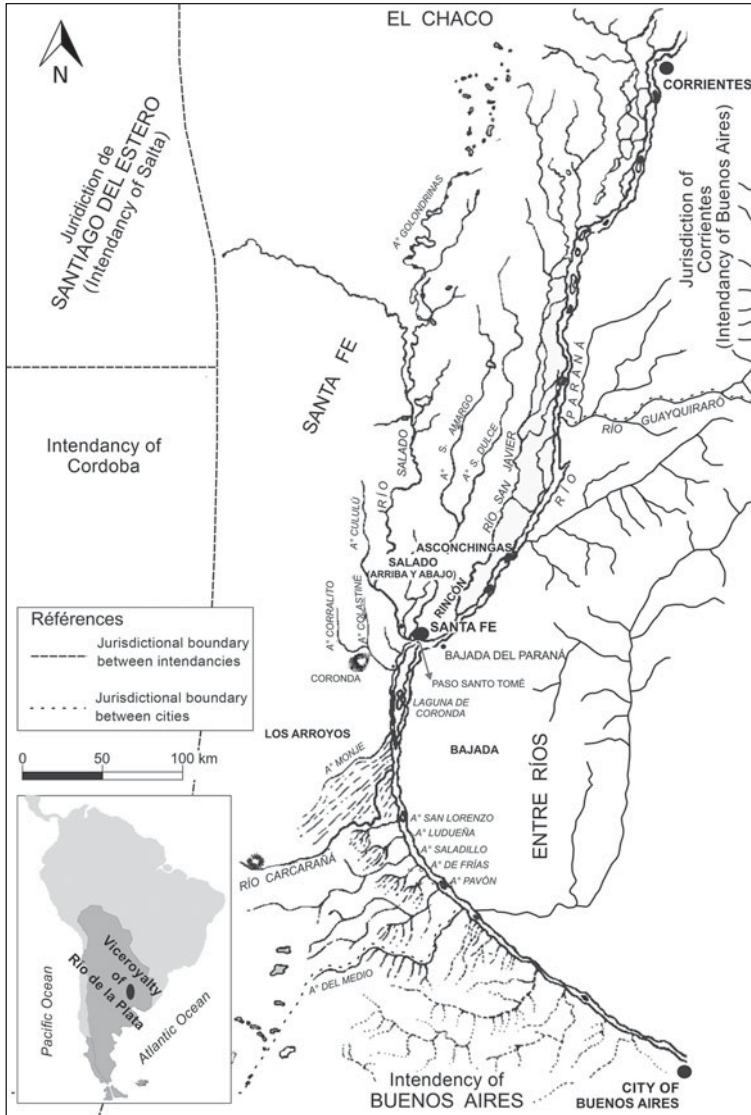
Santa Fe: The Gateway to Paraguay

The oldest city in the governorate (*gobernación*) of Río de la Plata, Santa Fe was continually in a state of dependency. From its very foundation in 1573 it had been subordinate to Asunción, Paraguay's seat of government. At the end of 1617, when the "gigantic province" was split in two, the municipality came under the authority of the new province of Buenos Aires. Neither the creation of the Viceroyalty of Río de la Plata in 1776, nor that of the Audiencia of Buenos Aires (1661–1671 and 1785–1812) changed the course of its fate (map 1). It never reached the top of the institutional and religious pyramid of the entity that encompassed it.

Over the eighteenth century, Santa Fe saw its population grow rapidly. The Mocoví people living in the middle of the Gran Chaco plain increased their incursions near farms located north of the city. In 1710 the attackers were partially pushed back following military expeditions ordered by the governor of the neighboring city of Tucumán. However, under pressure from the Mocovís, the countryside to the north and west of the urban network—the areas of Rincón, Salado, and Cululú—was becoming depopulated. Families sought refuge on the

30. On the spatial consequences of the jurisdictional nature of power and the use of governing methods, historiography is indebted to the pioneering work of António M. Hespanha: Hespanha, *Vísperas del Leviatán. Instituciones y poder político. Portugal, siglo XVII* (Madrid: Taurus, 1990); Hespanha, *La gracia del derecho. Economía de la cultura en la Edad Moderna* (Madrid: Centro de estudios constitucionales, 1993). See also Pietro Costa, "Uno 'spatial turn' per la storia del diritto? Una rassegna tematica," *Research Paper Series*, Max Planck Institute for European Legal History, 2013, https://archive.org/details/research_paper_no2013-07. A recent historiographical survey can be found in Darío G. Barrera, "Entre el retrato jurídico y la experiencia en el territorio. Una reflexión sobre la función distancia a partir de las normas de los Habsburgo sobre las sociabilidades locales de los oidores americanos," *Caravelle* 101 (2013): 133–54. See also Guillaume Gaudin, *Penser et gouverner le Nouveau Monde au XVII^e siècle. L'empire de papier de Juan Díez de La Calle, commis du Conseil des Indes* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2013).

Map 1. Santa Fe and its rural counties (*pagos*) in the Viceroyalty of Río de la Plata (1783)



Source: Darío G. Barriera and Facundo Scordo

outskirts of Santa Fe or the east bank of the Paraná river. Others settled further south in Coronda, ten leagues from Santa Fe, or in Los Arroyos, thirty leagues south towards Buenos Aires. Between 1720 and 1730 these areas absorbed migrations of Creole populations and of indigenous peoples living in reductions under attack from free natives. Besieged, Santa Fe's vecinos ended up suggesting that

their city be relocated once again,³¹ without at any point losing sight of its strategic importance: they knew it commanded the passage between Río de la Plata and the regions of Paraguay, Cuyo, and Potosí.³² Lying at the center of the viceregal “body,” Santa Fe was the gateway to Paraguay.

The city continued to grow even though it was regularly exposed to incursions. According to parish registers, the first christenings were recorded at Salado from 1730 as well as at Coronda and Rincón, albeit discontinuously. During the 1730s, around seven thousand Creoles of European origin³³ lived in Santa Fe and the farms of its hinterland. The lands that the municipality had granted them in the late seventeenth century, in an area stretching fifty leagues south of the city, were parceled out in keeping with Castilian egalitarian customs. At the same time, families settled in farms organized around oratories. Beginning in 1717, the military decisions taken by governor Bruno Mauricio de Zabala encouraged population growth between Coronda and Rosario, along the busy road that connected Santa Fe with Buenos Aires. From 1725 the municipality of Santa Fe sent a rural officer (*alcalde de hermandad*), who could adjudicate minor cases, to the county of Los Arroyos and to Bajada,³⁴ and in 1730 the bishop of Buenos Aires created the parishes (*curatos*) of Rosario and Paraná.

During the 1740s the alliances struck with local chiefs who “undertook to keep the peace and provide military aid against the rebel populations”³⁵ helped found the reductions of San Javier in 1743 (comprising Mocovís) and San Jerónimo in 1748 (comprising Abipónes), both of which were overseen by Jesuits.³⁶ In 1744 the

31. Santa Fe had been moved from its original location along the San Javier river and rebuilt between 1653 and 1660 at its current location on the Salado river. For an account of this episode, during which indigenous populations were driven south, see Miriam Moriconi, “Con los curas a otra parte. Curatos rurales y doctrinas en la frontera sur santafesina (1700–1740),” in *Gobierno, justicias y milicias. La frontera entre Buenos Aires y Santa Fe (1720–1830)*, ed. Darío G. Barrera and Raúl Osvaldo Fradkin (La Plata: Universidad nacional de La Plata, 2014), 71–119.

32. Juan Carlos Garavaglia, *Mercado interno y economía colonial. Tres siglos de historia de la yerba mate* (Mexico: Grijalbo, 1983).

33. This expression does not really represent the complex make-up of this population, whose European forebears had settled in the Americas at different times. Nor does it say anything about the diversity of those living in these Creole households, or their biological identity. In reality, this convenient sociopolitical label has lumped together “white,” “Spanish,” and “Creole” populations. Although this concept smooths out the features of these individuals’ identities and thus makes for a poorer description, it nevertheless helps grasp the disparate and irregular information typical of pre-statistical societies.

34. On this office, see Darío G. Barrera “Justicias rurales: el oficio de alcalde de la hermandad entre el derecho, la historia y la historiografía (Santa Fe, Gobernación del Río de la Plata, siglos XVII a XIX),” *Andes* 24, no. 1 (2013): <http://ref.scielo.org/fgpqxh>.

35. Florencia Sol Nesis, *Los grupos mocoví en el siglo XVIII* (Buenos Aires: Sociedad argentina de antropología, 2005), 16.

36. On the San Javier reduction, see Nesis, *Los grupos mocoví*; on San Jerónimo, see Carina Paula Lucaioli, *Los grupos abipones hacia mediados del siglo XVIII* (Buenos Aires: Sociedad argentina de antropología, 2005). On the jurisdictional character of these

city of Santa Fe numbered 205 vecinos and sixty-three soldiers, amounting with their families to a total of around one thousand residents in the urban area. Historian Juan Álvarez has estimated that, in the same period, there were around 1,300 Creoles living in the area south of the Carcarañá river.³⁷

It is difficult to put a precise number on the indigenous population. Even if we only include individuals living in reductions, the numbers were in constant flux—apart from those already mentioned, other reductions were created or reestablished in 1750, 1753, 1760, 1774, and 1780.³⁸ The centrifugal trend associated with the population growth in Santa Fe and the surrounding area between 1720 and 1730 was reversed after 1739 when the city was granted the tax privilege of Puerto Preciso, meaning that all boats coming from Paraguay had to unload their goods and pay customs and other duties.³⁹ Above all, between 1750 and 1790 the city and its outskirts prospered thanks to the development of agricultural and livestock rearing activities. The decline of a system founded on subsistence farming was accompanied by heavy migration from northern rural areas. In early 1760, after a Crusade bull had been issued,⁴⁰ the vecinos of Salado and Rincón were entered on tax rolls which recorded ninety and forty-seven families respectively.⁴¹

In 1795 Santa Fe and the surrounding area comprised between four and five thousand inhabitants of Creole origin⁴²; the county of Rincón had seven hundred.

entities, see Miriam Moriconi, “Administración borbónica de pueblo de indios en el Río de la Plata. Matriculas de pueblos de Santa Fe (1785),” *Prohistoria* 15, no. 18 (2012): 144–98.

37. “Lettre à Sa Grâce le Gouverneur Ortiz de Rozas (1744),” quoted in Juan Álvarez, *Historia de Rosario (1689–1939)* (Rosario: UNR/EMR, 1998), chap. 4.

38. These reductions comprised Mocovís, Abipónes, Mocoretás, Calchines, and Colastinés. Some were the result of displacement, others were aggregations of preexisting reductions. On this phenomenon and the religious and secular agents involved, see Moriconi, “Administración borbónica.”

39. Griselda Tarragó, “The Long Kiss Goodbye: Santa Fe and the Conflict over the Privilege of Puerto Preciso (1726–1743),” in *Growing in the Shadow of an Empire: How Spanish Colonialism Affected Economic Development in Europe and in the World (xvith–xviiiith cc.)*, ed. Giuseppe De Luca and Gaetano Sabatini (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2012), 271–84, notes that the situation in the region improved from 1734 with the appointment of two members of the local elite to key positions: Francisco Javier de Echagüe y Andía became the governor’s lieutenant and Francisco de Vera Muxica was named alderman; a slowdown in their personal affairs led these two men to tackle these problems head on.

40. Since 1509 papal Crusade bulls had granted Spanish kings the proceeds of the sale of privileges and indulgences, money originally used to wage holy war and ransom captives in the Mediterranean. This resource was collected in Spain, the Italian territories belonging to the Crown, and the Americas.

41. AGSF, AC, XIII, fol. 158, March 17, 1760: these tax rolls confirm that the county of Salado stretched as far as the Santo Tomé ford where the settlements of San Jerónimo and Coronda began.

42. This figure does not include the natives who lived in reductions or freely and numbered 3,500 in the county of Los Arroyos and 2,000 in the Coronda jurisdiction. See the “Rapport du procurador José Teodoro de Larramendi (1795),” in Manuel María Cervera, *Historia de la ciudad y provincia de Santa Fe, 1573–1853. Contribución a*

Historian Manuel María Cervera states that in 1799 the Sunchales fort, built in 1790 to repel attacks by local populations, was home to 1,113 individuals.⁴³ At the time, Rosario, which belonged to the county of Los Arroyos, was still only a modest town with eighty houses and farms grouped around a parish. In the surrounding countryside there were eighty-four agricultural farms and corrals. The total population of Los Arroyos was estimated at 5,879 inhabitants.⁴⁴

This population growth was due to several factors: an increase in the number of families settled in Santa Fe and the surrounding farms since the 1660s, the arrival of migrants from the north in the wake of raids by rebellious Indians, and a greater number of reductions. But it also reflected an improvement in government and census methods. The promotion of small rural chapels to the rank of parishes endowed with cures (Rosaria and Paraná in 1730, Coronada in 1749), the drawing up of tax rolls (in 1738 and 1760), and the appointment of *alcaldes de hermandad* dispatched to these rural territories eased communication between secular and ecclesiastical authorities, which further helped consolidate administrative knowledge of these regions. This process intensified after 1787 as registers compiled by priests and their vicars became a general phenomenon thanks to a growing parish network. Newcomers, who would sometimes temporarily settle in these lands before reaching the Buenos Aires region,⁴⁵ were almost always ascribed a bad reputation, especially when they had been banished from their previous place of residence.⁴⁶ Once identified by parish priests or local judges, all these groups

la historia de la República Argentina (1907; repr. Santa Fe: Universidad nacional del litoral, 1980), vol. 3, annex, p. xxvii. See also Gabriel Carrasco, ed., *Primer censo general de la provincia de Santa Fé (República Argentina, América del Sud)*, vol. 1, *Censo de la población* (Buenos Aires: Imprenta de Jacobo Peuser, 1888), xl. Félix de Azara, *Descripción e historia del Paraguay y del Río de la Plata* (Madrid: Sanchíz, 1847), suggested a total number of 12,600 inhabitants in 1797.

43. Cervera, *Historia de la ciudad y provincia de Santa Fe*, 1:562.

44. Including 265 slaves (mulattos and blacks, men and women), 274 free mulattos, and only 9 free blacks. See Pedro Tuella, "Relación histórica del pueblo y jurisdicción del Rosario de los Arroyos, en el Gobierno de Santa Fe, Provincia de Buenos Aires," in Miguel Navarro Viola, *Memorias y noticias para servir á la historia antigua de la República Argentina. Compiladas y publicadas por los fundadores de la Revista de Buenos Aires* (1802; repr. Buenos Aires: Imprenta de Mayo, 1865).

45. Mariana Canedo, "Propiedades, propietarios y ocupantes. La tierra y la familia en la campaña de Buenos Aires. El Pago de los Arroyos, 1600–1750," *Boletín del Instituto de historia argentina y americana Dr. Emilio Ravignani* 3, no. 7 (1993): 7–29; Garavaglia, *San Antonio de Areco*.

46. Teresa Suárez and María Laura Tornay, "Poblaciones, vecinos y fronteras rioplatenses. Santa Fe a fines del siglo XVIII," *Anuario de estudios americanos* 60, no. 2 (2003): 521–55, here p. 534. These phenomena have also been described in relation to the cities of Santiago del Estero and Río Cuarto: Judith Farberman, "Los que se van y los que se quedan. Familia y migraciones en Santiago del Estero a fines del período colonial," *Quinto Sol* 1 (1997): 7–40; María E. Rustán, *De perjudiciales a pobladores de la frontera. Poblamiento de la frontera sur de la Gobernación Intendencia de Córdoba a fines del siglo XVIII* (Córdoba: Ferreyra Editor, 2005). On the case of Buenos Aires, see María Elena Barral, Raúl O. Fradkin, and Gladys Perri, "Quiénes son los 'perjudiciales'? Concepciones jurídicas, producción normativa y práctica judicial en la campaña bonaerense

ceased to be defined as mere inhabitants and were categorized as a “population”⁴⁷ subject to political measures; they became the governed who would subsequently and in turn want to be the rulers.

Administration and Micropolitics: The Creation of New Rural Jurisdictions

Petitions submitted by Santa Fe’s residents used two arguments in favor of creating new districts within the viceroyalty: one invoked a rise in livestock theft and highway robbery, the other the disproportionate size of the jurisdiction “to be protected.” Sources repeated that the “territorial sprawl” favored the “cunning” of the “natives,” while the long distances involved made the vecinos’ offensives against them risky.⁴⁸ In 1790 the alcalde de hermandad of Paraná, José Seguí, suggested that constables be appointed in his district.⁴⁹ Similarly, in 1797 his counterpart in Coronda complained about the distance between his residence and the village of Desmochados placed under his jurisdiction, remarking that the road was “fifteen leagues long and passed through several hamlets.”⁵⁰ In their appeals, these actors established a direct link between the size of their jurisdictions, the distance to be covered, and the insufficient number of royal or municipal agents deployed in these territories.⁵¹ Paradoxically, the residents of those rural areas (*vecinos de la campaña*), victims of latent insecurity and livestock theft that often went unpunished,⁵² complained about the same things as those very officers. Faced with these dysfunctions, several alcaldes de hermandad took their responsibilities very seriously.

These difficulties stoked tensions in the countryside, especially over the populations whom landowners and authorities called by various names: itinerant families⁵³ or “unsubdued” individuals. These groups had settled without authorization close to the properties of the landowners (*hacendados*) of Salado, Chañares, Desmochados, Los Arroyos, and the Entre Ríos region.⁵⁴ Some had fled the Indian

(1780–1830),” *Claroscuro. Revista del Centro de estudios sobre diversidad cultural* 2 (2002): 75–111.

47. A point first made by Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977–1978*, ed. Michel Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007).

48. AGSF, AC, VII, fols. 48–49, November 10, 1710.

49. AGSF, AC, XVI A, fols. 35v–37v.

50. AGSF, AC, XVI B, fols. 436–38, session of March 2, 1797. The municipalities of Buenos Aires in 1784 and Luján in 1811 noted similar difficulties.

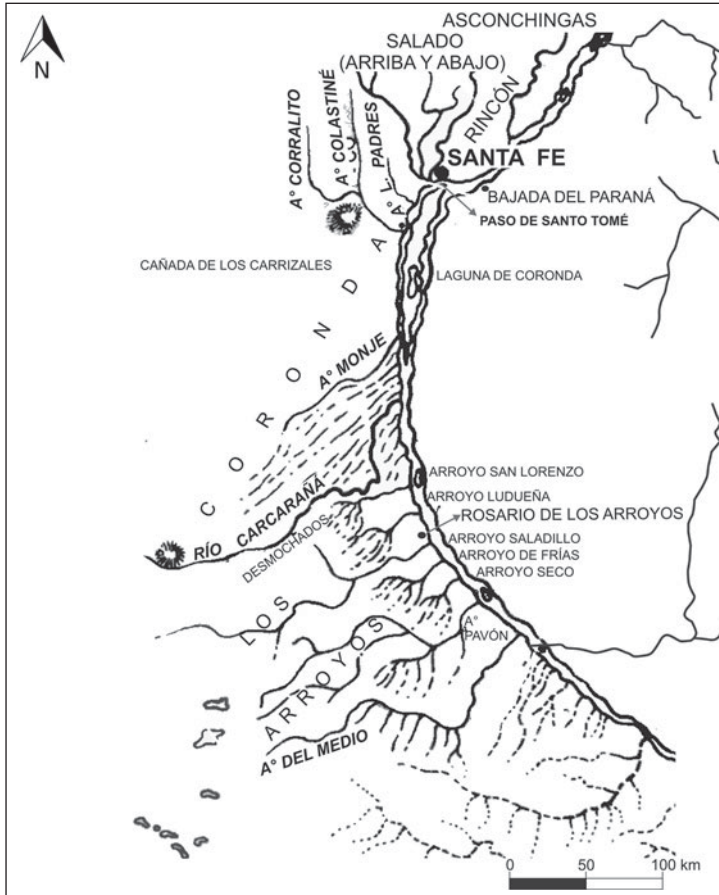
51. The area and the distance varied with the governing methods and means of transport employed.

52. AGSF, Varios documentos, 1634–1816, Legajo 20, fols. 5v–7, January 10, 1791. A month later the city’s notary wrote that there were not enough alcaldes de hermandad to keep this “turbulent” population under control.

53. AGSF, AC, XV, fol. 365.

54. AGSF, XVI B, fols. 512–513v, May 7, 1799: when in 1799 the judge dispatched to Nogoyá reported on the difficulties he encountered in his mission, he emphasized “the

Map 2. Division of Los Arroyos in 1784



Sources: Darío G. Barrera and Facundo Scordo

villages of San Javier, San Jerónimo, and San Pedro,⁵⁵ while others were *mestizos* from Santiago del Estero, Córdoba, and Tucumán. Their presence increased the pressure on available resources; how long individuals had been settled in the area became a determining criterion of their “social capital.”⁵⁶

pride and lack of docility of these people, many of whom are vagrants and convicts who roam this country with complete freedom and impunity.”

55. This was the consequence of contrasting policies pursued in these villages after the Jesuits’ expulsion: Miriam Moriconi, “Intersecciones críticas. Doctrineros en pueblos de indios de Santa Fe después de la expulsión de la Compañía de Jesús (1767–1804),” *Revista de ciencias sociales* 6, no. 26 (2014): 29–48.

56. An “autochthony capital” could be claimed against newcomers: Émilie Aunis et al., eds., *Les territoires de l’autochtonie. Penser la transformation des rapports sociaux au prisme du “local”* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2016).

The vast rural districts that had emerged out of the Catholic jurisdictional model began to be divided up.⁵⁷ In 1784 the Los Arroyos jurisdiction was split in two with the creation of the county of Coronda, which was entrusted to a new *alcalde de hermandad* (map 2).⁵⁸ This territorial division was helped by the prior existence of the parish of Coronda, founded in 1749 by the bishop of the diocesan province of Buenos Aires, and the new rural jurisdiction stretched from the Santo Tomé ford to the north bank of the Carcarañá.⁵⁹ However, only five years after its creation, it was subdivided once again (map 3). It is crucial to establish how and by whom this measure was adopted: Was it decided by the king, the viceroy, the intendant, an agent of the *gobernación*, or the municipal council of Santa Fe? Indeed, to write a social history of these institutions it is essential to examine the nature of the discussions and negotiations that preceded this decision.

From the Microsocial to Political Structures, from Society to Institutions

On December 3, 1787, the *vecinos* of Desmochados—the southwestern part of the county of Coronda, “settled on the banks of the Carcarañá river”—wrote to the viceroy to inform him of their fate and beg him to send experienced soldiers to defend the forts of Melincué and Zapallar south of their boundary. They complained of attacks perpetrated by “incorrigible infidels” against their livestock, which was “the sole target of their reckless affronts.” This situation, they added, would soon force them to leave the area.⁶⁰ In July 1788 the *vecinos* of the new county of Coronda followed their example, suggesting to the viceroy that they could pay for moving the “vagrants and thieves infesting these lands” to the northern border, where a new settlement could be established. They sent their request

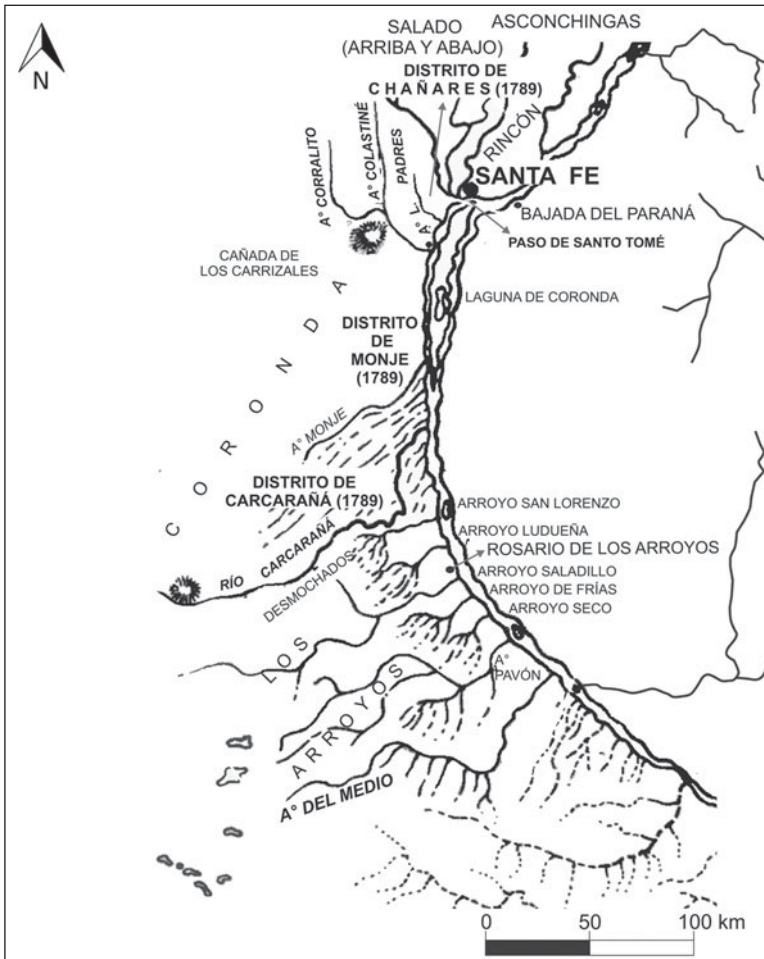
57. On this jurisdictional model, see Luca Mannori, “Justicia y administración entre antiguo y nuevo régimen,” *Revista jurídica* 15 (2007): 125–46.

58. The Los Arroyos jurisdiction covered the southern part of Santa Fe, west of the Paraná, from the Santo Tomé ford to the Arroyo del Medio (240 km). To the west it was bordered by a series of small forts. In total, this territory encompassed more than one million hectares. An initial examination of this territorial division can be found in Darío G. Barrera, “La política desde el campo: iniciativas locales y gobierno rural en tiempos reformistas (Santa Fe, virreinato del Río de la Plata a finales del siglo XVIII),” *Revista de Indias* 77, no. 270 (2017): 521–49.

59. On the complex relations between royal and ecclesiastical jurisdictions in the preceding period, see Darío G. Barrera and Miriam S. Moriconi, “Gobiernos y territorialidades. Coronda, de caserío a curato (Santa Fe, Gobernación y Obispado de Buenos Aires, 1660–1749),” *Nuevo Mundo Mundos Nuevos*, 2015, <http://journals.openedition.org/nuevomundo/67858>.

60. AGN, IX-4-1-7: document signed at “Desmochados by the Carcarañá river, December 3, 1787. This region’s *vecinos* make it known that ...” More than twenty Desmochados *vecinos* signed the text, and one of them did so on behalf of several soldiers who could not sign their names.

Map 3. Division of Coronda in 1789



Source: Darío G. Barrera and Facundo Scordo

through the Santa Fe representative (*procurador*), Juan Francisco de Larrechea, who had held this position since the beginning of the year.⁶¹

The transfer of “strangers” to the border area was endorsed by husbandmen, livestock breeders, the viceregal authority, and militia leaders. On February 12, 1789, Viceroy Nicolás del Campo, Marquis of Loreto, addressed the municipal

61. AGSF, AC, XV B, fols. 292 and 314: several months later, in November 1788, the municipality declared it had mislaid the petition and “could not find” it in its archives. It ordered the procurador to resolve this issue. A week later the latter confidently stated that he was going to Buenos Aires armed with the said request.

council of Santa Fe.⁶² He gave the military commander, an officer under his authority, a copy of the request he had been sent, asking him what he thought of the “petition (*representación*) from the vecinos of Coronda” and how best to address their grievances.⁶³ He bestowed on the captain of the company of soldiers known as the Blandengues⁶⁴ the curious title of “commander in charge of idle populations,”⁶⁵ asked the municipal council for a list of vecinos likely to finance the proposal, and ordered the appointment of justices of the peace (*jueces pedáneos*), district judges in charge of minor offenses:

*so that these areas may not lack justices of the peace, who are charged with preventing and limiting the thefts and assaults suffered there, the municipal council of Santa Fe is granted the provisional power to appoint three such judges from its subjects. Their zeal and probity should guarantee the proper exercise of their commission, which they shall exercise in the three districts indicated by the municipal council's representative in his report, until further notice.*⁶⁶

The municipality appointed Domingo Alarcón, Coronda's *alcalde de hermandad*, to draw up a list of the vecinos in his jurisdiction and assess the sums required to displace “this noxious population.” The planned relocation site was on the banks of the Las Ovejas creek, forty-four leagues north of Coronda.⁶⁷ As the vecinos were willing to bear the financial cost of this operation, the viceroy ordered the creation of three justice of the peace positions and the corresponding districts.⁶⁸ According to the municipality's arguments, the goal was to lighten the workload of Coronda's *alcalde de hermandad*.⁶⁹

On March 2, 1789, the Santa Fe council appointed the individuals in charge of the three new jurisdictions: Carcarañá, Arroyo de Monje, and Chañares. These areas were delimited by a series of rivers: the Paraná served as the eastern boundary for the county as a whole and three of its tributaries were used to divide it up. The first district lay from the north bank of the Carcarañá river⁷⁰ to the southern side of the Arroyo de Monje; the second stretched from the north bank of this

62. Nicolás Felipe Cristóbal del Campo y Rodríguez de Salamanca (1725–1803), second Marquis of Loreto, viceroy of Río de la Plata between 1784 and 1789, viceroy and superintendent since 1788.

63. AGSF, NYOC, II, fol. 209.

64. The *compañía de Blandengues* was the first regular paid militia established in Santa Fe. In response to the city's authorities, on August 21, 1724, the governor of Buenos Aires, Bruno Mauricio de Zabala, ordered two companies of fifty men each to be set up. In 1750 they were known as the *Blandengues de Santa Fe*.

65. Or *comandante de los vagos* in Spanish: AGSF, AC, XV B, fol. 365; the title gave him the power to displace these people near forts where the company was stationed.

66. AGSF, NYOC, II, fols. 209 and 209v.

67. AGSF, AC, XV B, fol. 353. This decision joined a series of similar plans devised since 1782.

68. AGN, IX-24-1-5, exp. 7.

69. AGSF, AC, XV B, fols. 352v–354. Córdoba had eighty-four justices of the peace.

70. The southern bank was the beginning of the county of Los Arroyos, also known as “Rosario.” It stretched all the way to the Arroyo del Medio.

creek to the south bank of the Colastiné; while the third was bounded in the south by the Colastiné and in the north by the Santo Tomé ford (also called the Salado crossing south of Santa Fe), covering an area of around one square league west of the city (map 3).⁷¹ Coronda's *alcalde de hermandad*—under whose authority the three justices of the peace officiated—found himself at the head of a considerably reduced territory in comparison with the one he had controlled in 1784, stretching from the north bank of the Colastiné to the south side of the Santo Tomé ford. Nevertheless, the appointment of the justices of the peace diminished neither the authority nor the jurisdictional scope of the *alcaldes de hermandad*.⁷² The latter kept their jurisdiction over the newly created districts, devolving their powers to these new judicial auxiliaries⁷³ and retaining the right to appoint *cuadrilleros*.⁷⁴

The process of government also underwent profound changes: letters of commission used to solve particular problems were abandoned in favor of offices attached to an area and a population. The aim of these measures was to better define jurisdictional boundaries and coordinate these territories more effectively. Despite this desire to fix the contours of an uncertain area open to the west, the appointment of a judge—in this case a justice of the peace—remained the preferred option. Within a regime that was jurisdictional in nature, this figure remained a much more important reference point for the population than territorial or legislative dimensions.

It is useful to emphasize the process that resulted in the creation of these judges and the districts where they exercised their powers. These measures were applied by the Santa Fe municipality “in keeping with the demands of the rural vecinos of the county of Coronda and the order given by His Excellency,” the viceroy.⁷⁵ The vecinos of Coronda were thus the first actors in these changes, suggesting the size of each district and recommending the creation of the new magistracies and the names of their future holders.⁷⁶ It was the viceroy who

71. AGSF, AC, XV B, fol. 353v, March 2, 1789.

72. Indeed, the powers of the *alcaldes de hermandad* and the parish priests were reinforced at the expense of the former jurisdictions that encompassed them.

73. AGSF, AC, XVI B, fol. 435, January 16, 1797, makes the status of the justices of the peace as judicial auxiliaries explicit, describing them as the “auxiliary judges or *pedáneos* of the *alcaldes de hermandad*.”

74. These were armed sergeants under the authority of an *alcalde de hermandad*. Appointed and maintained by the *alcaldes*, they helped them exercise their coercive power and make arrests. Similarly, the *alcaldes de hermandad* had great influence over the selection of justices of the peace in their jurisdiction since the municipalities required them to draw up lists of men eligible to hold this office.

75. AGN, IX-24-1-5, exp. 7.

76. It is likely—though not proven—that the vecinos of Coronda took their inspiration from the city of Córdoba, where justices of the peace had been appointed since the mid-eighteenth century. From 1783 the governor and intendant, the Marquis of Sobremonte, established a hierarchy between these judges and had their jurisdictions overlap with parish boundaries: Silvia Romano, “Instituciones coloniales en contextos republicanos. Los jueces de la campaña cordobesa en las primeras décadas postrevolucionarias,”

subsequently gave the order appointing the three justices of the peace “to monitor and prevent any disorder”⁷⁷ in the districts suggested by the city representative. In contrast, the municipal council seems to have played only a minor role, or to have merely rubber-stamped the viceregal decision.

Who then were the proponents of the project within the small political community of Coronda? What relational resources did they have at their disposal and how did they make use of them? What were their other grievances? The list of petitioners included a series of names: militia captain Fernando Méndez, Pedro de Gaviola, Ignacio de la Cruz Suero, Ramón Aguilera, Leonardo Romero, Domingo Correa, Juan Francisco de los Ríos, Domingo de los Ríos, Manuel Antonio Zavala, Manuel Torres, José Zeballos, Doña Isidora Zeballos (the only female vecina in Coronda), Ignacio Martínez, royal postmaster Juan José Redruello, sergeant Juan Segundo Ortíz de Vergara, the priest Malaquías Duarte Neves, Gabriel de Lassaga, Manuel de Toro y Villalobos, Francisco Solano Frutos, and Martín Francisco de Larrechea.⁷⁸ They all claimed the status of “honest landowners,” though four declared themselves resident in the city of Santa Fe.⁷⁹ Several of them also featured on the list of those who had held the office of *alcalde de hermandad* in Coronda: Ignacio de la Cruz Suero (1784), Cayetano de Torres (1785), Manuel Antonio Zavala (1786), Jacinto de Vergara (1787), José Miguel de Retolosa (1788), and Domingo Alarcón (1789). Two of the three justices of the peace appointed were likewise on the list of petitioners: Francisco de la Cruz Suero and Martín Francisco de Larrechea.⁸⁰ Over the course of their lives these wealthy individuals had held offices and responsibilities within the government or the militia. They also endeavored to control these small rural magistracies by exercising them directly or passing them on to close associates. But their influence did not stop there, as the following series of pen-portraits shows.

The militia captain Fernando Méndez was well established in Coronda. According to the petition sent to the viceroy, his financial contribution to the expulsion of undesirable populations amounted to six oxen. On December 2, 1764, during a pastoral visit by the bishop of Buenos Aires, Manuel Antonio de la Torre, three of his children from his marriage to Josefa Busaldo (Rosa, Guillermo, and Ramón) received their confirmation in the chapel of Saint Jerome in Coronda.⁸¹ Parish registers also record the marriages of two of his other children (José in 1799 and Nicolasa in 1800), and describe him as a county captain in receipt of a salary. By the time of Nicolasa’s wedding, Fernando was already

in *Revolución. Política e ideas en el Río de la Plata durante la década de 1810*, ed. Fabián Herrero (Rosario: Prohistoria Ediciones, 2010), 184.

77. AGSF, AC, XV, fol. 348.

78. AGN, IX-24-1-5, exp. 7. The list was drawn up on April 1, 1789, and finalized on April 3 when the names of six inhabitants staying in Santa Fe were added.

79. AGSF, AC, XV B, fol. 353.

80. AGSF, AC, XV B, fol. 360.

81. Coronda, Santa Fe, San Jerónimo parish, Book of Confirmations, vol. 1 (1747–1764).

dead.⁸² José and Nicolasa's marriages were witnessed by Domingo Alarcón (alcalde de hermandad in 1789) and his wife Severina Méndez, who was none other than Fernando's sister.

Pedro de Gaviola too was generous in his support of the migration project: he offered twenty-five oxen and several carts to transport the undesirables and their belongings. His father, Manuel de Gaviola, was one of the most active members of the Santa Fe municipal council. Since 1750 he had accumulated lands south of the city, and in 1766 he had bought the title of alcalde provincial of the *santa hermandad*. This office gave him the power to arbitrate all disputes arising within the Santa Fe jurisdiction.⁸³ Pedro had specialized in the agricultural tithe market from the 1770s. He was often a successful bidder for tithes on livestock and became the main administrator of the cures of Paraná (1770), Los Arroyos (1779, 1781, 1786), and Coronda (1781, 1783). In 1787, a year before the petition, he won the bid to collect tithes on livestock in Paraná, as well as those on grain and livestock in Coronda.⁸⁴ His sister María Polonia was married to another signatory of the petition, Manuel de Toro y Villalobos. Besides his generosity towards the convents of Santa Fe, the latter made a will in 1796 which stated that, before their marriage, he and his wife had owned lands in Coronda "adjoining those of the Oroños."⁸⁵ Thus, far from the image of the modest farmer, Manuel de Toro was a wealthy man. He had been procurador of the city of Santa Fe in 1778, an alcalde dealing with criminal cases in 1781, 1784, and 1786, first alcalde (*alcalde de primer voto*) in 1787, as well as a representative and defender of the poor in 1790. In 1791 he was appointed the municipality's procurador, replacing Andrés de Aldao. In 1794 he was elected first alcalde one last time. His will mentions several debtors, among them his late father-in-law Manuel de Gaviola. As this example clearly shows, political and family communities were closely intertwined.

Just like Pedro de Gaviola, Domingo de los Ríos benefited from the farm trade: in 1763 he collected the tithes on livestock from three villages, and in 1769 he collected those on grain in Coronda. The same was true of Juan José Redruello. In addition to the position of royal mail administrator which he held in 1783, he was a former military captain and collected the tithes on grain in Los Arroyos (1768 and 1772) and Coronda (1784, 1790, 1792, 1793, and 1794).⁸⁶

The history of the Larrechea family is indissociable from this area and, as such, it is unsurprising that today there is a village bearing its name. Martín Francisco de Larrechea was Santa Fe's second alcalde in 1776 and procurador in 1780. The emissary of Coronda who in 1788 had handed the viceroy the petition asking for the expulsion of the undesirables towards Arroyo de las Ovejas and the

82. Coronda, Santa Fe, San Jerónimo parish, Book of Marriages, vol. 1 (1742–1792).

83. AGSF, AC, *passim*.

84. AGN, IX-13-3-3. I wish to thank Julio Djenderedjian for providing a methodical electronic transcription of this document.

85. AGSF, AC, supplement 1796–1811, fol. 3.

86. AGN, IX-24-01-07, Guerra y Marina, leg. 3, exp. 6.

creation of the three new districts was none other than his brother Juan Francisco de Larrechea. He too had been second *alcalde* in 1767 and first *alcalde* in 1783 and 1804. In 1788 he held the position of *procurador* for another year but turned down that of orphans' judge: claiming that the two offices were incompatible, he declined the one that was less prestigious and unpaid. Indeed, that same year Juan Francisco complained about the time he spent on the mission with which the *vecinos* of Coronda had entrusted him. In Buenos Aires he was also a member of the *juntas*—*Proprios y arbitrios de temporalidades*—charged with administering the property confiscated from the Jesuits.⁸⁷ Like many of their peers, the two Larrechea brothers were involved in the tithe trade. In 1759, Juan Francisco leased the tithes imposed on livestock sales in Los Arroyos and Coronda. He did the same thing in 1765 in Coronda (on grain) and in 1772 in Paraná (on livestock). Martín Francisco succeeded his brother in Los Arroyos and Coronda in 1774.⁸⁸

In addition to the formation of new districts, these Coronda landowners, who were well positioned within the Santa Fe municipal council, also demanded an increase in the number of soldiers in the Blandengues company. Santa Fe's inhabitants wanted this guard, which had been made up of four companies of twenty-five men since 1788, to integrate twenty-five or fifty new soldiers. The members of this unit were paid a wage to defend the border, and since its establishment their provisioning had proved a major expense and consequently the cause of never-ending disputes. The desire to increase the number of troops may seem paradoxical since the territory was divided into smaller units and the border better protected than before, but the *vecinos* of Coronda had other concerns.

Appointed justice of the peace of the Chañares jurisdiction, Martín Francisco de Larrechea replied that he would willingly accept this office, but observed that:

*The opportunity will present itself for me to arrest an offender but, not being able to carry out this task alone, I will request the help of the population of the district. But what will happen in that case? The people will act in collusion with the offender ... and run to his aid by telling him of my intentions. He will then be free to flee across the fields and take refuge in the impenetrable forests covering the area. For this reason it will be very difficult for me to capture and punish the culprits.*⁸⁹

Just like the *vecinos* of Desmochados, he ended his argument by requesting four Blandengues to assist him in his police and judicial missions. He recommended that these soldiers should have no family or friendship ties with inhabitants of the district. He further requested permission to accommodate them in his home, at his

87. AGSF, AC, XV B, fol. 255, session of January 7, 1788.

88. AGN, IX-3-3-3; IX-23-4-6, exp. 110. Another signatory of the petition, Manuel Torres, was a farmer; he bred horses and owned a farm in Coronda which was located one league from Salado, at the end of the "Carrizal road" known today as Carrizales.

89. AGN, IX-24-01-05, exp. 7, Martín Francisco de Larrechea to the first *alcalde* of Santa Fe, José Arias Troncoso, March 21, 1789.

own expense, in order to have them at his disposal at all times “and thus catch unawares any individuals who may commit offenses.” He made clear that his acceptance of this position was conditional on this demand. Otherwise, he risked “becoming the target of insults, assaults, and death threats, even in [his own] home or in the exercise of justice.”⁹⁰ Although Martín Francisco’s requests were never granted—he thus turned down the offer—Santa Fe eventually stationed twenty-five additional soldiers in its border garrison.

This measure helped strengthen the border but also promised juicy profits for those involved in supplying the territory with beef, bread, salt, *yerba maté*, wood, chili pepper, and so on—namely, the municipal council, the intendant, and the viceroy. In 1788 the alderman Juan Francisco de Aldao, who was used to the disputes over provisioning the troops stationed at the border,⁹¹ began negotiations with the old families (the Vera Mujicas) and the more recent ones (the Larrecheas and Candiotis) that made up Santa Fe’s oligarchy, with the aim of establishing commodity prices and individual contributions.⁹² At the same time, Gabriel de Lassaga, a vecino of Coronda, was made administrator of the municipal excise. De Aldao, who was a representative of the city’s old elite, opposed this appointment.⁹³

The “vecinos rurales” settled in the Coronda countryside were thus landowners who resided in their county temporarily or throughout the year. Agricultural producers mindful of defending their local interests, they had stormy relations with the various factions within the Santa Fe municipality. They were army or militia members and were involved in collecting tithes and provisioning the Blandengues company. Apart from the governmental benefits that it anticipated from this process of territorial fragmentation, this elite did not hide its interest in setting up new offices. While the Santa Fe municipal council offered a decreasing number of opportunities—there were fewer aldermen and they could no longer elect alcaldes—the number of candidates for these positions kept growing.

90. AGN, IX-24-01-05, exp. 7, Martín Francisco de Larrechea to the first alcalde of Santa Fe, José Arias Troncoso, March 21, 1789.

91. AGSF, AC, XIV B, fol. 535 ff. In 1779 he had been asked to justify the high cost of rations supplied to soldiers living in the forts. His enemies accused him of inflating prices by systematically providing meat which he sold at a premium.

92. AGSF, AC, XV B; AGN, IX-24-01-07, leg. 5. At the 1788 Santa Fe auction for a six-year contract to provide provisions for the troops, Antonio de Vera Mujica, a royal sublieutenant (*alférez*) and landowner from Santa Fe, came forward as a bidder.

93. AGN, IX-04-01-07, petition by Juan Francisco de Larrechea to the viceroy concerning the quarrels started by the appointment of officers charged with collecting excise duties. A central figure of the American reforms, particularly in Peru and Chile, the finance and war subdelegate was not involved in the process that shaped this new institutional landscape. His absence was due to the fact that in Santa Fe the intendant-governor had entrusted this responsibility to Melchor de Echagüe y Andía, the governor’s former lieutenant. A native of Santa Fe, this official belonged to the old elite close to the Aldao faction. In March 1786 the viceroy relieved him of his duties as governor’s lieutenant in order to appoint him subdelegate: AGSF, AC, XV, fol. 181. In reality, these changes made very little difference to the municipality, which continued to call him by his old title of “lieutenant.”

Territorial Division and the Social Reconfiguration of Rural Government

The territorial division⁹⁴ of the county of Los Arroyos in 1784 was decreed by the governor-intendant,⁹⁵ while that of Coronda in 1789 was ordered by the superintendent viceroy.⁹⁶ This phenomenon became more widespread within the Santa Fe jurisdiction, and in 1791 justices of the peace were appointed in Santa Fe's two other big counties, Los Arroyos and La Otra Banda.⁹⁷ However, these appointments did not completely resolve the difficulties of governing those areas. The vecinos continued to request the creation of new districts, invoking the same reasons put forward in 1784 and 1789. Despite the smaller size of the new jurisdictions, they were still deemed ungovernable. The framework for intervention had indeed been refined, but the same problems persisted.⁹⁸

Nevertheless, the physical and relational distance between appointed agents and inhabitants faded during this period. Unlike *corregidores* (royal magistrates), first *alcaldes*, or *alcaldes de hermandad*, the new judges were not the instruments of a distant power. They were directly linked to the municipality and the viceroy communicated with them from Buenos Aires via his main local military representative, the colonel and commander in arms (*comandante de armas*). The appointment of judges at the head of a district for a year, with authority over a

94. On the concept of "territorial division," see Hespanha, *Vísperas del Leviatán*, 80–85.

95. AGSF, AC, XV, fols. 112–13, December 24, 1783; XVI A, fols. 78–80: similar measures were taken in July 1790 in view of "the urgent need to create justices of the peace in Paraná, Rincón, and Ascochingas." Fol. 111 contains a reference to the full title of the appointed intendant: "L[ord] Intendant-General of the Army and Royal Finances" (*Sr. Intendente General de Ejército y Real Hazienda*). The jurisdiction under his responsibility was designated as: "General Superintendence of Royal Finances" (*Superintendencia General de Real Hazienda*).

96. AGSF, AC, XV B, fol. 302: in 1788 the superintendence of war and finance was given to the Viceroy of Río de la Plata, the Marquis of Loreto; Santa Fe's authorities were informed of this on August 23, 1788.

97. AGSF, Varios documentos, 1634–1816, carton 20, fols. 5–7, January 10, 1791: "And since the current justices of the peace cannot control such vast districts, the appointment is ordered of those commissioned above."

98. These problems were dealt with differently in the various imperial territories. In New Spain, where government consisted of several interlocking structures—*audiencias*, *corregimientos*, and Indian villages—the figure of the subdelegate rose above the conflicts that emerged most frequently between municipalities and native villages: Beatriz Rojas, *Las ciudades novohispanas. Siete ensayos. Historia y territorio* (Mexico/Zamora: Instituto Mora/El colegio de Michoacán, 2016). Cuba, which was a military captaincy, used *capitanes pedáneos* who served as both police officers and justices of the peace: François Godicheau, "Les *capitanes pedáneos*, juges et policiers à Cuba (1765–1851)" (paper given at the conference "Police et justice, le nœud gordien," University of Geneva, November 6, 2014), <http://sypoc.hypotheses.org/410>.

given area and its population, represented an unprecedented measure within the institutional framework that characterized the government of rural territories. However, the judges still came under the authority of the higher jurisdictions: territorial fragmentation did not lead to autonomy. The model put in place in Coronda in 1789 with its first three districts spread quickly. In 1804 there were already more than forty counties in the Santa Fe jurisdiction—a number that remained stable until their drastic reduction after 1856.⁹⁹ The districts that were formed in this way were first delineated by geographical landmarks (especially watercourses), then by social markers corresponding to the name of a landowner, an Indian reduction, or a track used by cattle.

These events reflected a fundamental problem facing the Hispanic Monarchy in its attempt at imperial projection: the question of what form of government was best suited to the process of territorial division.¹⁰⁰ It is surely by linking these two phenomena that we can understand the strategies employed by the local elites—born of the parceling out of properties and the cultivation of agricultural areas—in order to sustainably develop and structure their region at a time of reform.¹⁰¹ The 1782 Royal Ordinance on Intendants of Río de la Plata reduced rural government to a classic structure entrusted to a provincial *de la hermandad* who sat on the municipal council and was assisted by the *alcaldes de hermandad* and *cuadrilleros*. Coronda's agents dealing with local problems on the ground received no royal orders and were offered no solutions by this ordinance. This failure to legally define the institutional organization of the rural world explains the variety of solutions devised within the Viceroyalty of Río de la Plata.¹⁰² While the

99. Once the Constitution of Argentina was approved on May 1, 1853, each province had to enact a constitution in keeping with the national supreme law. That of Santa Fe was promulgated on May 25, 1856. It reorganized the province into four departments under the authority of the municipality, an institution which had previously been abolished in 1833. In 1813 the counties east of the Paraná were included in the new province of Entre Ríos.

100. A form of government which relied on the active participation of various agents. See Michel Bertrand, "Configurations sociales et jeux politiques aux confins de l'empire espagnol," *Annales HSS* 62, no. 4 (2007): 855–84, in particular p. 864. The author notes the same difficulties in the case of Guatemala from 1760 on. See also Brian Connaughton, "Reforma judicial en España y Nueva España entre los siglos XVIII y XIX. Bitácora de agravios, arbitrios procesales y réplica eclesiástica," *Estudios de historia novohispana* 53 (2015): 30–51. For a historico-legal analysis, see Rafael García Pérez, "El intendente ante la tradición jurídica indiana: continuidad o ruptura?" in *Reformismo y sociedad en la América borbónica*, ed. Pilar Latasa (Pamplona: Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, 2003), 73–110.

101. Jorge I. Domínguez, *Insurrección o lealtad. La desintegración del imperio español en América* [1980], trans. Juan José Utrilla (México: Fondo de cultura económica, 1985). Many of the territorial districts that resulted from these divisions exist to this day in various provinces and cities: in Madrid and Naples, or in the former viceroyalties of New Spain, New Granada, Peru, and Río de la Plata.

102. On Tucumán, see Gabriela Tío Vallejo, "Presencias y ausencias del Cabildo en la construcción del orden provincial. El caso de Tucumán, 1770–1830," *Araucaria. Revista iberoamericana de filosofía, política y humanidades* 9, no. 18 (2007): 236–65.

ordinance went into great detail on how to govern large territories, control senior officials,¹⁰³ and supervise royal and municipal treasuries, and even dwelt on the issue of the municipalities' autonomy,¹⁰⁴ it remained vague on the administration of the countryside even though this was a subject dear to Enlightenment Spain.¹⁰⁵

The community of “vecinos rurales” who used petitions to present their demands was made up of individuals who belonged to an urban elite with an agrarian basis (some of them divided their time between the city and the fields), together with smallholders and families of illiterate soldiers for whom the militia was a way of life. This group was able to mobilize its close associates within the justice system or when a municipal council representative had to be sent to the viceroy. Far from the image of illiterate rural populations on the fringes of communication circuits, the documents produced by this community show that it mastered the language of power and the codes of petitions. For these rural vecinos, political participation did not depend on their residency in the city.¹⁰⁶ Coronda's landowners managed their estates but were also involved in the government of their region by virtue of the affairs that tied them to their city-dwelling relatives and the disquiet they felt when they came into contact with populations whom they deemed undesirable and immoral and who settled near them. The repression led by the rural judges, defenders of the vecinos' agricultural interests, against these populations was universally encouraged, to the extent that those involved discussed how much they would contribute to see the project through.¹⁰⁷ Not only

On Córdoba, see Romano, “Instituciones coloniales en contextos republicanos”; Ana Inés Punta, *Córdoba borbónica. Persistencias coloniales en tiempos de reformas* (Córdoba: UNC, 1997).

103. Mariluz Urquijo, *Estudios sobre la real ordenanza de intendentes*; Ezequiel Abásolo, “Estilo militar de gobierno y disciplinamiento en la administración virreinal rioplatense bajo los borbones,” *Revista de historia del derecho* 33 (2005): 13–67.

104. María Laura San Martino de Dromi, *Intendencias y provincias en la historia argentina* (Buenos Aires: CCA, 1992).

105. María Inés Moraes, ed., *El arreglo de los campos* (Montevideo: Ministerio de Educación y Cultura, 2015).

106. This was made possible by the *ius commune*. This law favored an individual's integration and political involvement in the community, though the nature of this relationship varied with each region. See Tamar Herzog, “La vecindad: entre condición formal y negociación continua. Reflexiones en torno de las categorías sociales y personales,” *Anuario del IEHS* 15 (2000): 127–28. Eugenia Néspolo, “La ‘frontera’ Bonaerense en el siglo XVIII un espacio políticamente concertado: fuertes, vecinos, milicias y autoridades civiles-militares,” *Mundo agrario. Revista de estudios rurales* 7, no. 13 (2006): <https://www.mundoagrario.unlp.edu.ar/article/view/v07n13a08/1181>, states that the status of militiaman was enough to prove an individual resided in a county and belonged to its community.

107. AGSF, Expedientes civiles, CXLIX, fols. 33–34, May 26, 1800: when consulted in 1800 on how to pay for armed reinforcements to assist rural judges, Viceroy Avilés argued that it was first and foremost the wealthiest who should contribute since it was in their interest that the “thieves be exterminated.”

did this community manage to present its political vision of how the countryside should be organized via municipal council representatives and emissaries, it was also able to do it at key moments, formalizing its complaints to ensure that they could be heard by the viceroy.

This microanalysis of the division of Hispanic territories offers several lessons. The new rural judges, generally considered a creation of Bourbon reformism, were in reality the result of neither a political decision from above, nor popular resistance, but of gaps in the legislation. Their appointment emerged from negotiations between the community of vecinos and the viceroy. Having consulted his commander in the region, the latter gave the Santa Fe municipal council, where some of those who initiated the project were employed, the order to implement their plan. The creation of justices of the peace had not been anticipated in Madrid, nor at the viceregal level, but these authorities nevertheless found them useful and compatible with the institutional arsenal available to the Monarchy.

The political achievements of these rural vecinos in Coronda recall the words of Zacarías Moutoukias: “These interventions, from the smallest to those of major political and social importance, required specific resources. The most precious was probably the ability to find exemptions—whether slight or substantial—within administrative structures that helped secure a position or the outcome of a trial, or favored business.”¹⁰⁸ An analysis of the negotiations that preceded the creation of justices of the peace in 1789 thus proves the existence of legal—and legitimate—institutions that were not simply the result of the application of laws inspired and dictated by the monarchical authorities. This office was the outcome of a process negotiated between three main actors: the populations settled in Coronda, the Santa Fe municipality, and the viceroy.¹⁰⁹

These intermediary communities played an important part in regulating rural life. They distinguished themselves as militiamen, soldiers, farmers (who were also armed), tithe collectors, livestock breeders, and, finally, auxiliary judges or municipal representatives sent before the viceroy. The division of the region into new districts was the product of these actors’ territorial practices. The farmers on their lands, the families settled between two rivers or around an oratory or chapel, managed to legally and institutionally translate their experience and knowledge by creating the counties (*partidos*) which would later be called departments

108. Zacarías Moutoukias, “Des liens sociaux à l’ordre politique. Réflexions pour une approche relationnelle des institutions,” *Caravelle* 101 (2013): 111–32, here p. 121.

109. At the same time the viceroy tried to assert his authority over the municipalities: in 1791 he took away Santa Fe’s right to appoint rural judges. The city’s elites and less influential inhabitants did not seem to take umbrage at this since he was the preferred recipient of their requests.

(*departamentos*).¹¹⁰ This experience shows that rural inhabitants did not wait until the Spanish-American revolutions to become politicized.¹¹¹ The episode considered in this article should spur historians to probe the roots of the inventive, dynamic, and historically political and politicized rural world that emerges once we look beyond the narratives of independence.

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110. Until the mid-nineteenth century “district” and “department” were interchangeable in the language of Hispanic actors. This was not the case in France, where the term *département* acquired a specific meaning after the French Revolution. See Marie-Vic Ozouf-Marignier, *La formation des départements. La représentation du territoire français à la fin du 18^e siècle* (Paris: Éd. de l’EHESS, 1989).

111. Annino, *Silencios y disputas*.