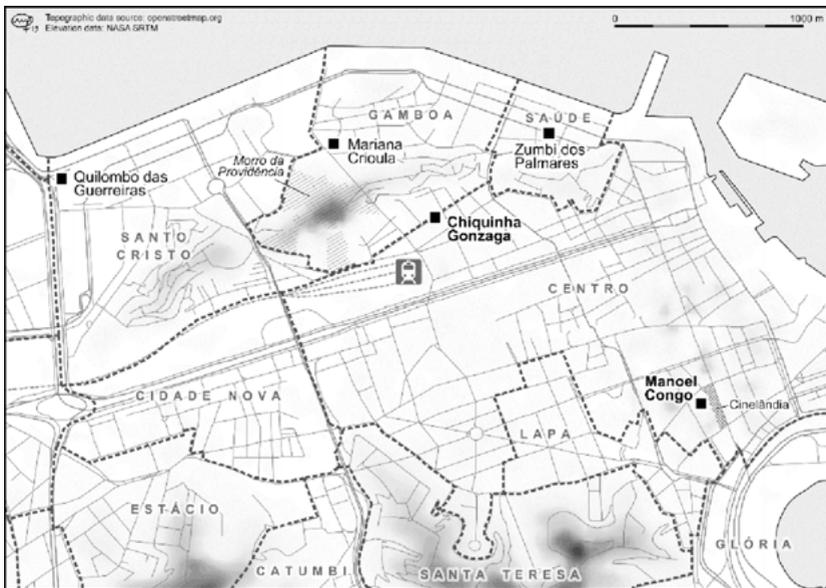


3. Insights into the Squats

A vida na ocupação é difícil!¹

Map 3: Close-up of the area surrounding the squats²



In the following chapter I will provide a detailed description of my case studies, the squats *Chiquinha Gonzaga* and *Manoel Congo*. To provide the necessary context and background for the analysis of the inhabitants' understanding of citizenship and gender, I will first introduce both squats by elaborating on their

1 Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 52-year-old woman, 14.03.2011.

2 Cartography: Monika Feinen, Hürth.

emergence and the initial developments that took place—focussing especially on their internal organization. Then, in a second step, I will point to the changes that occurred in the squats over time, and also consider the potential difficulties and challenges experienced by the inhabitants living in the squats, thus revealing both the commonalities and differences between them.

My description of the squats is based on information I obtained through oral histories and informal observations I recorded in 2011 in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* and *Manoel Congo*. As the interviewees often contributed to the topic in a similar way, for reasons of legibility they are not all cited separately by interview, when e.g. describing the first developments or internal organization of the squats. Only when inhabitants are directly quoted or when they serve as specific examples will I provide an additional reference in the footnotes. As I prefer to rely on my own sources and want to include only the information on the squats that I consider necessary and useful for my study, the small amount of existing literature on the squats by other scholars was rarely used for this chapter.³ In cases where I did draw on existing literature, for example to

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- 3 Only a few studies have been done on the squats, and not all of them provide a really detailed description of them. The existing studies focus mainly on the housing movements and their political organization and practice, or on the self-management inside the squats. Little has been written about the changes and challenges experienced in the squats by the inhabitants themselves. For the squat *Chiquinha Gonzaga* the relevant literature includes: Thesis of Silveira Grandi, Matheus d. 2010. “Práticas Espaciais Insurgentes e Processos de Comunicação. Espacialidade Cotidiana, Política de Escalas e Agir Comunicativo no Movimento dos Sem-Teto no Rio de Janeiro” Dissertação de Mestrado, PPGG/UFRJ, Rio de Janeiro and related articles, for example Tomazine Teixeira, Eduardo and Matheus d. Silveira Grandi. 2008, *O Agir Comunicativo e sua Espacialidade. Reflexões a partir do Exemplo da Ocupação Chiquinha Gonzaga, no Centro do Rio de Janeiro*. <https://www.yumpu.com/pt/document/view/12980627/o-agir-comunicativo-e-seus-territorios-reflexoes-a-partir-do-e> (29 Sep 2015); Silveira Grandi, Matheus d. 2012. “Espacialidade Cotidiana e Processos de Negociação no Movimento dos Sem-Teto Carioca. Reflexões sobre um Caso da Variante por Coletivo”, *Revista Território Autônomo* (1): 15–43; PHD Thesis of Tramontani Ramos, Tatiana. 2012. “As Barricadas do Hiperpreariado Urbano. Das Transformações no Mundo do Trabalho à Dinâmica Sócio-Espacial do Movimento dos Sem-Teto no Rio de Janeiro” Tese de Doutorado, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro; Mamari 2008, *Se Morar é um Direito* and articles of Gonçalves Almeida, Rafael de. 2013, *A Territorialização da Dissidência no Movimento dos Sem-Teto no Rio de Janeiro. Entre “Mediadores”, “Agentes Externos” e Protagonistas*. XIII Simpósio Nacional de Geografia Urbana, 18 a 22 de

complement my findings, I have explicitly indicated through the use of footnotes.

novembro de 2013, UERJ, Rio de Janeiro. <http://www.simpurb2013.com.br/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Rafael-Almeida.pdf> (30 May 2015). There is only one study comparing the squat Chiquinha Gonzaga to another squat (Quilombo das Guerreiras): Vanzan da Silva, Luciana. 2006. “Tramas Urbanas de uma Cidade Ocupada. Análise Possível de uma Experiência com Ocupações no Rio de Janeiro” Dissertação de Mestrado, Universidade Federal Fluminense, Niterói.

For the squat *Manoel Congo* the relevant literature includes: Thesis of Fornazin 2014, *Luta pela Moradia*; thesis of Neves Vasconcelos, Vinicius. 2014. “O Espaço como Produto, Meio e Condição para uma Educação Popular Transformadora. A Prática Pedagógica do Espaço Criarte na Ocupação Manoel Congo – MNLM – RJ” Dissertação de Mestrado, Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro; Thesis of Queiroz e Mello 2014, *Trajetórias, Cotidianos e Utopias* and related articles and talks, for example Queiroz e Mello, Irene de. 2013, *Ramifications of the Social Housing Movements. A Step towards an Alternative Society. Resourceful Cities*. International RC21 Conference, 29-31 August 2013, Berlin. <http://www.rc21.org/conferences/berlin2013/RC21-Berlin-Papers-3/26-MELLO-Irene.pdf> (02 Nov 2015); Carle-Marsan 2013, *Luttes de Brésiliennes pour le Droit à la ville* (see section 4.3) and article of Rodrigues da Silva 2010, *Ocupação Manuel Congo*.

The squats are also mentioned in some smaller studies or online reports (including by NGOs), but without studying or describing them in much detail; for example Instituto Pólis. 2009, *Moradia é Central — Rio de Janeiro*, Rio de Janeiro: Instituto Pólis; Fundação de Direitos Humanos Bento Rubião. 2010, *Direito à Moradia na Cidade do Rio de Janeiro*, Rio de Janeiro: Fundação de Direitos Humanos Bento Rubião; Dantas, Diana, Elza Albuquerque, Patrícia Streit, and Renata Souza. 2007. “Direito à Moradia. Famílias Ocupam Prédios Abandonados para Sobreviver”, *Revista Eclética* (24): 62–67; Schmidt, Katharina. 2010. „Aneignung öffentlicher Räume Rio de Janeiro“ Masterarbeit, Universität Innsbruck, Innsbruck; Hamdi, Alice. 2012. „Territorien des Widerstandes. Entstehungshintergründe und Perspektiven der autonomen Besetzungen in Rio de Janeiro“ Diplomarbeit, Universität Wien, Wien; Garuzi Luz Machado, Giulia. 2013, *Cidadania, Reconhecimento e Movimentos Sociais*. XXI Seminário de Iniciação Científica da Puc-Rio, 27 a 30 de agosto de 2013, Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro. http://www.puc-rio.br/pibic/relatorio_resumo2013/relatorios_pdf/ccs/SOC/CSOC-Giulia%20Garuzi%20Luz%20Machado.pdf (29 Sep 2015).

3.1 THE SQUAT *CHIQUINHA GONZAGA*

Figure 2: Front view of *Chiquinha Gonzaga*⁴



The squat *Chiquinha Gonzaga*⁵ is a run-down high-rise building, which is located on the street *Rua Barão de São Felix Nº 110* behind Rio de Janeiro's central station⁶ at the foot of the *Favela Morro da Providência*⁷ (see Map 3). At the time of the interviews, the area surrounding the squat was characterized by a visible lack of urban development measures, and by poverty, prostitution, and

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- 4 The pictures used in this study serve only for illustration and are not part of the analysis. They are intended mainly to help the reader to better imagine the place of study. Photograph: Bea Wittger, 2011.
- 5 According to some of the inhabitants of the squat, *Chiquinha Gonzaga* was a Brazilian composer and pianist. She was also a woman who had resisted the conventions of her time and also took part in social movements. The name was chosen in order to honor a person who in the past had engaged in resistance and struggles. Interestingly, most of the inhabitants could not tell me much about her, or about the specific reason for the selection of the name.
- 6 Unless otherwise indicated, I use *Rio de Janeiro* to refer to the capital of the Federal State of Rio de Janeiro.
- 7 The *Morro da Providência* is supposed to be one of the oldest *favelas* in Rio de Janeiro, and also the place where allegedly the name *favela* originated. For further reading see for example Braathen, Einaar, Timo B. Celina Myrann Sørboe, Anna C. Christovão, and Valéria Pinheiro. 2013. "Rio de Janeiro. Favela Policies and Recent Social Mobilizations", *NIBR Working Paper* (110): 1–62 or Fabricius, Daniela. 2008. "Resisting Representation. The Informal Geographies of Rio de Janeiro", *Harvard Design Magazine* (28): 1–8.

drug trafficking. Therefore it was considered—especially by many members of the middle- and upper classes—as one of the “dangerous” areas of Rio de Janeiro. That the area was in fact a problematic and sometimes challenging place to live was expressed frequently during the interviews by those who actually lived there—the inhabitants of the squat:

Aí o telefone tocou e fui atender e a menina: Olha, a ocupação vai ser hoje, hem! À meia-noite. Na Central do Brasil aqui. Na Central? Meu Deus do céu!⁸

Se eu tivesse condições eu não moraria. (...) o centro do Rio esta muito abandonado. A energia daqui ta muito ruim. (...) você que passa, você vê drogado (...), prostituição. É uma coisa que não me faz bem.⁹

Aí no ano passado a filha dele ficou alguns meses aqui comigo, mas também não se adaptou ao meu regime porque não pode soltar, mesmo porque a situação aí de cima não ia deixar uma menina que nunca viveu aqui, sempre viveu em outro lugar, vivia aqui dentro, e vivia solta nessa rua aqui e você sabe muito bem que é a Central do Brasil. Entendeu, então eu não ia deixar ela conviver com determinadas coisas que ela não estava acostumada.¹⁰

Since the area is an important traffic junction in the city center, during the day it was always quite animated. The way from the central station to *Chiquinha Gonzaga* was flanked by small shops of unregulated street vendors, where prices in comparison to the south zone (*Zona Sul*) were low, and goods more affordable for the low-income population. This was also the area where street and beach vendors bought the products they offered for sale on the irregular market in the city center and the *Zona Sul*.

The streets and houses around the squat were highly degenerated. The *Rua Barão de São Felix* was full of recycling depots, so that besides of a lot of car traffic at rush hour, loaded trucks frequently passed through the small street and not only fostered its destruction and dirtiness, but also contributed to a high level of noise pollution. During the day it was therefore sometimes difficult even to follow a conversation in one of the street-facing rooms in the lower levels of the squat. The lack of investment in urban renewal measures in the area’s sewage system meant that after rainy days the street was full of waste water, which caused a foul odor, especially in summer. The inhabitants of *Chiquinha*

8 Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 59-year-old woman, 03.03.2011.

9 Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 35-year-old woman, 23.2.2011.

10 Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 67-year-old woman, 10.03.2011.

Gonzaga, who had to pass along the street every day on their way to work or school, also complained about it and about the associated risks to their health. Speaking during one of the interviews about potential investments in the area in the context of the—at the time of the interviews, still forthcoming—major sport events in Rio de Janeiro (FIFA World Cup and Olympic Games), a female inhabitant of *Chiquinha Gonzaga* expressed the need for public works in the area:¹¹

A Rodoviária vai ser mexida, uma boa parte aqui do morro vai ser tirado. Vão tirar muita casa aí da vizinhança! Eles vão mexer com o centro do Rio todo. Não tem uma obra ali? Eles tão fazendo porque todas essas obras que tem aqui de saneamento, isso é tudo do tempo de Don Pedro. Então você vê que tudo aqui em volta, eles tão botando tudo em cima. Estão botando manilhas grandes, que quando chove um pouquinho essa rua enche, é horrível. Então eles vão ter que mexer nisso tudo aqui. Então você ta vendo o processo aqui. E tem muita coisa que está atrasada.¹²

Another problem, especially for the inhabitants in the squat with children, was the visible presence of prostitution and drug-dealing in the area surrounding the squat, and the inhabitants' related fear of getting involved or caught in a drug conflict. One of the founding members of the squat confirmed during our conversations that at the time the building was first occupied by them, the area already "had an owner." He confirmed that due to this fact, conflict and problems with the local drug dealers had emerged, and especially the young people living in the squat were in danger of getting involved in it.¹³ Additionally, the installation of the UPP on the neighboring *Favela Morro da Providência* on 26 of April in 2010¹⁴ led to an increased presence of the drug-dealing in front of the building, as the dealers were forced to *descer ao asfalto* (to come down to the asphalt) to be able to continue their drug business without being disturbed by the police: "*Ali depois da Central. A boca de fumo está ali. Todo mundo sabe onde é (...). Mas o tráfico ta lá (...). Aqui é para mostrar lá fora que vocês*

11 Finally in 2014, as some inhabitants told me, at least the sewage system of the *Rua Barão de São Felix* had been renewed.

12 Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 67-year-old woman, 10.03.2011.

13 Interview with founding member of the squat *Chiquinha Gonzaga*, 06.05.2011.

14 Date from Governo do Rio de Janeiro. n.a., *UPP Providência. Dados sobre a Implantação da UPP Providência*. <http://www.upprj.com/index.php/informacao/informacao-selecionado/ficha-tecnica-upp-providencia/Provid%C3%AAncia> (30 May 2015).

podem vir para cá. Mas não é assim. Porque quando tiraram eles lá de cima eles ficaram todos aqui em baixo."¹⁵

The other inhabitants also reported that the installation of the UPP had not helped to solve the problem of the drug traffic, but only to move the problem—meaning its location and visibility during the day—from one place (the *favela*) to another (in front of the squat).¹⁶ Correspondingly, the inhabitants frequently expressed the fear that their children could get involved, and told me that it was one of the reasons why they wished to leave the squat and area in the long run:

[O] pai dos meus filhos não aceita isso de jeito nenhum. Porque ele acha muito ruim os filhos dele estarem morando ali, que não sei o que ... que não é um lugar legal! Mas graças a Deus eu consigo ter um controle. A pesar de assim: são três. A de 20 e o de 16 moram na ocupação. E o pequenininho mora comigo. Tem dois meses que está morando comigo. Eu consigo ter um controle tão grande com eles, que os meus filhos não se envolvem em nada.¹⁷

In some cases the involvement of children in the drug trade had already become reality. Some parents reported about their children's involvement and sometimes even imprisonment due to the drug-dealing in the area:

Eu tenho um filho que se envolveu (...). Que não quer dizer que está morto nem está perdido nem nada. Tanta gente passa por isso então ele até ... até tem uns que ajudam no futuro a dar mais valor à própria vida. Já outros é diferente. Mas os outros, meus filhos, eu vejo eles muito bem encaminhados.¹⁸

One of the female inhabitants, for example, reported that two of her three children had been involved since living in the squat. Her 22-year-old daughter had started to consume drugs and became involved shortly after they had moved to *Chiquinha Gonzaga*, and at the time of the interview had already served a prison sentence of nine months. During my stay, the interviewed woman was still waiting for her 26-year-old son to be released from prison after serving a sentence of two years. She repeatedly stressed the necessity that her children live somewhere else, especially after their sentences, so as not to get involved again. She was suffering due to the regular, humiliating visits to the prison and the additional financial pressure to ensure the sufficient alimentation of her son

15 Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 67-year-old woman, 10.03.2011.

16 Informal talk in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 52-year-old woman, 09.05.2011.

17 Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 36-year-old woman, 17.03.2011.

18 Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 50-year-old man, 14.03.2011.

inside prison, something that, due to the poor prison conditions in Brazil, was not automatically guaranteed.

The building itself had been abandoned for at least 21 years, so at the time of its initial occupation, it was not in a livable condition. Only through the work of the occupants had it been made habitable again. Nevertheless, at the time of my visit the building was in a poor condition, and its previous long abandonment quite evident. The squat was the only high-rise building in the area and therefore easy to identify. As there was no bell at the main entrance door, it was only possible to enter the building by knowing someone who could open the door, or by waiting until someone was leaving the building.

On the first floor there was a big meeting room with an adjoining patio and three single rooms, one of which was planned to be used as a computer room.¹⁹ Additionally, next to the entrance, the building possessed a big garage, which could be used by the inhabitants of the squat.

The building had been constructed in the 1950s, designated to be a hotel, before becoming the property of the Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform (*Instituto de Reforma Agraria e Colonização*, INCRA). As it had been intended to be a hotel, the building consisted of 13 floors, each of them with six single rooms with an estimated size of 20 square meters, including a small separate bathroom.²⁰ Inside the rooms the facility standards varied according to the income and desire of each inhabitant to invest in it. The inhabitants tried to use the small spaces as well as possible, and very often used for example furniture to separate each apartment in order to have at least the feeling of having two rooms available. To what extent the space of the apartment was sufficient or comfortable for the inhabitants depended on their family size. According to my observations, the number of people living in one room varied between one and five.

Not only the interiors, but also the front doors of the apartments were individually designed. Just as in an ordinary apartment building, they were

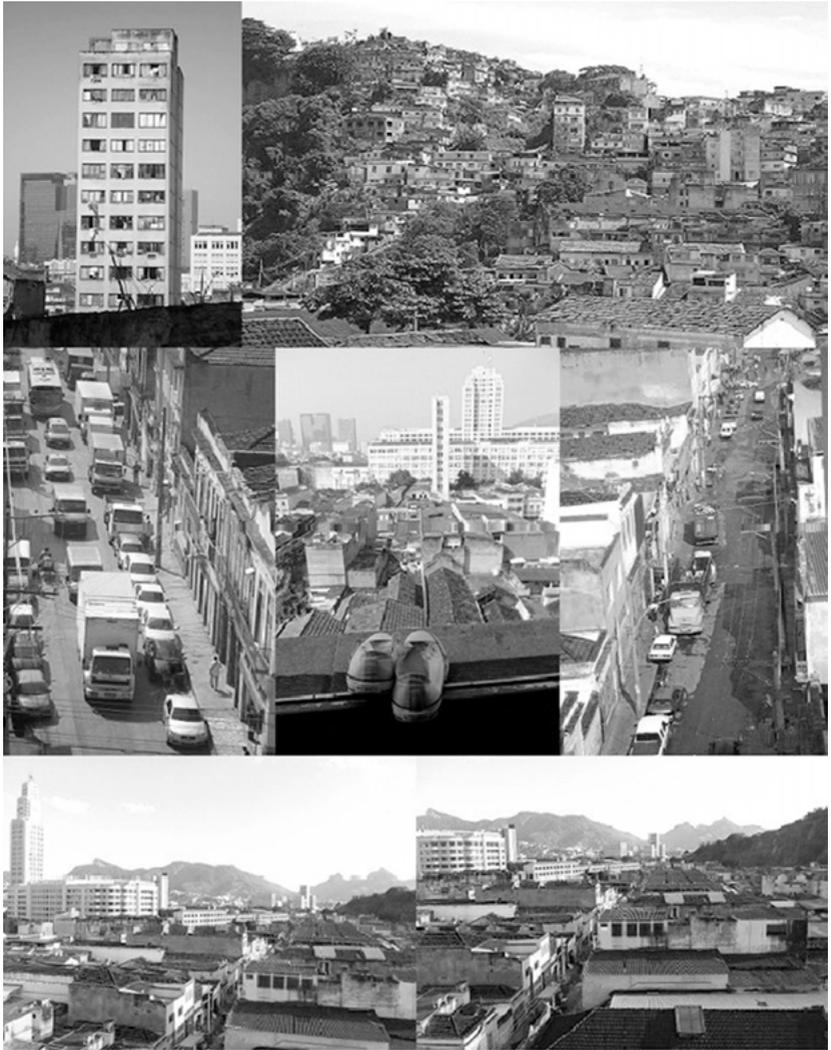
19 This goal was never realized. Although the initial intention was to create a computer room for the people, and especially the children, in the squat, by the time of my short visit in 2012 the space had been “invaded” by a person and had become another apartment.

20 On the 13th floor only there were two bigger rooms instead of six smaller ones.

furnished with their own locks.²¹ The corridors and stairways of the squat were run-down, dirty, and in many places mold-infested. The lighting and the small windows in the stairways were very often broken. The same applied to the rooms, where the window glass was not always intact, and therefore the closing of windows was often only provisionally possible. The condition of the stairways also differed on every floor and depended on the people who lived there and the degree of responsibility they felt for its maintenance. That these feelings of responsibility for the maintenance of the floor differed considerably was not only visible, but also often subject of disputes among the inhabitants (see section 3.1.2). The walls inside the building were also used for announcements, such as for meetings, or to remind people to pay the water bill. The elevator did not work and therefore the elevator shafts were closed provisionally with wood, and some of the cables were exposed. The lack of a lift in a 13-story building was especially stressful in the hot summer, when people had to climb up to the upper floors with their daily groceries and their small children.

21 Even though this detail seems to be normal and therefore not worth mentioning, in *Manoel Congo*, as we will learn in section 3.2, for reasons of the internal control of the inhabitants, they were not allowed to lock their doors.

Figure 3: Rear view of the building from Favela Morro da Providência and area surrounding the squat²²



22 Photograph: Bea Wittger, 2011.

Figure 4: Entrance area of Chiquinha Gonzaga²³



Figure 5: Assembly room and terrace of Chiquinha Gonzaga²⁴



23 Photograph: Bea Wittger, 2011.

24 Ibid.

Figure 6: Individually designed doors in Chiquinha Gonzaga²⁵



Figure 7: Official announcements²⁶



25 Photograph: Bea Wittger, 2011.

26 Ibid.

Figure 8: Corridors and stairways of the building²⁷



27 Photograph: Bea Wittger, 2011.

3.1.1 Genesis and First Organization

Foi a primeira ocupação organizada no Rio de Janeiro, num prédio grande igual a esse, num prédio que estava parado há 20 anos. E as famílias se reuniram e deu certo. Não foi nada desorganizado.²⁸

The occupation of the building was the first of its kind in Rio de Janeiro, and the result of a long-term process of preliminary organization and planning. Over six months of preparatory meetings, initialized and led by the two social movements CMP²⁹ and the Front of Popular Struggle (*Frente de Luta Popular*, FLP) were conducted before the building was finally entered on 23 July 2004. Members of the two social movements started to organize the squat due to their common interest in the problem of housing in Rio de Janeiro, but students, syndicates, and NGOs also joined them, supported their activities, and expressed solidarity. While the CMP was a national organized social movement, the FLP was a small group of activists who had started to organize in 2000 with the aim to “*impulsionar a luta contra a violência, por moradia, cultura e trabalho, construindo a organização independente do povo na perspectiva do Poder Popular.*”³⁰ Part of the group had a Marxist-socialist orientation, and a major characteristic of the group was the rejection of authoritarian hierarchies and an emphasis on horizontal organization.³¹

The aim of the occupation was twofold: first, to force attention to the problem of housing and the existence of vacant buildings in the city center; and second, to establish a new form of organization based on self-government (*autogestão*), which had the so-called collective (*coletivo*)—the people living in the squat—as its center of reference, without submitting to the banner of any specific social movement.³²

28 Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 67-year-old woman, 10.03.2011.

29 For more information on the CMP see section 2.1.3.1.

30 Gonçalves Almeida 2013, *A Territorialização da Dissidência no Movimento*, p. 2.

31 For more information on the FLP see for example Silveira Grandi 2010, *Práticas Espaciais Insurgentes*; Gonçalves Almeida 2013, *A Territorialização da Dissidência no Movimento*.

32 Cf. also Gonçalves Almeida 2013, *A Territorialização da Dissidência no Movimento*, p. 4.

Em segundo lugar, de colocar a experiência de outro tipo de organização, que tem seus problemas, é claro, mas que mostra que é possível ter um outro tipo de organização do movimento social que não é aquele tipo centralizado, onde a coordenação detém tanto poder que todo mundo só conhece a coordenação, a ocupação é identificada pelo movimento e não pelo coletivo da ocupação, etc.³³

As the national coordinator of the CMP later emphasized, not acting under the banner of a leading movement was especially important to the FLP, and the CMP had therefore accepted this decision in order to avoid conflict.³⁴

The preliminary meetings took place every Monday at the headquarters of the CMP in the *Rua Francisco Serrador*, close to the *Cinelândia* square, and gradually more and more people in need of housing joined the meetings with the intention of occupying the building.³⁵ During these meetings they discussed the necessary organization and potential difficulties inside and outside the building, and future inhabitants were also informed about the political background of the occupation. The building was chosen with care, with one of the criteria being to occupy a publicly owned building in order to increase the chances of a permanent stay.³⁶

Essas reuniões aconteceram durante seis meses, nesse endereço que eu falei na Francisco Serrador no. 90, e ali nós fomos convidando pessoas. Quem morava na rua, quem morava em abrigo, quem morava num aluguel, mas não tinha condições financeiras de pagar. E durante esse período é que acontece o processo organizativo, porque boa parte das pessoas tinha uma certa experiência. E sabia perfeitamente que ao se entrar num imóvel desses, era necessário que as pessoas fossem identificadas de acordo com as suas profissões. Sabe-se perfeitamente que dentro do imóvel tem problemas de hidráulica, de elétrica, de pintura, de limpeza. Tem a questão da alimentação, da segurança, também a questão jurídica, aí subdivide. É uma coisa bem organizada mesmo. Aí durante o período em que essas

33 Quote from an ex-member of the FLP, cited in Gonçalves Almeida 2013, A Territorialização da Dissidência no Movimento, p. 2.

34 Interview with the national coordinator of the CMP, 06.05.2011.

35 Interestingly, in both squats the families were registered in the name of the women in the family.

36 Occupying publicly owned buildings facilitates negotiation with the authorities on the basis of the constitutional right to housing (see section 2.1.3.1); negotiations can then be conducted directly with the State or Municipality and no expropriation of private property becomes necessary.

reuniões vão acontecendo você vai tirando as comissões que vão se encarregando de assumir cada um a sua função.³⁷

For security reasons,³⁸ the exact place and time of the occupation was kept secret and was not revealed until the day of the occupation itself. Due to the high level of preparation and organization, such as the allocation of tasks, people knew what could happen and how to behave from the time they entered the building. The thorough advance preparation was also the reason they were able to resist the first attempts by the police to prevent the occupation.

Aí nos organizamos, marcamos a data de ocupar, entramos, já organizamos também uma comissão para a defesa. Uma comissão para conversar com a justiça na hora da repressão. Tudo foi estudado antes, com a ideia da gente entrar e sofrer menos com a situação. Aí ficamos três dias com o portão trancado, com cadeado, sem poder sair. Com a polícia sempre passando, procurando saber como tava o andamento e tal. E depois disso a gente se organizou para estruturar o prédio, que estava parado há 23 anos. Muita sujeira, sem energia, sem água, sem esgoto, sem nada! A gente trabalhou uns três ou quatro meses todo mundo. Fizemos uma comissão de elétrica, uma comissão de hidráulica, uma comissão de limpeza, de segurança de portaria.³⁹

Finally, inside the building, the occupiers faced the challenge of organizing and sprucing up the run-down and initially uninhabitable building. Besides the dirt and the dilapidation of the building, the occupants also had to face, for example, a lack of water and electricity. The internal organization was meant to be non-hierarchical, and decisions were supposed to be made in a horizontal and collective manner during regular meetings, which were obligatory for all participants. The necessary work inside the building was organized in *mutirão*, in self-help action. The *coletivo* became the main point of reference both inside and outside the building, and later, as the interviews show, also the main point of conflict (see section 3.1.2).

The *coletivo* came together in the form of regular meetings (*reuniões*), which at the beginning were held on a daily basis, and were where decisions were made together, which were then binding for everyone. They took place at seven o'clock in the morning to discuss the necessary tasks to be performed, and at eight o'clock at night to discuss the political questions regarding the building.

37 Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 45-year-old man, 21.03.2011.

38 Above all, to avoid either the police or the local drug dealer turning up to prevent the occupation.

39 Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 42-year-old man, 04.04.2011.

During the initial stages of the occupation, the group also established a set of binding internal rules—the Charter of Principles (*Carta de Princípios*). This laid down the rules and norms governing everyone living inside the squat, and in addition to questions of neighborly behaviour also included the potential to expel (*expulsar*) someone if they were breaking these rules. One of the women in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* reported about this early experience:

Porque como você ocupa, você ocupa geralmente com pessoas que você nunca viu na vida, você aprende a conviver com essas pessoas de maneira que você respeite essas pessoas. Você tem regras, né. Para você ocupar você tem que primeiro fazer um regimento interno, ou seja, um conjunto de regras. (...) a gente teve que estabelecer umas regras de convivências. Como por exemplo: não fazer barulho depois de um certo horário à noite, não jogar lixo no corredor. Participar das reuniões, ou um representante maior de idade daquela família tá sempre participando na reunião. Evitar briga. Teve uma época que a gente até proibia bebida alcoólica aqui dentro.⁴⁰

Even though the occupants stressed the fact that there was no leadership inside the squat, for formal reasons of negotiation with the authorities, it became necessary to set up an official association, the Association of Popular Housing of *Chiquinha Gonzaga* (*Associação de Habitação Popular da Ocupação Chiquinha Gonzaga*, AHPOCG). This consisted of various coordinators, among them a president, a representative, and a treasurer, who were (re-)elected every two years by the inhabitants.

[E] desses seis anos só após o primeiro ano foi que nós constituímos a associação. Porque o governo exigiu que nós tivéssemos uma personalidade jurídica. Porque ficava uma coisa muito solta. O pessoal aqui entendia que: "Não, porque tem que ser coletivo! E quem manda aqui é o coletivo!" E coisa do gênero, mas o estado brasileiro exige uma personalidade jurídica. Para poder dar sustentação a coisas desse gênero. Mesmo assim o coletivo continuou agindo, mas reconhecendo que nós precisávamos disso.⁴¹

The *coletivo* in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* also thought about possibilities for the generation of income in the form of a recycling cooperative, and planned several projects, such as a computer room and a childcare center. During the initial stages, some inhabitants ran handicraft classes, and a group of people prepared and sold food for events at universities or syndicates.

40 Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 39-year-old woman, 23.02.2011.

41 Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 45-year-old man, 21.03.2011.

The organization started to work immediately after entering the squat. While some inhabitants took care of the renewal of basic services such as water, electricity, and drains, others cleaned, did construction work, or were responsible for the security and legal defense of the building. Before the rooms were made liveable and the families could be divided into the single rooms, people also shared the bathroom, slept, cooked and ate together on the lower floors. As there was not, for example, a separate kitchen for each person or family, a cooking commission took over responsibility for the organization of the collective kitchen, the *cozinha coletiva*.

After water and electricity had been reconnected, the occupants tried to secure a legal supply of both, but were only successful in their negotiations with the municipal waterworks, *Nova CEDAE*. With the support of other social movements and lawyers, they managed to negotiate a social fee of around six *reais* per month per family (see Figure 7). Due to difficult negotiations with the privately owned public service company Light S.A. the inhabitants could only obtain the electricity for the building illegally. Even though the monthly water fee was very low, the treasurer and the president of the association reported that there were always people who did not pay the money, and that there had been occasions on which the water for the building had therefore been shut off.

Another commission was engaged in the organization of the *portaria*, the control of the main entrance door of the building, to avoid granting entry to uninvited persons—an arrangement designed to thereby hinder eviction and further conflict. Every inhabitant had to do shift work at the main entrance door and to control who entered and who left the building. This task was obligatory for everyone, and non-accomplishment was even punished by, for instance, turning off the lighting in the corresponding apartment. After the first basic problems had been resolved, people could be distributed to the rooms. Care was taken here that older occupants and those with children found accommodation in the lower levels of the building. Particularly in times of water supply problems—when water could only be obtained from the main tap in the basement—living in the upper parts of the building meant an extra burden.

Later in the process of organization and making the building habitable again, some changes were made, and some joint tasks were abandoned, such as the *cozinha coletiva*, due to the desire of the occupants to take care of certain things within their own families, or to the then reduced need to solve some problems within the group. Furthermore, conflict started to emerge, and contributed to problems and changes in the original structure and organization of the squat.

É difícil né (Rir). Mas no primeiro momento, o mais difícil é você viver coletivamente. Eu nunca gostei disso. Nunca gostei. Porque assim: a gente quer ter a sua casa, quer ter o seu fogão, a sua máquina de lavar, quer fazer as suas coisas, na sua casa. E você ficar comendo com aquele montão de gente. Eu nunca gostei. Eu não gostava desse primeiro momento na ocupação porque você tinha que fazer um monte de comida. Aí domingo você quer comer com os seus filhos (...).⁴²

In the following section I will go into detail regarding these changes and the problems that emerged inside the squat after the first period of occupation.

3.1.2 Still the Same? Talking about Problems and Changes

A Chiquinha está doente.⁴³

A lot of things have changed in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* since its very beginning. The stories told by the inhabitants who had taken an active part in the occupation in 2004 contrasted strongly with the reality inside the squat in 2011. There was practically no internal organization or control on the part of the *coletivo* anymore, and the internal rules formalized in the Charter of Principles were mostly not considered. Furthermore, the political activities of the squat had almost come to a standstill. The loss of former organization went along with changes and conflict inside the squat and among its inhabitants. In the interviews I was interested to find out what had changed, and what the inhabitants experienced as particular challenges while living in *Chiquinha Gonzaga*. When talking with the inhabitants about the challenges and difficulties they personally faced living in the squat, their answers indicated that a lot of challenges and problems were closely related to the organizational changes that had occurred over time.

Frequenting the place, one of the first changes I noticed was that the former organized commissions no longer existed in their original forms. Besides the already mentioned *cozinha coletiva*—whose activities had ended when occupants had moved into their own apartments (see above)—the *portaria* and the cleaning tasks were also no longer organized.

Não tem mais, mas tinha: eram a portaria, a limpeza do prédio, a portaria tinha um- a sua entrada, a sua saída- de todos os moradores. Tinha horário em que você não poderia fazer

42 Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 36-year-old woman, 17.03.2011.

43 Ibid.

visitas, não ser acompanhada. Então cada um aqui tinha o seu compromisso. O prédio inteiro. Todos os moradores tinham que fazer a mesma coisa. Então não deixam entrar estranhos, a não ser os próprios moradores, e de repente aquilo foi acabando, foi acabando, agora ninguém tem mais compromisso com nada. A não ser com a sua própria casa.⁴⁴

The *portaria* task was especially important at the beginning to restrict the entry of people to the squat, in order to prevent eviction and further conflict. The interviewed inhabitants reported that they had performed the *portaria* task for at least two years in daily shifts. After that time, everyone received a key to the main entrance door, and the *portaria* shifts had ceased. Most of the interviewees did not complain about this fact, nor did they express a desire to readopt the practice.

Então assim: a gente tinha uma portaria. Todo morador tinha que tirar a portaria. Porque a portaria não podia ficar sozinha. E as pessoas que entravam aqui tinha que ser identificadas: a onde iam, no apartamento de quem e tal. A gente conseguiu fazer portaria até uns ... dois anos e meio depois da ocupação a gente conseguiu segurar a portaria, depois já foi diminuindo até acabar. Daí cada um foi fazendo uma chave, daí não existe mais a portaria.⁴⁵

The organization and regulation of the cleaning of the building was also lost over time, and became, in contrast to the discontinuation of the *portaria* task, a reason for disputes and a real challenge for some of the inhabitants. The cleaning of the stairways, as one could observe, was rarely done by the inhabitants after the cleaning tasks were no longer organized. Previously, the cleanliness of the building had been regulated by a fixed cleaning rota, but at a certain point people had begun to lapse in their accomplishment of their assigned tasks. This had resulted in a kind of chain reaction, and people explained their lack of fulfillment of their own cleaning responsibilities with reference to a similar lapse by the other inhabitants. At the same time, many of the interviewees—especially the female inhabitants—complained about the dirtiness and lack of a sense of responsibility of their neighbors regarding the cleanliness of the squat.

Eu acho que todo ser humano é digno de um teto. Então aí eu estou aí. Faço todo o possível, estou sempre limpando, sempre zelando, sempre arrumando. Mas eu sozinha. Essa escada aqui ... ela brilha quando eu estou boa! Quando eu estou com saúde, eu limpo

44 Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 67-year-old woman, 10.03.2011.

45 Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 39-year-old woman, 23.02.2011.

tudo. Daqui a pouco vem outro e suja, vem outro que joga papel. E vem outro e joga um copinho, outro joga papel ... quando você vê a nossa entrada está ... muito suja que ninguém colabora. Tem que estar chamando, pedindo, falando.⁴⁶

Another problem within the squat turned out to be the presence of drugs. As already described above, the inhabitants considered it a big challenge to live and to raise their children in the area where the squat was located. From the very start, the squatters had tried to keep the drug dealing out of the building in order to avoid letting the dealers take control of it. At the beginning, therefore, drug consumption was prohibited inside the building, but over time, this prohibition had been loosened. Many inhabitants reported drug problems inside the squat, or even within their own families, as illustrated by the following interview excerpts:

Evitar briga- teve uma época que a gente até proibia bebida alcoólica aqui dentro. As pessoas podiam até sair e beber na rua, mas não podiam trazer. Isso no início. No início da ocupação. Trazer bebida alcoólica para aqui pra dentro. Usar drogas ilícitas também. Então era um conjunto de regras. Algumas coisas com o tempo foram caindo, né. Como bebida (Rir), drogas também. É. As pessoas não usam dentro de casa. A gente acabou perdendo o controle de pedir para as pessoas não usarem. Mas enfim. Desde que não haja o tráfico, né? A pessoa consuma e acabou se deixando para lá.⁴⁷

Mas no início o coletivo tinha mais força, né? As pessoas não faziam coisa errada porque ... não tem como você morar numa ocupação que o tráfico, se você fica usando droga, você vai vender o quarto, você vai roubar e trazer ali para dentro ... então para você conviver no local, tem que conviver legal. Porque a gente já sofre a discriminação.⁴⁸

Due to the problematic situation of the area surrounding the squat, it turned out to be a difficult task to avoid letting the drug dealers take control of the squat. Therefore the inhabitants were proud that—at least until 2011—despite this being a real threat, they had still been able to manage and control the situation and to avoid such a takeover.

The inhabitants told me that the drug dealers had tried several times to influence and control the internal organization and decisions of the squat. Apparently it had also happened that some inhabitants had asked the drug dealers for help in disputes with other inhabitants, which had led to dangerous

46 Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 59-year-old woman, 03.03.2011.

47 Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 39-year-old woman, 23.02.2011.

48 Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 36-year-old woman, 17.03.2011.

situations and even violence inside the squat. In 2012, when I briefly visited the squat again, the situation had become worse and the presence of drug dealing in the building started to increase. It was also reported to me that the building had begun to be used by the dealers as a place to hide, and that therefore already the police had entered the building while searching for them. This led to an increased fear on the part of the inhabitants of becoming involved in a conflict or being shot by a ricochet, which in turn led to a sense of no longer being safe inside their own homes.

The loss of the joint tasks and the increasing influence of the drug dealers formed part of the retrogression and loss of control by the *coletivo* inside the squat. This loss of control was one of the points most mentioned by the inhabitants when asked to talk about the changes that had occurred over time. The daily meetings at the beginning had been reduced to weekly meetings, and then had occurred only twice a month. In 2011 the meetings did not occur regularly at all, and sometimes were then even cancelled because no one felt the responsibility or need to organize them. People also complained about the shifting of topics during the meetings, which had led many of them to stop participating. While at the beginning, the meetings were more about the internal organization and the political process of *Chiquinha Gonzaga*, now the inhabitants had the feeling that they was mostly about disputes and gossip between the inhabitants.

[A] gente tem falado isso: porque cansa. Você ficar toda hora falando, toda hora você está ajudando. E sendo criticada, entendeu? Aí, eu falei: pô, eu já to com a pressão a vinte, vira e mexe eu vou para uma reunião, saio de lá estressada, e quem passa mal sou eu. Tomo remédio para dormir. Aí eu fui me afastando, nem reunião.⁴⁹

This led to a situation in which the inhabitants felt demotivated to participate, and hence stopped attending the meetings. As a result, they were often uninformed about the actual political processes and developments related to *Chiquinha Gonzaga*. The participation of the inhabitants in the meetings in 2011, which I attended, was very low, and normally not more than 15-20 people were present. An exception was a meeting initiated by members of the NGO *Chiq da Silva*⁵⁰ and founding members of the CMP in order to talk about the political situation of the squat. On this occasion, I counted at least 30 participants. One of

49 Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 67-year-old woman, 10.03.2011.

50 NGO that focuses on the rehabilitation of abandoned public buildings as a strategy for social housing. They were also supporting the squat, and had developed plans for its restructuring.

these participants told me later that he was only taking part in these kinds of meetings—when the architects and CMP were present—because then it was an important meeting, and not only about fighting.⁵¹ Interestingly, the architect present at that meeting also openly expressed her preoccupation with the current situation, namely the evident “demobilization,” lack of participation, and dissemination of misinformation in *Chiquinha Gonzaga*. She thereby confirmed my impressions of the ongoing depolitization of the squat.

Even though 30 people was still a relatively small number of participants—taking into account that 70 families lived in the squat—this was as twice as many as normally present at such meetings, and therefore attracted my attention. It also reflected the inhabitants’ desire to meet in order to learn about the political processes around *Chiquinha Gonzaga*, because one thing they were really concerned about was that they would be able to continue to stay in the building. At the same time, it confirmed how much the internal, independent self-organization of such meetings had suffered during the last few years.

Olha, A gente já teve muitas tarefas aqui dentro. Tipo assim, que no início a gente tinha que se organizar, tudo que a gente fazia na ocupação era mutirão. (...) todo mundo participava. Mais agora quando tem um mutirão, quando se fala assim de mutirão, nunca tem, ta todos. Ta meia dúzia só. Nunca ta todos. Antes, estavam todos.⁵²

No começo era uma maravilha. Todo mundo se unia, todo mundo tal ... depois começou a descambar, descambar, descambar ... cada um quer fazer o que acha melhor, cada um acha que tem que fazer e vai fazendo. Não dá mais satisfação ao coletivo. Porque aqui nós tínhamos reuniões diárias. Reuniões diárias para saber como é que faz, como é que não faz, como é que deixa de ser.⁵³

Another reason for the weakness of the *coletivo* was the loss of influence by the two responsible social movements inside the squat. While the FLP had dissolved completely in 2008, the CMP had also failed to continue to exert a decisive influence on the squat. Additionally, after two years of occupation, there had been increasingly personal and ideological misunderstandings between members of the two groups that had over time also led to a certain mistrust among them. It was difficult to understand what had actually happened, but it seemed as if the political aims and ideas of the two groups, and the ways they thought they

51 Informal talk in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 45-year-old man, 04.04.2011.

52 Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 31-year-old woman, 21.05.2011.

53 Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 59-year-old woman, 03.03.2011.

should be implemented, were hard to combine or reconcile. The national coordinator of the CMP also explained these difficulties:

Um ano, dois ano, foi maravilhosa a organização, mas é uma coisa que você não pode confundir: é uma situação social injusta e a realidade das pessoas. Você junta um grupo de pessoas, tem todo tipo de pensamento e se você não deixa bem claro qual a linha política que você tá ali caçando ... isso não é questão de ser, de impor ou nada ou de respeitar a independência o autonomia. Essa independência, autonomia, a chamada horizontalidade da organização tem que ser em cima de alguns pontos. Isso foi um problema seríssimo nesse processo da Chiquinha Gonzaga (...). Uma confusão muito grande do que, do papel ali. (...) Foi enfraquecendo justamente porque a base, os princípios da ocupação foram sempre deixados de lado, em nome do basismo, da horizontalidade. Aquela coisa do bonita do coletivo, mas sempre usando o coletivo pra justamente desqualificar a decisão do coletivo. Não sei se você compreende isso, porque ...o processo foi muito assim, o coletivo decidia alguma coisa, aí numa reunião seguinte, se nem fazer cumprir aquilo que foi decido pelo coletivo o próprio chamado coletivo, como o pessoa dizia destruiu o que ele havia decidido. (...) Foi um processo que começou a desqualificar tudo. Começou o cara a não cumprir a portaria porque o outro não cumpria. Começou ali na reunião a mudar, a reunião era semanal, primeiro passou pra três dias na semana, depois semanal, aí numa reunião, uma pessoa resolve discutir com o grupo lá pra ser quinzenal, quando passou pra quinzenal passou a cada quinze dias a não ter mais reunião. O processo é ... você tem, aí sim, politicamente a Chiquinha Gonzaga constituindo vários grupos de vários interesses.⁵⁴

At the time of the interview only a few founding members of the FLP were still living in the squat. The loss of influence of a social movement in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* was also a topic in the talks with the inhabitants. In contrast to *Manoel Congo*—where the situation, as we will see, was completely different—not every respondent even thought that the squat formed part of a social movement.

Accordingly, other aspects of the squat had also changed, such as the political activities of the inhabitants and the plans to make *Chiquinha Gonzaga* more than just a residential building. The plans for the income-generation project, like those for the recycling cooperative and other projects, were no longer promoted, and were almost never mentioned by the inhabitants at the time of the interviews. Only the small group that had sold food for events at universities or syndicates was still working from time to time—though its members were also quarrelling. One of the inhabitants therefore reported frustration: “*Eles falaram que fariam um núcleo de cultura, de trabalho em*

54 Interview with the national coordinator of the CMP, 06.05.2011.

renda, e de formação política. Não tem nada disso. A gente tentou montar uma cooperativa de reciclagem, (...) se encerrou isso.”⁵⁵ The only collective activities I observed in 2011 were that once a week the meeting room was used by an external *Capoeira* group, and that the planned computer room was being prepared to be used as such. However, the latter situation subsequently changed, and in 2012 the computer room had become another apartment.

The inhabitants also did not participate in demonstrations or other external activities anymore. Sometimes, while assisting in a demonstration with the MNLM, I also met one or two inhabitants of *Chiquinha Gonzaga*. These were the ones who were politically engaged, and when I asked about the low level of participation, they complained about the other inhabitants’ lack of interest. It also seemed that the rare announcements of planned activities in the name of the squat were mostly made by the CMP and affiliated activists.

Considering the living conditions of the people in the squat, and the changes that had occurred since the initial occupation of the building, I was interested to find out what they themselves felt to be the particular challenges of living in *Chiquinha Gonzaga*. The answers my interlocutors gave were often related to the above mentioned changes that had occurred over time.

The biggest personal challenge for most of the interviewees that had come to live in the squat was the new (for them) situation of living closely together (*conviver*) with people they had not known before. Already, from the time of the initial occupation, some families could not stand the difficult living conditions in the squat, or had not been able to accept the collective manner of organization with its internal rules, and thus had finally left.

Que ele ligou para mim e falou que ia ter ocupação. Aí perguntou se eu queria. Eu falei, quero, só que não tinha começado ocupação ainda não. (...) Aí eu falei: tá, eu vou. Bota meu nome. Que a reunião era na segunda-feira. Aí ela viu no final da reunião que teve, na outra segunda-feira, ela disse: não, já está cheio, não tem mais não. Mas quando tiver vaga, eu boto o seu nome. Aí não apareceu vaga mais, ela não botou. Aí quando ocupou, depois de quatro meses de ocupação, ela ligou para mim. Falando que tinha vaga, que muita gente que entrou aqui estava desistindo.⁵⁶

55 Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 46-year-old man, 18.03.2011.

56 Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 47-year-old woman, 28.03.2011; after occupation, every occupant had been allowed to suggest a family-member or friend to take part in the squat.

Even though they had been prepared before moving in, the reality and practice of living in a squat was not what most inhabitants had expected it to be.

A organização tanto antes da ocupação eu entendo assim: antes a gente tinha mais uma teoria. A partir do momento em que a gente entrou no prédio, aí que a gente viu que a prática era diferente. Então automaticamente ficou um pouco a teoria que a gente tinha e partimos para a prática. E a prática acabou ensinando a gente como dar o andamento à ocupação.⁵⁷

Thus, managing to live together with the other people inside the building in a collective manner turned out to be challenging. One of the interviewees explained these problems as being due to the fact of being in a special situation of dependency. Even though the inhabitants, after they had survived the critical phase and had set up their homes, were trying to live their private lives, the internal structure and special situation of being in a squat made it complicated to withdraw completely from the others. A woman stated that after she had moved to *Chiquinha Gonzaga*, although she had her own place, she felt like she had lost all her privacy.⁵⁸

Quando você vai para algum lugar e compra uma casa, ou ganha uma casa, você também tá perto de pessoas que você não conhece, né? Mas você é dono da propriedade. É diferente daqui que a gente sabe que não é dono e a gente tem que viver em coletivo. Toda essa conquista para você hoje estar morando aqui você precisou de outras pessoas para garantir a sua moradia. Então é diferente de você comprar uma casa num lugar, que você se sente dono daquilo e você acha que pode fazer o que você quiser. Aqui dentro não. A gente sabe que se a gente fizer determinadas coisas que possam vir a prejudicar o coletivo a gente vai estar prejudicando a várias pessoas. A gente corre o risco de perder a moradia de todo mundo. Então é bem diferente e um pouquinho complicado. Você às vezes tem que dar satisfação de coisas que você não tá acostumado. A gente é muito individualista. Fala assim: “ah, a vida é minha, eu faço o que eu quiser.” E morar numa ocupação é muito difícil. Não é uma coisa fácil. O ser humano ele ainda não aprendeu a respeitar os outros. Então aqui você tem muitas vezes que respeitar as outras pessoas e nem sempre você é respeitado também, né.⁵⁹

On almost every visit in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* I was confronted with neighborhood disputes, mistrust, rumors, or accusations, so that even for me it

57 Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 37-year-old man, 01.03.2011.

58 Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 52-year-old woman, 14.03.2011.

59 Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 39-year-old woman, 23.02.2011.

sometimes became difficult to remain neutral, as my position as a researcher required. The frequent mutual accusations and mistrust among the inhabitants were often related to the problems in the functioning of the *coletivo*. A lot of interviewees complained, for example, about money that had disappeared in unknown ways, and that some persons in or related to the squat would allegedly use it for their own profit. The fear that a small group of people was taking advantage of the occupation in order to profit from it was widespread. I was told several times about the existence of a website to accept donations from Europe for *Chiquinha Gonzaga*, the supposed income from which never reached the people living inside the squat. The mistrust was often directed towards the former organizers of the squat, especially those who were members of the middle class (*clase media*).

Eles falam que não, mas eu acho que as pessoas falam aqui dentro que é um movimento aqui, comem o dinheiro nas nossas costas, usam a gente para poder comer dinheiro. (...) Então quem mora, precisa. Mas as pessoas que não moram aqui dentro ... aí usam isso. Faz parte do movimento social, que é para os pobres, estão ajudando aqueles que necessitam. É mentira! Ninguém faz nada. Eles falam que estão ajudando a gente, mas por trás estão fazendo alguma coisa. Eu acho.⁶⁰

Tinha um site assim que ocuparam, né? Inclusive tinha até uns contatos na Alemanha e na Europa, e o pessoal mandava dinheiro do mundo inteiro para cá. Até um cara na rua falou: mandei 100 Euros. E eu: ah, cadê esse dinheiro? E o que acontece? A gente nunca viu a cor desse dinheiro e de nada. É complicado. Eu acho, tenho que falar isso: vocês quando mandam dinheiro para cá, vocês estão enriquecendo algumas pessoas.⁶¹

There were also rumors about a real-estate mafia inside the building, which would expel people and sell the apartments to the highest bidder. Several times I was told about people who allegedly already had a house and who were only living in the squat to take financial advantage of it.

Aqui dentro foi assim: eu conhecia você, aí eu moro aqui dentro. Aí ela vem falar aqui assim: mãe, apresenta lá um quarto para mim que eu te dou mil reais, dois mil. Aí eu vou, vou falar assim: olha fulano, tem um quarto desocupado aqui, né? Aí eu vou e falo assim para ... é a minha vez de apresentar alguém para morar aqui dentro. Na época era assim. Olha a malandragem. Aí eu vou e apresento você. Mas você vai me da mil reais, mil e duzentos, mil e quinhentos. Aí eu vou, apresento você, para morar no quarto que tá vazio,

60 Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 42-year-old woman, 09.05.2011.

61 Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 46-year-old man, 18.03.2011.

mas você vai me dar 1500. Aqui aconteceu isso! Não foi assim apresentar para morar (...). Não.⁶²

All these rumors were always related to the feared practice of *expulsar*—the practice of expelling people who were not sticking to the rules from the squat. Even though this practice had not been applied for a long time—due to the weakness of the exercising of the internal rules in general—people still feared this possibility. Most of the interviewees did not agree with this rule, and in one case the fear of being expelled was so strong that it had already manifested paranoid characteristics. This person, for example, started to make noise when coming home from work to show the other inhabitants that he was still living in his apartment, in order to reduce the possible reasons for his expulsion.

Essa insegurança. Você mora inseguro, cara. O estado não expulsa. O estado expulsa bem menos. O estado expulsa, o estado é canalha. Mas de 70 famílias, em menos de sete anos eles expulsaram oito, no mínimo oito. Oito famílias expulsas. Pessoas integras e tal. No porcentual expulsam mais do que o estado. Entendeu? Tem pessoas que foram expulsas daqui para venderem o apartamento da família, para ganhar um dinheiro em cima. A mulher seqüelada, quase doente mental, diziam que botava papelzinho e tal. Olha a covardia! Entende?⁶³

I could not verify whether all this was really true, or to what extent mistrust had also been spread intentionally to hinder further organization. But these rumors obviously worked perfectly to deepen mistrust towards the former organizers of the squat and among the current residents. These topics also dominated the few meetings of the small *coletivo* that still existed, therefore making further organization difficult, and also contributed to the demotivation to participate in the affairs of the squat (see above). The cases of other squats, like *Zumbi dos Palmares*, have shown that internal conflicts were dangerous for their long-term success, because they could foster external interference and make thus eviction and manipulation from outside easier.⁶⁴

62 Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 47-year-old woman, 28.03.2011.

63 Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 46-year-old man, 18.03.2011.

64 The squat *Chiquinha Gonzaga* had also been the starting point for at least other two squats in the area, organized by members of the FLP: the squats *Zumbi dos Palmares* and *Quilombo das Guerreiras* (see Map 3). In 2011 one of these had been evicted (*Zumbi dos Palmares*) and the other was still massively threatened with eviction (*Quilombo Guerreiras*). These squats also were or had been experiencing serious internal conflicts. During the interviews, I was told frequently that the Municipality

Although it was sometimes difficult to distinguish between truth and rumor, the obtained information about this situation should be read as an indicator of the internal problems and the lack of cohesion within the squat. During my stay, I witnessed the case of one of the inhabitants, who helped another man to enter the squat and, without authorization, to take over an apartment that had been kept free for someone who at that time could not live there for mental health reasons. It was especially surprising to me that this incident was initiated by a person that normally tried to make the *coletivo* work, and was, from outward appearances interested in the improvement of the squat. This incident, along with the existing rumors, made at least clear that in fact the space inside the squat was highly contested. Issues of power and power conflict inside the squat played a major role, and were not automatically visible from outside. It also showed how difficult interpersonal relationships can become in a living situation in which everyday life and political engagement are closely related—particularly when the inhabitants had all gone through difficult and sometimes even life-threatening and traumatic situations in their lives (see also section 4.1.1). One interviewee therefore explained that it was difficult to engage in militant political activity in the same place that you live, and told me that it would be much easier to go to a meeting once a week in a place where you would not have to live together with the participants afterwards.⁶⁵

Dealing with these challenges, the inhabitants also expressed their disappointment about the lack of unity among the people living in the squat. This regret was expressed above all from the people who were still politically active. They remembered times when there was more unity among the inhabitants, and expressed their wish for another development:

O maior desafio (...) morar aqui, em uma comunidade, é falta de união. Falta de interesse de algum morador, de uma grande parte dos moradores (...) melhorar o prédio. Como tem alguns poucos que fazem, então deixa tudo por conta dessas poucas que fazem. Então não existe a união (...).⁶⁶

had taken advantage of this situation, especially in the squat *Zumbi dos Palmares*, and had “bought people”—that is, had offered money to some of the inhabitants to leave the squat. This was also confirmed through the national coordinator of the CMP.

65 Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 39-year-old woman, 23.02.2011.

66 Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 50-year-old man, 24.03.2011.

Por isso que eu estava falando: é ruim de unir. É uma das coisas piores. Uma das coisas das mais difíceis é unir as pessoas. Para estar construindo se a gente se unir ia ser outra coisa.⁶⁷

Apart from the internal conflicts, another big challenge for the inhabitants was the permanent fear of being evicted by the government. The insecurity of many inhabitants regarding this issue very often resulted from the described internal problems in the squat. People complained about rumors of eviction and about “not being informed,” or about contradictory information, but at the same time did not try to foster their own engagement. The low level of information that people had about the actual political situation of the squat thus also indicated that the inhabitants were not all politically engaged with the same intensity. Although the danger of being evicted was not eliminated completely, and therefore of course a constant psychological stress, the political process had reached a point at which the actual risk was quite low, especially in comparison to the situation at the beginning of the squat.⁶⁸ While those who followed the political process of the squat with greater engagement were more relaxed about the issue of eviction and did not believe it to be very likely,

Não, o maior desafio que nós tínhamos era a certeza de ficarmos aqui ou não. O maior desafio que nós tínhamos era esse. Como isso está praticamente superado... E os outros desafios eram essa questão do emprego né?⁶⁹

others still feared eviction:

É que nem morar num bairro. É sofrido porque tem reuniões, tem que obedecer àquelas regras, você tem que ... você não sabe se o governo vai vir para te tirar e te mandar embora. Você está naquela expectativa ali.⁷⁰

Desafio? É um medo de um dia ter que sair. Chegar a prefeitura e mandar todo mundo sair. Para onde que eu vou? Se eles me derem uma casa ... porque a gente não sabe, né?⁷¹

Não. O difícil é a gente conviver sem um documento que prove que você pode continuar vivendo aqui, pelo menos. Só isso preocupa a gente aqui. Algum documento dizendo da

67 Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 50-year-old man, 14.03.2011.

68 This was also confirmed by the national coordinator of the CMP (Interview with the national coordinator of the CMP, 06.05.2011).

69 Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 45-year-old man, 21.03.2011.

70 Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 53-year-old woman, 16.03.2011.

71 Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 59-year-old woman, 03.03.2011.

posse do apartamento para a gente. É só isso que nos preocupa, que a gente sempre tem um pé atrás.⁷²

In fact, the political negotiations had been complex, time-consuming, and were not easy to look through.⁷³ It was mainly the CMP that had taken over the negotiations and solved the juridical problems in order to avoid eviction. As the national coordinator confirmed: “*A CMP assumiu muito mais a articulação na questão de tentar permanência do prédio, de resolver os problemas, impedir o despejo. E quem ficou com mais na articulação interna foi a FLP.*”⁷⁴ It had certainly been an advantage, and a reason for the continued existence of *Chiquinha Gonzaga*—in contrast to other squats—that a large and nationally organized social movement, with the power to exert massive pressure on the government, was leading the negotiations.

These negotiations were on the one hand directed towards the regularization of the building, and on the other hand towards the access to public funds for its renovation. The building originally belonged to the INCRA, which after intense negotiations with several actors—*inter alia* with the Ministry of Cities (see section 2.1.2.3)—ceded the building to the Union’s Patrimony Secretariat (*Secretaria do Patrimônio da União*, SPU).⁷⁵ During the negotiations, the CMP

72 Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 42-year-old man, 04.04.2011.

73 Due to the fact that the political process is not the focus of this study and a detailed description would be beyond its scope, for both squats I will provide only a brief and simplified overview of the political negotiations and results. Additionally, it turned out to be difficult to get a clear picture of the complex negotiation processes through the interview material alone. Therefore, in the following passages I have used a compilation of several sources to provide this overview, including my own interviews; the letters written by the CMP during the process of negotiation and the *Diário Oficial da União*. I also compared my findings with the research of Silveira Grandi 2010, *Práticas Espaciais Insurgentes*, pp. 223, 286, and added some of these other parties’ obtained information if necessary.

74 Interview with the national coordinator of the CMP, 06.05.2011.

75 The SPU forms part of the Ministry of Planning and “is the unit which has jurisdiction over lands belonging to the federal government, and is responsible for their registration, inspection, destination, and regularization” (Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE). 2008, *Submission for United Nations Committee on Economics, Social and Cultural Rights Concerning Brazil*. http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cescr/docs/info-ngos/COHRE_BRAZIL.pdf (23 Sep 2015)).

referred to the fact that due to the long vacancy of the building, it had not accomplished its social function, as determined in the Constitution.⁷⁶

Finally, the SPU transferred the building to the State of Rio de Janeiro, charged with the task of transforming it into housing of social interest. Hence, in 2009 the occupants officially achieved the right to use the building:

O MINISTRO DE ESTADO DO PLANEJAMENTO, ORÇAMENTO E GESTÃO, no uso da competência que lhe foi delegada no art. 1º, inciso I, do Decreto nº 3.125, de 29 de julho de 1999, tendo em vista o disposto no art. 18, inciso I e § 1º, e no art.19, inciso IV, da Lei nº 9.636, de 15 de maio de 1998, c/c o art. 7º do Decreto-Lei nº 271, de 28 de fevereiro de 1967, e o art. 17, inciso I, alínea f, da Lei nº 8.666, de 21 de junho de 1993, e os elementos que integram o Processo nº 04905.006440/2008-01, resolve: Art. 1º Autorizar a cessão, sob o regime de concessão de direito real de uso gratuito, ao Estado do Rio de Janeiro, do imóvel, com área de 570,78m² e edificação com 3.438,97 m², situado na Rua Barão de São Félix, nº 110, Centro, Município do Rio de Janeiro, naquele Estado, com as características e confrontações constantes da Matrícula nº 45.088, Ficha 01, do Cartório do 2º Ofício de Registro de Imóveis daquela Comarca. Art. 2º A cessão a que se refere o art. 1º destina-se à regularização fundiária de interesse social, beneficiando sessenta e seis famílias de baixa renda ocupantes do imóvel desde 2004.⁷⁷

Regarding the aim of accessing public funds for the renovation of the building, the squat achieved through mobilization and negotiations—including at the national level—inclusion in the Program: “Support for Social Housing Provision” (*Programa Apoio à Provisão Habitacional de Interesse Social*)⁷⁸ financed by the National Fund for Social Housing (*Fundo Nacional de Habitação de Interesse Social*, FNHIS), which is responsible for the resources necessary to implement housing policies within the context of the City Statute. The responsibility for carrying out the reform was then transferred from the State

76 “O imóvel se encontrava vazio e abandonado há pelo menos 21 (vinte e um) anos, não cumprindo assim com a sua função social, como determina a Constituição (...)” (Letter of CMP during the process of negotiation).

77 Diário Oficial da União 2009—Seção 1, PORTARIA No. 233, Assinatura: 05/08/2009, No. 149, Publicação: 06/08/2009.

78 The aim of this project is: “viabilizar aos segmentos populacionais com renda familiar de até R\$ 1.050.00 o acesso à habitação digna, regular e dotada de serviços públicos em localidades urbanas ou rurais, minimizando as desigualdades sociais e contribuindo para a ocupação urbana planejada” (Caixa Econômica Federal. no date, Programas de Repasse do OGU. http://www1.caixa.gov.br/gov/gov_social/municipal/programas_de_repasse_do_OGU/prov_hab_int_social.asp (23 Sep 2015)).

of Rio de Janeiro to the Institute of State Territory and Cartography of Rio de Janeiro (*Instituto de Terras do Estado e Cartografias de Rio de Janeiro*, ITERJ):

A GERENTE REGIONAL DO PATRIMÔNIO NO ESTADO DO RIO DE JANEIRO, no uso da competência que lhe foi atribuída pelo art. 1º, I, da Portaria nº 437, de 28 de novembro de 2008, da Secretaria do Patrimônio da União e tendo em vista o disposto no art. 6º, do Decreto-Lei nº 2.398, de 21 de dezembro de 1987, os elementos que integram o Processo Administrativo nº 04905.006440/2008-40, resolve: Art.1º Autorizar o Instituto de Terras e Cartografia do Estado do Rio de Janeiro - ITERJ a implantar o canteiro obras e efetuar todas as medidas necessárias para a implantação e execução das obras no imóvel da União, denominado Comunidade Chiquinha Gonzaga, localizado na Rua Barão de São Félix nº 110, Centro, Município do Rio de Janeiro/RJ. Art. 2º As obras a que se refere o artigo 1º destinam-se ao desenvolvimento do Programa Apoio à Provisão Habitacional de Interesse Social, com recursos provenientes do Fundo Nacional de Habitação de Interesse Social - FNHIS.⁷⁹

Despite these achievements, at the time of writing the renovation of the building has still not begun, due to bureaucratic delay, such as for example the delay in releasing the money necessary to start the work.⁸⁰ That means that the inhabitants of *Chiquinha Gonzaga* are still waiting for the renovation, and therefore also for the definitive guarantee that the building is to be transformed into housing of social interest. The long process of negotiation and the delays in putting promises into practice are also reasons why people did not trust the announcements made by the government, and therefore still feared eviction, as described above. In my opinion, this delay in the process of renovation is also an example of how existing rights are not being enforced in praxis. As we will see in the following section, other squats, such as *Manoel Congo*, had to face similar problems.

79 Diário Oficial da União 2009—*Seção 1*, PORTARIA No. 15, Assinatura: 31/03/2009, No. 62, Publicação: 01/04/2009.

80 According to one inhabitant, in October 2015 the beginning of the reform had been announced for the year 2016.

3.2 THE SQUAT *MANOEL CONGO*

Figure 9: Front view of *Manoel Congo*⁸¹



The squat *Manoel Congo*⁸² is a run-down high-rise building in downtown Rio de Janeiro, which is located at *Rua Alcindo Guanabara Nº 20*, next to the city hall of Rio de Janeiro (*Câmara dos Vereadores*) (see Map 3). The squat itself is surrounded by other high-rise buildings, and therefore only the flag of the MNLM on its front face indicated a difference from the other buildings. At the time of the interviews, the area surrounding the squat was full of restaurants, shops, and business offices, and therefore during the day quite animated. The building was only walking distance away from the central *Cinelandia* square, where among other things the National Library (*Biblioteca Nacional*), the Municipal Theatre (*Teatro Municipal*), and the National Museum of Fine Arts (*Museu Nacional de Belas Artes*), as well as metro and several bus stations, were located. Hence, the inhabitants of the squat lived in a part of the city where, on the one hand, they had easy access to transportation, leisure and culture. But, since the commercial center was not a common residential area, on the other hand they also had to face the everyday noise pollution of traffic, people, bars, and restaurants.

⁸¹ Photograph: Bea Wittger, 2011.

⁸² According to the Coordination of the squat, *Manoel Congo* has been an important leader in the resistance of the slaves in Rio de Janeiro, which has been an area of coffee cultivation. The name was chosen in order to honor a leader of past resistance and struggles.

The building was constructed in the 1940s and had been property of the National Institute of Social Insurance (*Instituto Nacional do Seguro Social*, INSS). It had been abandoned for more than ten years at the time of its occupation, and therefore the participants had to make it habitable again. But, in contrast to *Chiquinha Gonzaga* and due to its shorter period of vacancy, the building was in a much less dilapidated condition. The building consisted of ten floors, of which only nine could be used as living areas at the time of the interviews.⁸³ Each floor had at least seven single rooms, with an estimated size of 30 square meters each. To what extent the space of the rooms was sufficient or comfortable for the 42 families living in the squat depended on the respective family size.⁸⁴ As the rooms didn't have their own bathrooms, the inhabitants had to share one bathroom, as well as one wash-bowl and one washing machine, per floor.⁸⁵ Inside the rooms, just as in *Chiquinha Gonzaga*, the facility standards varied according to the income and desire of each inhabitant to invest in them. The building had a small inner courtyard, which was used by a restaurant that occupied a part of the ground floor of the building, and some apartments led to the street while others to the inner courtyard. As the building shared a wall with the city hall, the people working there could see directly into the courtyard, and therefore also into the rooms of some of the inhabitants, what sometimes caused discomfort among them.

Unlike in *Chiquinha Gonzaga*, the front doors of the rooms were not furnished with their own locks, so people were obliged to live with unlocked doors. As Glória,⁸⁶ the national coordinator of the MNLM, told me in an informal meeting, this rule was established by the movement for several reasons. First, as the building was still in a provisional state this was a question of security, and second, the movement wanted to prevent the inhabitants from starting to feel that the apartments belonged to them in terms of property.⁸⁷ Something similar happened with the main entrance door. To enter the building, it was necessary to identify oneself to the concierge (*portero*) who was always

83 Due to the bad state of the tenth floor, only one person was living there.

84 The amount of people living in one room varied according to my observations between one and five.

85 They were obliged to use only the bathroom and washing machine on their own floor.

86 The names for the case narratives have been all changed in order to guarantee the anonymity of the interviewees.

87 Even after the renovation the building would belong to the State and the inhabitants would only obtained the right to use the building (Interview in *Manoel Congo* with the national coordinator of the MNLM, a 51-year-old woman, 06.04.2011).

present at the entrance area to guarantee access to the building.⁸⁸ Also here access to the key was restricted. In contrast to *Chiquinha Gonzaga*, where every inhabitant had her/his own key, in *Manoel Congo* only the *portero* on duty and the general coordinator of the *portaria* possessed a key to the main entrance door.⁸⁹

The *portero* had a small desk and chair, and also a television connected to an observation camera at the main entrance door. Next to the entrance, one could find the *portaria* shift plan for the week, and another space on the wall was reserved for announcements of meetings and activities.

Passing the entrance area, opposite there was a large room with access to the road *Rua Evaristo da Veiga Nº 17*, which runs parallel to the *Rua Alcindo Guanabara*. This room had been named *Casa de Samba Mariana Crioula* (House of Samba *Mariana Crioula*) and was used for bigger events, and was also planned to be the location of the income-generation project of the squat (see section 3.2.1).

On the first floor, the inhabitants used two other large rooms as meeting and education rooms. While one of these was mainly equipped with chairs, in the other the results of seminars and joint working or educational meetings were laid out, such as a time board with the history and development of the MNLM (see Figure 23). On the same floor there was also the child-care center of the squat—the *Espaço Criarte Mariana Crioula*—which took up two large rooms, filled with books and toys. On a short visit later in 2012, the space had been increased to include two more office spaces for the organization of the income-generation project, sponsored by the company *Petrobras*.

The corridors and stairways of the building were in quite a good state considering the long abandonment of the building. Even though mold-infested walls and run-down areas were also visible, the building was in a much better condition, and much cleaner, than the squat *Chiquinha Gonzaga*. This was also due to the residents' adherence to a strict cleaning shift plan, a copy of which was hung up on every floor. Other official announcements and plans could also be found on the various floors, like the opening hours of the child-care center, meetings of the income-generation group, or the rota stating who could use the washing machine at what time. The elevator of the building did not work, and just as in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* people had to climb up to the upper floors with

88 The main entrance door was closed between 01:00 am and 04:00 am. During that time no one could enter or leave the building.

89 As we will see, in comparison to *Chiquinha Gonzaga* this was only one example of the different control and intensity of rules in *Manoel Congo*.

their children and daily groceries. More than once I met people “taking a break” on their way up, especially in the hot summer.

Figure 10: Back view of Manoel Congo and area surrounding the squat⁹⁰



90 Photograph: Bea Wittger, 2011.

Figure 11: Casa de Samba Mariana Crioula before the renovation in 2011⁹¹



Figure 12: Shared wash-bowls, washing machines, and bathroom with shower on different floors⁹²



91 Photograph: Bea Wittger, 2011.

92 Ibid.

*Figure 13: Entrance area of Manoel Congo*⁹³



*Figure 14: Inner courtyard of the building*⁹⁴



93 Photograph: Bea Wittger, 2011.

94 Ibid.

Figure 15: Corridors and stairways of the building⁹⁵



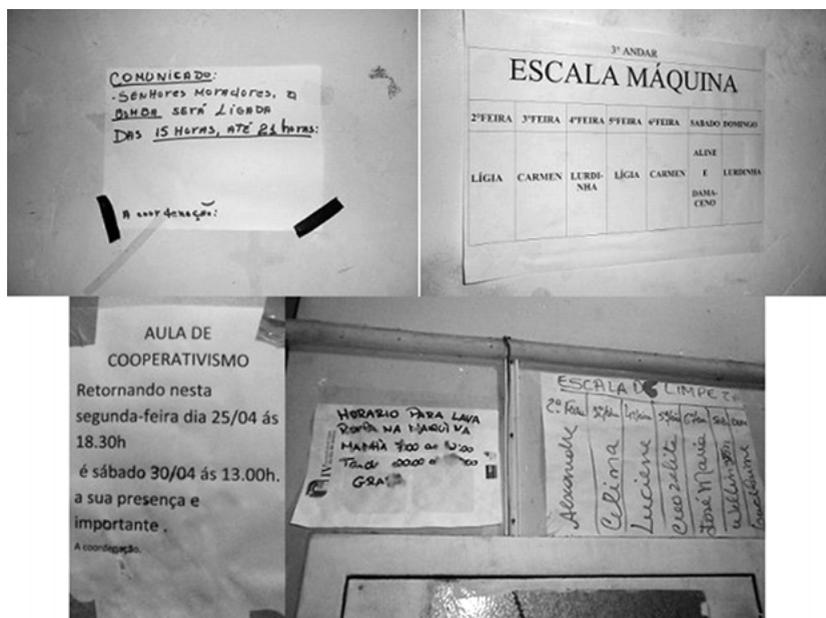
Figure 16: Espaço Criarte Mariana Crioula⁹⁶



95 Photograph: Bea Wittger, 2011.

96 Ibid.

Figure 17: Official announcements and cleaning plans⁹⁷



3.2.1 Genesis and First Organization

The occupation of the building, as with *Chiquinha Gonazga*, had been the result of a long-term process of preliminary organization and planning. Approximately one year of preparatory meetings—initialized and led by the MNLM—passed before the first squatters finally entering the building on the 28 October 2007. The movement started to organize its preparatory meetings with people in need of housing and earning not more than zero to three minimum wages. During this process, the initiators drew on a pool of people they already knew from their former work in the peripheries.⁹⁸

Foi então que nós começamos a juntar as pessoas sem moradia que nós conhecíamos, porque o movimento, as pessoas do movimento já moravam em locais pobres, de periferia,

97 Photograph: Bea Wittger, 2011.

98 See also section 4.3.4 on the topic of the use of networks in the process of recruitment.

de favelas, então já estava no meio do povo que já tinha esse direito negado. Então não era nada difícil, assim como não é nada difícil a gente juntar as pessoas.⁹⁹

To facilitate their participation, the place of the meetings changed according to the areas where the participating families came from; among them, for example, the neighborhoods of Caju, Anchieta, Cantangalo, and Pavuna.

A curiosidade maior é sempre: mas como é que vocês juntaram essas pessoas, né? Isso é natural, porque a gente já faz parte deles. Já faz parte também deles. Então reunimos 126 famílias em reuniões toda semana no Sindicato dos Professores, aqui na Veiga, depois a gente percebeu que estava ficando muito caro para eles vir de diversos lugares: do Caju, de Anchieta, daqui das favelas da Zona Sul. Estava ficando muito caro para eles vir e para ter reunião toda semana, começamos a nos reunir de 15 em 15 dias, depois todo mês. Só que quando começamos a reunir de mês em mês, a gente fazia reunião descentralizada. Nos núcleos mais próximos das casas deles. Com isso nós ficamos mais de um ano nos preparando para essa ocupação.¹⁰⁰

The preparatory meetings served, as they did in *Chiquinha Gonzaga*, to discuss the necessary organization and the potential future challenges inside the squat, as well as to inform people about the political background of the occupation. The meetings formed part of a well-planned process and strategy that had already been used and applied by the MNLM before. In this process, the so-called “formation of the families”¹⁰¹ was an important aspect in order to guarantee a successful occupation. It included, *inter alia*, the joint construction and adaptation of the participants to a charter of principles, which established, again, as in *Chiquinha Gonzaga*, a set of internal rules that applied to and were obligatory for everyone living in the squat. Among these rules were for example also the prohibition of fights and the use of drugs inside the building.

A gente primeiro, antes das famílias ocuparem o espaço, a gente faz o que a gente chama de formação das famílias. (...) Formação política e de convivência. De vínculos. E a gente nesse processo vai e fala um pouco o que seria uma ocupação, como é que a gente se organiza, né e tudo mais. E a gente constrói até numa carta de princípios. Que são coisas, ações de convivência. Seriam regras de convivência para todos. E essas regras envolvem muito a questão da ocupação dos espaços, entendeu? A gente é um movimento social, a

99 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with the national coordinator of the MNLM, a 51-year-old woman, 06.04.2011.

100 Ibid.

101 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with a 27-year-old woman, 26.05.2011.

gente não é uma empreiteira, então a gente trabalha muito essa questão de você ter essa disponibilidade de estar na luta com outras pessoas. Ter a disponibilidade também de ceder o seu tempo para a comunidade.¹⁰²

The exact place and time of the act of occupation was kept secret, and the participants only knew about it shortly before taking action. In contrast to *Chiquinha Gonzaga*, altogether the occupants needed over a month until finally ending up in the building at *Rua Alcindo Guanabara 20*. The original plan had involved splitting up the group and occupying two buildings in the same street—the building of the actual squat *Manoel Congo* and also the *Cine Vitória*, an old building used formerly as a cinema, but equally vacant for years. On the day of the occupation, people were picked up early in the morning by a bus that would take them to the chosen buildings. But as the police started to follow the bus things got more complicated and the group decided not to split up, but instead to only occupy one building: the *Cine Vitória*. The occupation followed the same pattern as the occupation of *Chiquinha Gonzaga*. People had to enter clandestinely and quickly, and had to stay inside the building without leaving it for at least 24 hours. This caused a lot of difficulties for the occupiers. Apart from facing the until then unknown dirty and run-down conditions of the building, some people also lost their jobs, due to the obligation to stay inside the building until things outside had calmed down.

Entrei correndo junto com a minha família, meu esposo, meus filhos, meus netos. Entramos numa carreira só. Aí entramos ali dentro do Vitória, minha filha! Tudo quebrado, tudo (Rir) As paredes todas quebradas, morcego. A gente andando, os morcegos voando atrás para morder a gente. Quase um palmo de poeira no chão. Era a grossura de quase de um colchão de poeira no chão. E cada um jogou o seu pano lá no chão, cada um se ajeitou num cantinho, olha, tem que ficar todo mundo junto. Porque a gente não sabe como é que tá. Só amanhã de manhã que a gente vai ver como é que está o chão ... para poder não ter um acidente nem nada.¹⁰³

Ele ficou desempregado. Trabalhava e ficou desempregado porque a coordenação exigiu que os moradores não podiam sair de dentro do prédio porque tinha que ficar mais de 24 horas. Eu falando que a gente tem que ficar porque a gente precisa morar. Você não vai. Aí no outro dia que ele foi o patrão dele tinha mandado ele embora.¹⁰⁴

102 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with a 27-year-old woman, 26.05.2011.

103 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with a 53-year-old woman, 09.05.2011.

104 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with a 28-year-old woman, 21.05.2011.

The *Cine Vitória* had been abandoned for years, but was—in contrast to *Manoel Congo*—privately owned. Even though the chances of being evicted were therefore significantly higher (see previous section), the occupation of a privately owned building in this case was part of the strategy of the MNLM in order to force the authorities to make an offer and negotiate about a better place where they could stay.

Hence, as expected, after a few days the owner showed up and the police evicted the squatters from the building only eight days after its occupation. Some of the occupants then found short-term initial accommodation in another squat called *Regente Feijó*, before in a subsequent step they occupied an empty public building in the same street as *Regente Feijó*, which was owned by the Treasury Department (*Secretaria de Fazenda*). After being evicted by the police again, the labor union *Conlutas—Central Sindical e Popular* offered them shelter in a big hall in their then headquarters. During this time, organization and plans were already made again to occupy the building that later became *Manoel Congo*, but these were still difficult to realize. As the occupants also had to leave the shelter of the labor union, they moved to the squat *Quilombo das Guerreiras*, where they stayed for at least two weeks, reorganizing and further planning their next steps. Finally the occupants managed to implement their plan and to enter the building at *Rua Alcindo Guanabara 20*, despite the presence of security guards watching it, on 28 October 2007.

Inside the building, just as in *Chiquinha Gonzaga*, the occupiers faced the challenge of organizing and sprucing up the run-down structure. At the beginning, everyone lived together on the second floor in the meeting room, where the conditions were better and where they had access to running water. Some occupiers took care of the renewal of basic services like water, electricity, and drains. Others cleaned, did construction work, or took care of security and coordination of the tasks inside the building. As in *Chiquinha Gonzaga*, the occupiers organized themselves into commissions that started to work immediately. As there were not enough kitchens for everyone to have access to their own, a cooking commission was responsible for the organization of the collective kitchen (*cozinha coletiva*). According to the interviewees, every family had to pay around 30 *reais* per month for approximately one year to receive daily meals.

Another important task was the control of the main entrance door of the building (*portaria*), to avoid granting entry to uninvited persons—an arrangement designed to thereby hinder eviction and further conflict. Every inhabitant had to do obligatory shift work to guarantee the continuous occupation of the main entrance door area.

Aí viemos para cá. Aí entramos de dia, nove horas da manhã que foi a hora que a gente ocupou aqui. Com dois seguranças, ocupamos. Aí entramos, 30 segundos! Rapidinho. Entramos. Ficou todo mundo lá em baixo na sala de reunião que a gente não conhecia o prédio. Então aqui foi onde estava melhor, aqui já tinha água encanada, nós lavamos do décimo andar até aqui em baixo jogando água, sabão em pó, água sanitária. Lavamos o prédio todo e lavamos, limpamos. O menino botando luz, o pessoal da brigada, colocando luz. Vendo como estava a água, esgoto, aí aqui já tinha um banheiro que dava para usar que usamos até hoje. Cada andar tem um banheiro para as pessoas do andar. E aí fizemos a cozinha coletiva, aqui. A cozinha coletiva, cada família tinha que dar 30 reais para poder fazer compras (...) e aí na hora da comida a gente ganhava os nossos pratos, por exemplo aqui são cinco pessoas, aí pegava cinco pratos e ia para a fila.¹⁰⁵

Figure 18: Assembly room in the squat Manoel Congo¹⁰⁶



During this initial period, a commission the occupiers called the brigade (*brigada*) was responsible for both the internal and external security of the building, as well as its maintenance. Apart from doing manual work, wherever necessary, the brigade also detected dangerous situations or areas inside the building, and were prepared to face potential problems with the police. The brigade further took on the responsibility of an internal police force, ensuring

105 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with a 53-year-old woman, 09.05.2011.

106 Photograph: Bea Wittger, 2011.

that all the rules established in the Charter of Principles were fulfilled. Hence, if necessary, the brigade also executed the expulsion of people from the building.

Então essa comissão, essa brigada de apoio, que tinha também a tarefa, se tivesse descumprimento, claro, da carta de princípios que e a pessoa tivesse que ser expulsa daqui, essa brigada tinha também a tarefa de tirar, de botar as pessoas para fora. Então a brigada tinha mais ou menos, a gente brincava, ela tinha mais ou menos o papel da polícia que a gente queria construir quando a gente tivesse uma sociedade nossa. A polícia que não sai prendendo, não sai batendo, não sei o que. Mas que participa do desenvolvimento de todo mundo e faz aquilo pelo coletivo dentro do contexto.¹⁰⁷

In order to keep the building clean and tidy, a cleaning commission (*comissão de limpeza*) was created. After distributing rooms among the families, every floor was given a cleaning shift plan, and every family had to do the cleaning of the floor they lived on once a week. An exception was only made for recent mothers, as they received a maternity leave from such responsibilities for a period of four months.

All the tasks assigned to the various commissions were obligatory, and non-accomplishment was brought up in discussions in the regular assemblies, exposing the respective person to everyone. In extreme cases, a misbehavior could also lead to expulsion from the squat. Besides the obligatory tasks of cleaning, doing *portaria*, and participating in the regular meetings, the movement also required an active and regular participation in demonstrations.

Ao coletivo formalmente três horas e 20 que são da portaria, mas além de estar fazendo escala na limpeza, no corredor, mais uma hora. As reuniões de sexta-feira que são toda sexta-feira, de 22 às 23 e meia, meia-noite. A hora que acaba. E as mobilizações que a gente se prepara um dia antes e um dia depois para fazer um ato, uma mobilização, então são várias horas. Não por dia, mas na semana e no mês vai se somando a dedicação.¹⁰⁸

Alongside the commissions, the movement had a great interest in promoting education and offering educational measures. The inhabitants were encouraged to go back to formal education, and it was also noted whether the children living in the squat were attending school. Several interviews and talks with the coordinators and the inhabitants of the squat revealed that the MNLM was the

107 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with the national coordinator of the MNLM, a 51-year-old woman, 06.04.2011.

108 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with a 49-year-old woman, 06.04.2011.

driving force behind the fact that people had gone back to school or had restarted other kinds of further education.

Assim como nós ocupamos o espaço, dois meses depois nós orientamos todo mundo para estudar. Ninguém aqui tem que ficar fora da escola. Das crianças aos velhos. Todos eles foram para a escola. E para a nossa alegria, era ver as crianças com o uniforme público, ir para a escola pública. E vai a pé! Aqui na escola pública. E hoje acontece isso, hoje avançamos, as crianças vão, as meninas vão dançar balé! As crianças dançam, né. Quer dizer, estão tendo acesso a atividades culturais que eles não tinham quando moravam na periferia.¹⁰⁹

E nessa parte a gente agora as crianças também têm três aulas por semana, aqui na salinha, tem a salinha delas, e existe uma lei de que cada criança tem que estar na escola, no colégio.¹¹⁰

Olha, a maioria dos moradores aqui estão todos voltando a estudar. Você olha, tem cabelo branco, e voltaram para a escola! É oportunidade. Porque? Porque a escola é aqui, entendeu? Então é essa a mudança radical que acontece na vida da pessoa. Essas senhoras, será que elas iam se animar de sair do morro para ir não sei até onde para estudar à noite? Não. Mas aqui tem.¹¹¹

E a [Glória] também falava muito comigo. Falava: olha Lígia, você estuda! Entra no colégio e vai estudar. Entendeu? Ela me deu muito conselho para estudar, me deu muito conselho para fazer curso. Ainda falei com ela, falei: Ah, [Glória], eu sou uma mulher velha já! Com filho, com criança para tomar conta, marido com problema ... não! Vai estudar sim! Vai estudar. E aí comecei a estudar no Brizolão, à noite, aí depois achei que não estava bom lá, aí saí do Brizolão, para ir para lá sozinha eu achava muito perigoso. Como eu não estava acostumada, aí fui para a Presbiteriana que é de dia.¹¹²

Part of the educational efforts of the MNLM was the establishment of the child-care center—the *Espaço Criarte Mariana Crioula*.¹¹³ The narratives of Lia—who built and organized the child-care center from the very

109 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with the national coordinator of MNLM, a 51-year-old man, 03.05.2011.

110 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with a 40-year-old man, 07.04.2011.

111 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with a 66-year-old woman, 29.04.2014.

112 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with a 53-year-old woman, 09.05.2011.

113 For a detailed study on education in *Manoel Congo* and the *Espaço Criarte Mariana Crioula*, see Neves Vasconcelos 2014, *O Espaço como Produto*.

beginning—reflected the importance of education for the movement. Lia was invited by the coordinators to live in the squat in order to help the inhabitants, as she put it: “with a little bit of reflecting to do,”¹¹⁴ and was herself finishing her studies at university. She emphasized the importance of education and the future opportunities it offered to the inhabitants:

E eu acompanhava as crianças na escola, conversava com eles. Eles não podiam dormir muito tarde senão não iam ter rendimento escolar. E sempre observando também. Conversando com as famílias, as famílias um pouco resistentes. Eu compreendia, porque tinha uma outra maneira de organizar a vida. (...) Mostrar a importância dela. Que se a gente estudar a gente tem mobilidade social. Que isso dependia da gente ... mostrar para a família que depende delas a educação das crianças, não é só na escola. Então a minha chegada aqui, eu vim diretamente trabalhar com as crianças pequenas e até aos 13, 14 anos. E esse projeto deu certo. Porque as crianças começaram a ficar apaixonadas, a gostar.¹¹⁵

The child-care center was run by Lia and other inhabitants¹¹⁶ with the support of five students, who were not living in the squat. Twice a week, the center was open to the children living in the squat. They were divided into two groups: one group on Tuesdays from 18.30 until 19.30 o'clock for the children from three to seven years, and from 19.30 until 20.30 o'clock for children from eight to 13 years; and a second group on Saturdays from 10.00 until 11.30 o'clock for children from three to seven years and from 11.30 until 13.30 o'clock for children from eight to 13 years. The program offered by the center included, for example, cultural excursions and help with homework, and also part of the idea was to allow parents some free time.¹¹⁷ The child-care center had also started with the idea of offering the children of the squat—which in a lot of cases had faced difficult living conditions in their past—some space of their own, and also aimed to help with the implementing of daily rules and routines, which were sometimes missing inside their homes. Besides school control and healthy alimentation, the program of the center also included a political education, oriented towards the ideology of the MNLM.

114 Own translation from: “*Para ajudar também um pouco com o refletir*” (Interview in *Manoel Congo* with a 50-year-old woman, 21.05.2011).

115 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with a 50-year-old woman, 21.05.2011.

116 All of them women, see section 4.3.2.2.

117 And being, for example, able to participate at the preparatory course for the income generation project, which took place on Saturdays.

Na escolinha também nossa, no espaço Criarte, também ajuda muito nessa coisa de acompanhar as crianças. De tentar integrar a criança a esses conceitos gerais que estamos dando. Entendeu? Do espaço geográfico, da questão da exclusão territorial, porque eles moravam em Anchieta e agora moram estão morando aqui ... do que é coletivo, sabe? Qual é o limite do coletivo para o individual. Então a escolinha faz muitos exercícios com eles para poder tentar trabalhar esses conceitos. E eles assimilam. Às vezes com muito mais facilidade do que os adultos, né. Eles são meio que um papel em branco, né. Para ser escrito. Os adultos já estão cheios de vícios.¹¹⁸

Apart from the child-care center, the MNLM had organized the opportunity for the children of the squat to participate gratis in the broad range of sports activities offered by the Young Men's Christian Association (*Associação Cristã dos Moços*, ACM) in the neighborhood of Lapa—such as ballet, soccer, and swimming. Most of the children took advantage of the sports program, and it was often emphasized by their parents how lucky they were to have this opportunity, as they otherwise would not have been able to afford such activities for their children.

A minha filha sempre quis fazer balé. Mas eu não podia pagar. Além de pagar o aluguel, eu não poderia pagar um balé para ela. Porque aula de balé é caro. (...) Ai quando eu vim para cá, graças a Deus eu consegui. Hoje ela faz balé todos os dias. É uma coisa que ela sempre quis desde pequena, fazer alguma coisa que tenha dança, que seja dança. E faz. O meu filho faz ACM, 3 vezes na semana. Ele faz futsal, e GA, que é ginástica olímpica. Enfim, eu não podia dar isso para os meus filhos! A outra de 5 anos já diz que vai fazer balé também. Então uma coisa puxa a outra. E se fosse lá ... se eu não estivesse aqui, eu não podia.¹¹⁹

As the occupation of the building implied the idea of staying there on the long-term, it became necessary to find a solution early on regarding how to cover future costs that would emerge after the renovation of the building—such as the charges for water, electricity,¹²⁰ and the taxes for the building. Because, due to their low or nonexistent incomes, most of the people living in the squat would not be able to pay these charges. Hence, the idea of a cooperative that would generate jobs and income for the inhabitants was established. The idea of

118 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with the national coordinator of the MNLM, a 51-year-old woman, 06.04.2011.

119 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with a 42-year-old woman, 02.05.2011.

120 Until the time of the interviews in 2011, the occupiers did not pay for water or electricity.

combining employment in the form of a cooperative with the political project of squatting was not an idea that only emerged in *Manoel Congo*; it also formed an important part of the general strategy of the MNLM.¹²¹ To make the implementation of the cooperative easier, the squat thus additionally applied for funding for the project at *Petrobras*, which at the time of the interviews was starting to sponsor the project *inter alia* with weekly courses on how to do cooperative work.¹²²

Inside the squat, the influence and guidance of the MNLM was strong and binding from the very beginning. Based on elections, there existed clear hierarchies inside the squat, which also reflected the general structure and organization of the movement. The internal structure of the MNLM was based on coordinators with different levels of reference—namely the local, the municipal, the state, and the national level. Each level implied different responsibilities, and the coordinators met on a regular basis. At the local—the squat—level, every commission had a coordinator, who also formed part of the general coordination group of the squat.

Existe uma hierarquia por esfera. Você tem a coordenação estadual, quer dizer, a nacional, estadual, municipal e local. Normalmente é eleita a partir de locais. Cada ocupação que se diz ocupação, São Cristóvão, Duque de Caxias, Petrópolis, eleitos os representantes, como representantes locais. E normalmente ser representante local vai ter reunião semanal ou quinzenal, que cada esfera faz.¹²³

Apart from the local level—at which the everyday life in the squat was organized—at the municipal-level coordinators also met regularly to discuss issues and topics that could not be resolved inside the MNLM squats or that needed the support of a higher level, such as for example solving problems or discussing the need for mobilization in the municipality of Rio de Janeiro. Out of every squat in the same municipality that was part of the MNLM, two municipal coordinators were elected.

121 Cf. Queiroz e Mello 2013, *Ramifications of the Social Housing Movements*, p. 9.

122 For more information on the cooperative “*Liga Urbana*,” see Fornazin 2014, *Luta pela Moradia*, pp. 31, 73-75 or Queiroz e Mello 2014, *Trajatórias, Cotidianos e Utopias*, p. 102.

123 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with a 32-year-old man, 24.05.2011.

A coordenação municipal, a composição dela são representantes, moradores da Manoel Congo, são moradores da São Cristóvão, são moradores espalhados no Rio de Janeiro, aqui na capital, que compõem a coordenação municipal.¹²⁴

A gente participa e fala da problemática do município. Tem um conflito, estamos ocupando um espaço em tal lugar. Aí tem que saber como mobilizar, como a gente vai trabalhar isso tudo. Onde o movimento vai estar atuando, entendeu? Nessa situação, nesse conflito. Tem uma remoção, aí a gente vai ver como vai funcionar, mobilizar as pessoas para estarem lá no horário, no dia.¹²⁵

While at the municipal level the topics discussed brought into focus the problems and organization inside the different squats, the state level coordinators took care of the general political issues, such as direct negotiations with the authorities in the municipalities. Every year the state encounter took place, at which the coordinators of the state levels were also elected. At the same state meetings, the assembly also voted for national coordinators, who took part in the national operations of the movement, such as important political negotiations and general decisions about the political standing of the movement.

Aí o encontro estadual não é só a ocupação Manoel Congo. São todos aqueles que pertencem ao movimento nacional: Volta Redonda, Caxias, Petrópolis, São Cristóvão que é da municipal. Aqui a capital do Rio de Janeiro tem um encontro estadual, que nesse encontro estadual, a gente elege a coordenação estadual. (...) Nesse encontro estadual é que se elegem dois representantes nacionais. Esse encontro estadual, bateu o martelo: aí eu e [Glória], a [Glória] é titular, e eu sou suplente.¹²⁶

Então o coordenador nacional tem o papel de falar em nome da política do movimento. E a política do movimento é a política da ocupação Manoel Congo também. Tem esse direito e dever de falar. Mas eu tenho esse direito e dever, trazido pelos pobres. Nos encontros, nas instâncias, entendeu? Nas discussões.¹²⁷

124 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with the national coordinator of MNLM, a 51-year-old man, 03.05.2011.

125 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with a 53-year-old woman, 09.05.2011.

126 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with the national coordinator of MNLM, a 51-year-old man, 03.05.2011.

127 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with the national coordinator of the MNLM, a 51-year-old woman, 06.04.2011.

At the time of the interviews, two of the national coordinators of the MNLM lived in *Manoel Congo*, which was clearly an exceptional case. Even though they tried not to mix their responsibilities, their presence and strong political consciousness influenced the daily life in the squat. Especially Glória, a highly charismatic and engaged leader, had become an important point of reference for the inhabitants (see also section 4.3.4), which sometimes led, as she herself explained, to serious conflict and also problems with or confusion of responsibilities:

Eu acabei ficando com um problema sério porque nenhum coordenador nacional do movimento mora numa ocupação. Entendeu? Ele às vezes mora num assentamento precário, há 30 anos, 40 anos. Mas ele nunca fez uma ocupação para ele ir morar nela. Nessa ocupação. E eu acabei fazendo isso. Em determinado momento achei que seria bom. Mas tem momento que eu acho que foi um erro. Porque eu com um monte de tarefa nacional, estadual, local, eu acabei ainda ficando como referência dentro da ocupação. Então muitas vezes a própria coordenação local ela era desautorizada pelos moradores em função de alguma coisa que eu pensava. (...) Então ficou uma relação muito centrada em mim, sabe? E isso é ruim também politicamente falando, porque quem na verdade tem a bandeira de luta pela reforma urbana, é o Movimento Nacional de Luta pela Moradia. Do qual a ocupação naturalmente faz parte. Como a coordenadora nacional mora na ocupação Manoel Congo, quando eu chego num órgão público aí, eles falam assim: Ah, a [Glória], da ocupação Manoel Congo.¹²⁸

In the subsequent process of organization—even though less drastic than in *Chiquinha Gonzaga*—some changes had begun to appear over time, and new conflicts had emerged within the squat. Especially the strong influence of the MNLM turned out to be a problem for some of the inhabitants. In the following section, therefore, I will go into detail about these changes and the problems that had emerged in the squat after the initial period of occupation.

128 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with the national coordinator of the MNLM, a 51-year-old woman, 06.04.2011.

3.2.2 Still the Same? Talking about Problems and Changes

Mas para quem não aceita, não tem como viver.¹²⁹

Visiting *Manoel Congo*, one's first contact with its inhabitants is usually with someone sitting at the *portaria*, restricting entry to the squat. In contrast to *Chiquinha Gonzaga*, where almost all commissions were dissolved over time and the *coletivo* had practically ceased to exist, in *Manoel Congo* the situation developed very differently. Almost all commissions described above and established at the beginning still existed, or had changed only in terms of their focus or intensity over time.

One of the few commissions that stopped functioning in *Manoel Congo* was the already mentioned *cozinha coletiva*. After moving into separate spaces the inhabitants wanted to organize their meals independently for themselves and their families. Another commission, the aforementioned brigade, reduced its responsibilities to dealing with pending problems with the infrastructure of the building, and was later dissolved completely.

Quando a gente teve um período mais difícil nosso, que foi o nosso primeiro ano, a brigada funcionou. Na medida em que os perigos foram diminuindo, que a comunidade foi se acostumando, que as reuniões dos andares foram acontecendo, as escalas de trabalho do andar, da cozinha, tudo foi acontecendo, a coordenação foi dando conta disso, a brigada foi ficando só por conta dessa infraestrutura. Então precisa de ampliar a rede da água. A gente se juntava, dizia para a gente quanto que ia custar, a gente se cotizava, e eles construíam, entendeu?¹³⁰

In the place of the brigade, a new commission—the so-called construction commission (*comissão de obras*)—started to work in order to organize the future renovation of the building. The organization of the cleaning of the building was still strictly maintained, and as before, regulated through a weekly cleaning plan. Since the inhabitants of each floor shared one bathroom and one sink, the necessity of keeping them clean in order to avoid conflict was much higher than in *Chiquinha Gonzaga*, where every room had its own sink and bathroom. But still, the corridors and stairways were also part of the regular cleaning and therefore the building was well-tended. The cleaning, like the work

129 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with a 28-year-old woman, 21.05.2011.

130 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with the national coordinator of the MNLM, a 51-year-old woman, 06.04.2011.

in the *portaria*, was still not voluntary, but part of the conditions for living in the squat, and everyone was admonished to invest a certain number of hours in tasks dedicated to the community. The number of hours that everyone over 18 years of age had to provide in the areas of cleaning, *portaria*, or infrastructure, was reduced over time from eight hours to three hours and twenty minutes per week.

E nós, que fazíamos portaria. São três horas e vinte. Uma vez por semana. E dentro de cada andar temos a nossa escala própria do andar. Entendeu? Que é o nosso corredor, e o nosso pedaço de escada, e o banheiro. Cada dia é uma pessoa também. Somos seis. São apartamentos por andar. Aí é um dia de cada um.¹³¹

Mas como agora foi para três horas. Eram oito horas, que a gente fazia na portaria. (...) Aí quando ia fazendo 18 anos já ia entrando para a portaria, para a limpeza. Aí (...) diminuiu para três horas. Quer dizer: eu pago três horas na portaria, meu esposo também três horas na portaria, e quem é da limpeza também, paga três horas.¹³²

Another obligation for the inhabitants was participation of at least one member per family in the regular meetings (*assembléias*) of the squat. Whereas at the beginning these had been held daily, over time their frequency was reduced to weekly, then fortnightly, and finally to monthly meetings. These meetings took place fairly late at night (22:00 pm) in order to facilitate the participation of everyone. Apart from the general assembly, the different commissions such as the *portaria* met regularly in additional assemblies. Even though in *Manoel Congo* the frequency of the meetings was also reduced over time, no decline of the *coletivo* occurred as it did in *Chiquinha Gonzaga*. This was due to the obligatory character of the residents' participation, not only in the meetings, but also in public demonstrations, which was controlled by the coordination of the MNLM inside the squat.

O primeiro ano nós tínhamos assembléia diária. Quando tinha ameaça de despejo tinha assembléia todo dia. Aí no segundo ano nós passamos a assembléia para semanal. Nós só passamos a assembléia quinzenal no ano passado, e mesmo assim a gente faz de 15 em 15 dias assembléia, mas na sexta tem assembléia e na outra tem portaria. (...) Então na verdade toda semana tem reunião do conjunto das famílias e toda semana tem reunião da comissão que coordena a ocupação local.¹³³

131 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with a 49-year-old woman, 06.04.2011.

132 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with a 47-year-old woman, 16.05.2011.

133 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with the national coordinator of the MNLM, a 51-year-old woman, 06.04.2011.

Additionally, due to the presence of the national coordinator at almost every regular meeting of the squat, there was always a regulating and controlling authority that interfered in the issues discussed and raised awareness of the until then established rules and procedures. The guiding reference was always the Charter of Principles, which was still in force, and which also contained the binding commitment to active participation at the regular assemblies. During one of the observed meetings of the *coletivo*,¹³⁴ this commitment to active participation was renewed in the form of a written assurance, which every inhabitant had to sign immediately. The reason for this renewal was the change in the frequency of the meetings, and the forthcoming renovation of the building. Observing the corresponding meeting, the coordination of the squat distributed a new declaration of commitment, which included the obligation of at least one family member to take part in the regular meetings, and the stipulation that they would be allowed to miss only two assemblies before being expelled from the squat. The invitation to sign the commitment immediately during the assembly contributed to an extra pressure on the inhabitants, as refusal implied the danger of being exposed in front of everyone. However, one of the inhabitants nevertheless challenged the renewal of the commitment, asking if this meant that she could still be expelled after the renovation: “*Mulher: Também depois das obras vou correr o risco de ser mandado na rua? Coordenação: Vai!*”¹³⁵ However, she had to desist after a short verbal exchange with the coordinators, and finally signed the commitment.

Other inhabitants later expressed to me their concern and discomfort with the situation. Especially the insecurity over whether they would be able to stay in their homes that this generated was challenging for the inhabitants.

Até teve uma situação que a gente assinou, eu acho que você estava no dia da assembléia, a gente assinou um compromisso, né? De ir na assembléia e permanecer freqüentando as manifestações, as coisas assim. Porque já cheguei no final, não tive nem tempo de ler direito, mas aí como tinha que assinar ali no ato da assembléia eu peguei assim e entreguei. Então tem essas coisas. Que se você tiver que morar, você pega e tem que fazer. (...) Mesmo depois do prédio pronto, a gente vai ainda continuar nessa coisa: ah, se não cumprir regra vai ser expulso? Vai ser mandado embora? E você ouviu muito bem a resposta da [Glória], né?¹³⁶

134 Assembly in *Manoel Congo*, 29.04.2011.

135 Ibid.

136 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with a 28-year-old woman, 21.05.2011

Então o que acontece com a gente aqui na ocupação. A gente está sempre sob areia fofa. Não há uma garantia, sabe? De dizer: não vou mais sair daqui. Porque esse documento que nos fizeram assinar, dizendo que esse documento é para sempre, e se depois faltar três reuniões, você é convidado a sair, e me colocarem na rua eu, meu marido e meus filhos.¹³⁷

What became evident in the case of the commitment renewal was that in *Manoel Congo* the practical power the responsible movement had to expel people from the squat for non-accomplishment of internal rules had been maintained, and expulsions still actually happened. During my visits I had to witness the expulsion of one of the inhabitants by the coordinators of the squat because he allowed someone from outside (actually his pregnant girlfriend) to stay for a few days with him in the squat without the official permission of the coordination. The policy of entrance control and regulation of visits in order to protect the squat¹³⁸ was strictly maintained. Still, for some of the inhabitants this rule also signified a big challenge, because they were not able to receive guests or to offer overnight stays. Some of the inhabitants reported that due to their living in the squat and being subjected to these rules, they had lost former social contacts, like family and friends, and also felt more vulnerable for not being allowed to lock their doors.

A minha casa é uma casa que vivia cheia de amigos e tudo. Isso mudou radicalmente. Agora quando eu quero ver os meus amigos eu tenho que ir até eles, não eles virem até a mim.¹³⁹

E outra experiência que a gente vive hoje, que eu acho muito difícil, é a gente não poder trancar as nossas portas. É você ter que viver aqui o dia a dia com a sua porta aberta. E você sair ... vamos supor, se você viajar, ficar três dias fora, quatro dias, a sua porta dica aberta. Entendeu? A sua casa fica vulnerável. Se a coordenação não estiver ... vai entrar na sua casa, entendeu? Se sumir alguma coisa no prédio, todas as casas ganham revista. (...) Existe! Revistem todas as casa. Revistem mesmo. Levantam colchão, abrem armário. Revistem tudo. Procurando para ver se o objeto tá na casa de algum morador.¹⁴⁰

In extreme cases a disregard of that rule could also, as the example shows, lead to expulsion from the squat. Asking the national coordinators about this practice,

137 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with a 53-year-old woman, 09.05.2011.

138 Also because the practice of not having a key for the apartments and therefore being accessible all the time made a strict control at the entrance even more necessary.

139 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with a 37-year-old woman, 16.05.2011.

140 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with a 53-year-old woman, 09.05.2011.

I was told that expulsion unfortunately still existed and was in extreme cases necessary to guarantee and protect the interests of the coletivo.¹⁴¹ Especially those persons engaged in the movement with a certain responsibility, for example as coordinators, also confirmed the necessity of expulsion. They argued that it was sometimes difficult to deal with people inside the squat who had a different idea of living together and therefore did not follow the rules, thus hindering the advancement of the others.

Então a gente vem fazendo um trabalho com essas famílias, até chegar. (...) Porque tem algumas famílias também que não aceitaram mudar aquele ritmo porque não conseguiam mudar, aí tiveram que sair daqui, porque a pessoa quando acostuma a fazer o que quer, ela não fica presa, assim. Por exemplo: se você tem um grupo e esse grupo faz uma assembléia e ali é discutido tudo. Resolvido ali. Só que tem algumas pessoas que não aceitam isso. E não aceitam assim, por exemplo: eu te ajudar. Ela só quer fazer tudo do jeito dela. Então não tem, não avança. Sempre fica para trás. Aí a gente conseguiu ficar com um grupo aqui de pessoas que quer mudar de vida mesmo. Quer ir para a frente, porque não adianta você ter lá as pessoas que não querem, atrasam todo o processo! Aí você em vez de avançar fica andando para trás.¹⁴²

Through the strict control of the MNLM, rules and order were in fact better preserved than in *Chiquinha Gonzaga*. But the effect on the inhabitants was often that they felt a certain insecurity, fear, and sometimes even resentment. Accordingly, the strict rules and their implementation constituted one of the greatest personal challenges for the inhabitants in *Manoel Congo*:

Agora no caso de ter essas coisas assim, por exemplo é usuário, tá com drogas, trouxe drogas. Então é obrigado a sair. Tudo bem. (...) Agora o que eu não aceito, mas é uma coisa que está em mim, é mandar as pessoas embora sem atos graves. Entendeu? Por: ah, eu não lavei o meu corredor hoje, não lavei na outra semana também. Então vamos chamar, tem que ter uma justificativa. Não pode continuar sem lavar. (...) Porque às vezes acontece, como já aconteceu de eu não lavar, porque eu não tinha dinheiro para comprar sabão em pó. (...) E às vezes você para comprar comida para dentro de casa, gás, remédio, é uma roupa. Você tem gastos. É material de escola, então você tem gasto. Aí você deixa de comprar um caderno para comprar um sabão para lavar o corredor? Não. (...) Então

141 Informal talk in *Manoel Congo* with the national coordinator of the MNLM, a 51-year-old woman, 06.04.2011.

142 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with a 40-year-old man, 07.04.2011.

essas coisas aí, são coisas que eles não relevam. Entendeu? (...) se você não descer para a portaria, eles vão na sua casa e te chamam para as reuniões. Eles te oprimem (...).¹⁴³

Aceitar regras de pessoas (...) o maior desafio que existe aqui dentro é isso. É você ver uma coisa, você não concordar com aquilo, mas como você precisa morar, você tem que abaixar a cabeça e tem que ficar ... Isso é horrível. É chato. Às vezes eu nem sei se compensa. Às vezes. Às vezes eu nem sei se compensa. Mas como a gente tem filho, não somos só eu e meu marido. E eu realmente não tenho dinheiro para comprar uma casa. Não tenho. Então muitas das vezes é melhor agüentar.¹⁴⁴

That the strict internal rules and control were in fact a challenge for some of the inhabitants was sometimes difficult to discern, especially at the beginning of my fieldwork. Only some of them talked openly about these feelings. Most of the concerns and doubts were uttered after a while in informal talks, because of the fear of getting into trouble for expressing their criticism openly. On one occasion one of the female inhabitants even refused to give an interview because she was afraid of “having to tell the truth” because, as she told me, the truth was that “it is an obligation to participate. Nobody is an activist (*militante*) here!”¹⁴⁵ In an informal meeting this inhabitant expressed her feeling of having been betrayed, because she had thought that she would obtain housing and not that she would be obliged to participate to this extent and also be exposed to the fear of expulsion. She was convinced that people only talked positively about the squat in the interviews with me because of their fear of being expelled if they did not, and she stated that most people would leave the squat immediately if only they had another place to go.¹⁴⁶ Even though this was certainly an extreme case of dissatisfaction, which did not represent the opinion of all inhabitants of the squat, on other occasions other inhabitants also expressed their doubts, and it became quite clear that there existed some tension between the needs and expectations of the MNLM and of the people living in the squat.

However, not all inhabitants experienced the obligatory participation and strict implementation of rules mainly as a burden. For some it also meant the prevention of disputes and conflict. They expressed for example how pleasant it was to know that their children would not be able to leave the squat without them knowing, or that violence or drugs were prohibited inside the squat. This often stood in sharp contrast to their former living conditions, where they and

143 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with a 53-year-old woman, 09.05.2011.

144 Ibid.

145 Informal talk with a woman in *Manoel Congo*, 16.05.2011.

146 Ibid.

their children had often been exposed every day to dangerous situations, like drug-dealing or other kinds of violence. Their life in the squat therefore was clearly experienced as an improvement.

Por exemplo: eu saí da favela porque eu pagava aluguel, então eu queria sair da favela por causa do tráfico, que a gente percebe que oprime muito as pessoas. E por causa do aluguel. Então se eu tivesse que morar num prédio também, que mesmo que não estivesse pagando aluguel, mas que tivesse que conviver com o tráfico de drogas lá dentro, eu também não conseguiria viver. (...) Então eu gosto daqui por essa situação né? É bom também por essa parte. Que a gente não vê o tráfico de drogas, não tem prostituição. Tem umas regras que são legais, sabe? Às vezes eu acho que existe um exagero, mas tem algumas coisas que são legais.¹⁴⁷

Living in a *coletivo* was for almost all inhabitants a new experience however, and something they had to get used to. The situation of being required to organize and to live in a group, to share daily workflows and facilities—like the bathroom, or the cleaning of clothes and dishes—or not being able to lock the doors, often meant a significant change in the lives of many interviewees. The challenges described had also led to situations in which families had not been expelled, but had decided to leave the squat, because they had not been able to adapt to the new living conditions.

Mas todo mundo no mesmo local. E assim foi durante algum tempo. Até surgir a divisão e tudo. (...) Aí depois ficaram duas famílias em cada local. Aí depois foi dividindo. Dividindo. Porque muitos foram desistindo no meio do caminho. Porque tinha muita gente no começo. Aí depois tem gente que vai parando. Companheiros que vão desistindo, parando, no meio do caminho. Aí foram dividindo assim.¹⁴⁸

Another characteristic, and possible reason why the described internal organization in *Manoel Congo* had developed differently from that in *Chiquinha Gonzaga*, emerged quite unexpectedly during the interviews. Inside the squat *Manoel Congo* the topic of religion, and especially that of “being evangelical” (*evangélico*) was introduced by the inhabitants, and provided some interesting additional information regarding the squat. It turned out that the number of *evangélicos* in *Manoel Congo* on the one hand had the potential to facilitate its internal organization, but on the other hand constituted a challenge for some of the inhabitants.

147 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with a 28-year-old woman, 21.05.2011.

148 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with a 46-year-old woman, 06.05.2011.

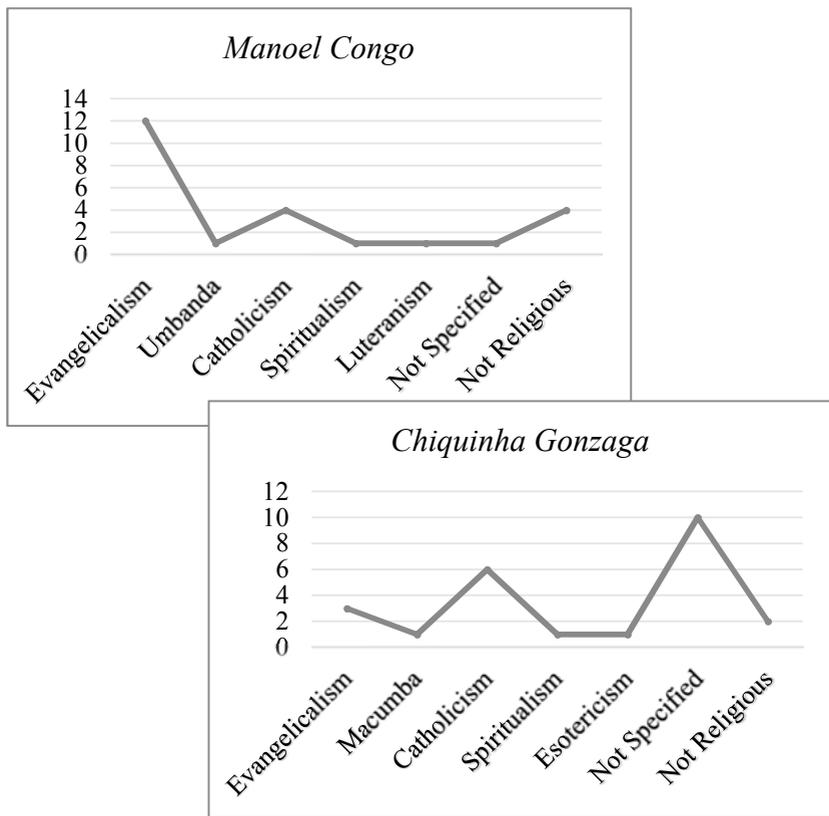
Data show that Pentecostalism has grown considerably in Brazil over the last few decades.¹⁴⁹ Even though Catholicism is still the most widespread religion, its members have declined and membership in Pentecostal churches has increased, especially in poor urban areas and among women.¹⁵⁰ It is therefore no surprise that there were also Pentecostals living in the squats, and that most of them were women,¹⁵¹ but what caught my attention was how many there were in *Manoel Congo*. While in the squat *Chiquinha Gonzaga* people did not talk a lot about religion on their own initiative, and therefore it almost never emerged as a topic during the interviews, in *Manoel Congo* this was not the case. On several occasions during my visits, I was not only verbally but also visually confronted with Pentecostalism inside the squat. For example, some of the inhabitants were reading the Bible or other religious books, such as “The power of the woman

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- 149 Previous work has shown the expansion and characteristics of Pentecostalism in Brazil. See for example Chesnut, R. A. 1997, *Born again in Brazil. The Pentecostal Boom and the Pathogens of Poverty*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press; Höllinger, Franz and Adriana Valle-Höllinger. 2007, *Religiöse Kultur in Brasilien. Zwischen traditionellem Volksglauben und modernen Erweckungsbewegungen*, Frankfurt am Main: Campus; Mariz, Cecília L. 1992. “Religion and Poverty in Brazil. A Comparison of Catholic and Pentecostal Communities”, *Sociological Analysis*, 53: 63–70; Motley Hallum, Anne. 2003. “Taking Stock and Building Bridges. Feminism, Women’s Movements, and Pentecostalism in Latin America”, *Latin American Research Review*, 38 (1): 169–186; Oosterbaan, Martijn. 2014. “Religion, Popular Culture, and the City: Pentecostalism, Carnival and Carioca Funk in Rio de Janeiro” in *Global Prayers: Contemporary Manifestations of the Religious in the City* edited by J. Becker, K. Klingan, S. Lanz and K. Wildner. Zürich. Lars Mueller Publishers, p.452; Heck, Gerda and Lanz, Stephan. 2014. “Religiöses „worlding” in der Stadt: Globaler Pentekostalismus in Rio de Janeiro“, *PERIPHERIE* 34 (134/135): 213.
- 150 For the socio-economic profile of the members of the Pentecostal Church, see IBGE – Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística. 2010, *Censo Demográfico. Características Gerais da População, Religião e Pessoas com Deficiência*, Rio de Janeiro: IBGE, pp. 89-105; on the great number of women in the Pentecostal Church, see Drogus, Carol A. 1994. “Religious Change and Women’s Status in Latin America. A Comparison of Catholic Base Communities and Pentecostal Churches”, *Helen Kellogg Institute for International Studies Working Paper* (205): 2; Chesnut 1997, *Born again in Brazil*, pp. 7, 14ff; Motley Hallum 2003, *Taking Stock and Building Bridges*, p. 171.
- 151 For the influence of Pentecostalism on gender roles in *Manoel Congo* see chapter 4.3.3.

who prays” (“*O poder da mulher que ora*”), while doing *portaria*, and sometimes even prayed for me and my future after our interviews. Intrigued by these observations, I went through my interview material, and it turned out that 50% of the interviewed inhabitants in *Manoel Congo* were *evangélicos* (see Figure 19). Thus, religion turned out to be a really interesting issue in *Manoel Congo*.

While there has been a production of literature stressing the importance of religion in the urban context and pointing to the influence and spreading of the Pentecostal church especially in the *favelas*,¹⁵² I could hardly find any reference or specific attention paid to the large number of Pentecostals in the squat in any of the academic literature or internet sources written so far on *Manoel Congo*.¹⁵³ Thus, even though not planned as a major topic of interest in my research, the importance of religion grew “out of the field,” and was introduced as an issue by the actors themselves. It could therefore hardly be ignored completely as a topic here, especially because this study advocates being open to other social categorizations, as these can provide useful insights for a better understanding of citizenship and gender inside the squats (see chapter 1.1).¹⁵⁴

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- 152 Heck et al. 2014, Religiöses „worlding” in der Stadt, pp. 212-238; Lanz, Stephan. 2014. “Assembling Global Prayers in the City: An Attempt to Repopulate Urban Theory” in *Global Prayers: Contemporary Manifestations of the Religious in the City* edited by J. Becker, K. Klingan, S. Lanz and K. Wildner. Zürich. Lars Mueller Publishers, pp. 16–47; Lanz, Stephan. 2010. „Neue Götter und Gläubige in der Stadt. Thesen und Fragen zum veränderten Verhältnis zwischen dem Städtischen und dem Religiösen“, *dérive. Zeitschrift für Stadtforschung* (40/41): 33-37.
- 153 Even though the studies by Fornazin 2014, *Luta pela Moradia*; Carle-Marsan 2013, *Luttes de Brésiliennes pour le Droit à la ville* and Rodrigues da Silva 2010, *Ocupação Manuel Congo*, mention in a few sentences the great number of *evangélicos* inside *Manoel Congo*, they do not go any further into an analysis of this fact.
- 154 One can observe that religion addresses and interacts with issues of citizenship and gender, such as participation and gender relations (see also chapter 4.3.3 and 4.3.4), and therefore serves as a potentially fruitful topic of investigation through which to learn even more about the reasons behind the inhabitants’ understanding of citizenship and gender in the squats. The emergence of the topic “out of the field” also illustrates the importance of opening the analysis up to include new aspects at any time, and not merely to determine from its beginning the sole relevance of a fixed set of social categorizations. Due to the small amount of data I collected specifically on the subject of religion, and because a detailed analysis would be beyond the scope of this study, I am only able to offer a brief overview and selected

Figure 19: Different religions in Chiquinha Gonzaga and Manoel Congo¹⁵⁵

Hence, some interviews revealed that the fact that there were a large number of inhabitants who were *evangélicos* in the squat had been an important and also controversial topic among the inhabitants. The interviewees often pointed out how many *evangélicos* there were of their own accord, without being asked about it, and reported that at the beginning, people also had used the squat to perform religious services at home. The services (*cultos*) described by the

insights into the topic of religion and its possible interdependency with gender and citizenship in this thesis. It turned out to be an important topic in *Manoel Congo*, and therefore remains another profitable area of further research in this context, as do other social categorizations, such as ethnicity and age—which did not however emerge during the interviews with the same intensity.

inhabitants during their interviews form part of Pentecostal practices.¹⁵⁶ Their enactment and dominating presence inside the squat had then also become a reason for disagreements among the inhabitants, as some felt bothered by these practices:

Olha, religião aqui já foi uma coisa que tentaram fazer uma coisa predominante. Predominante que eu digo: que a religião fizesse parte disso aqui. Que tivesse espaço para uma determinada religião. Que eu acredito que é a maioria, que são os cristãos, né. Os crentes, que nem se diz. Mas isso com as palestras, com as reuniões isso foi ficando em segundo plano, porque aqui é uma ocupação. A pessoa tem que praticar a sua religião dentro da sua casa, morar lá, rezar, acender vela.¹⁵⁷

Teve até uma época que eles faziam culto aqui dentro. Que a [Glória], como é católica, e esse pessoal tem uma mania de fazer as coisas muito barulhento. Eu não gosto justamente por isso! Não é que eu tenha nada contra a religião. Porque a religião existe e você vai atrás daquela que você quer. Se você se sente bem na igreja evangélica, ótimo! É um direito seu. Se você se sentir bem na católica, que é onde eu me sinto bem, tudo bem. Eu acho que cada um tem que respeitar um ao outro, né?¹⁵⁸

As a consequence, it had become necessary, for the coordination of the squat, to establish rules over time in order to prevent such dominant religious practices and further internal conflicts about them.

Hence, if many of the inhabitants of *Manoel Congo* were *evangélicos*, it is likely that not only religious practices, but also the ideology of the Pentecostal church was reproduced in the squat by its members, and had some influence on their activism. Even though this aspect has yet to be studied in more detail in future research, some of the interviews already suggest a certain influence:

156 These practices are, as Carol Ann Drogus states, often organized by women: “Women can lead religious services in the *cultos* or consciousness-raising discussion in the *grupos*. Through such activities, they may learn valuable practical skills, including public speaking, and they may also gain an important measure of confidence” (Drogus 1994, *Religious Change and Women’s Status*, p. 5). Her statement points to two aspects, which are discussed in the literature on Pentecostalism and are also of significance for the topic of this study: First, the question of to what extent Pentecostalism has the potential to change gender roles in the private home environment; and second, to what extent it offers new participatory opportunities for women. I will therefore pick it up briefly later in chapter 4.3.3.

157 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with a 51-year-old man, 07.04.2011.

158 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with a 42-year-old woman, 02.05.2011.

Sim. Muita influência. Acho que foi a partir da igreja que eu consegui enxergar melhor o meu papel no mundo. De lutar pelo reino de Deus aqui. Que o reino de Deus não é aquele só lá em cima. Ele ta aqui. O reino de Deus é construído e conquistado à força. Então é isso.¹⁵⁹

Não, eu separo. Para mim essa coisa é bem clara: eu separo. A questão da igreja evangélica, a questão da religião, com a minha questão mesmo de militância, né? Do que eu acredito. Mas também não interfere também. Não tem interferência. Se eu separar isso ... mas tudo isso eu vejo que, quando você conhece Deus, você tem uma vida cristã, de frente a Deus, você percebe que isso também faz parte. A desigualdade social, a diferença entre os nossos irmãos em Cristo ou então o ser humano como irmão ... tem essa diferença. Você vê muito isso no movimento, né? Do movimento de moradia, de criança e adolescente, na comunidade, de ver muito isso. E até separar. Eu como tenho a minha profissão como psicóloga, eu separo a questão ... eu como pessoa separo da religião e disso. Mas quando a gente se depara, a gente vê que as coisas se encaixam. É todo um contexto da necessidade. É importante. Então isso para mim ... a minha igreja evangélica não me atrapalha no dia a dia, naquilo que eu acredito e tudo mais, não atrapalha. E sempre que eu puder usar algumas questões eu uso. Se for pertinente a esse processo do movimento e da militância.¹⁶⁰

As the first quote shows, some interviewees even reinterpreted their struggle for housing as a divine mission. This influence of Pentecostalism on activism clearly did not meet with the approval of all inhabitants. Especially those who had come to the squats prompted by a political motivation criticized this fact vehemently on several occasions. For them a religious motivation was clearly undermining the motivation and efforts of the squat to provoke serious political change:

Influencia. Para as atividades culturais, definições básicas, de leitura de realidade, assim. Que Deus quer, se Jesus quiser ... pelo amor de Deus, sabe? Se for para querer alguma coisa, você tem que ser ativo, né? Ficar esperando não dá, né? E essas questões religiosas, já aconteceu por exemplo da gente ter uma Roda de Jongos, e a galera decepar e fazer oração. Isso é o cúmulo, sabe? Como é que você ... ta fortalecendo a cultura do seu país, né? O folclore e as formas de expressão da própria população, sabe? O outro vai lá, criminalizar, e falar que não, que não tem que ser feito aquilo, que aquilo é do diabo, sabe? Não tem cabimento esse tipo de coisa. Então eu acho que isso meio que influencia.¹⁶¹

159 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with a 45-year-old woman, 21.05.2011.

160 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with a 53-year-old woman, 09.05.2011.

161 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with a 27-year-old woman, 26.05.2011.

Porque eles no Brasil até a década de 70, o catolicismo era muito forte. A teologia da libertação. Com as comunidades eclesiais de base católica, com os teólogos mais comprometidos. E isso daí, um grupo então desses teólogos da teologia da libertação, contribuiu muito para as comunidades. Mas ao mesmo tempo também começavam a nascer a partir daí, uma outra, mais a linha pentecostal norte-americana, conservadora. Muito forte aqui dentro do Brasil. Então o pentecostalismo, as igrejas eletrônicas, essas igrejas que pegaram, transformaram a igreja num mercado. Então nós temos muita gente aqui que acha que a nossa luta aqui, que o prédio aqui foi milagre de Deus! Foi a nossa luta! O milagre foi a gente ser despertado para lutar! Não é ganhar o prédio. Porque se não tivesse luta, não tinha prédio. E até hoje. A resistência, entendeu? Então a pessoa mistura. Acha que não ... foi um milagre de Deus. Um milagre de Deus? Como? Se a gente não tivesse nós para nos organizarmos.¹⁶²

The large number of Pentecostals in *Manoel Congo* was not only perceived and criticized inside the squat. In an informal meeting, the national coordinator of the CMP, who had been involved in the organization of *Chiquinha Gonzaga*, also commented on the noticeable presence of *evangélicos* in *Manoel Congo*. For him, the religion of the inhabitants and its associated rules, such as for instance the prohibition of alcohol and drugs,¹⁶³ facilitated the organization and control of the squat for the MNLM and thus also partly explained the differences between it and *Chiquinha Gonzaga*, where for example the presence of drugs constituted one of the big challenges (see section 3.1.2).

Mas eu acho que cada um tem seu estilo, tem sua forma de organizar, que pode ser melhor ou pior, mas o importante é que você mantenha a sua linha. Isso que vou falar, você tem coisas boas na Chiquinha, tem coisas que deveria ter sido mais organizadas e tem coisas na Manoel Congo que eu também não concordo. Eu acho por exemplo, você deve ter percebido, não tenho nada contra, mas você deve ter percebido um grande número de evangélicos, ne? Aí você, essa linha de você querer exigir demais um comportamento (...)

162 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with a 50-year-old woman, 21.05.2011.

163 Pentecostal rules include, for example, the prohibition of alcohol, drugs, gambling, and adultery, and especially in the *favelas* for the inhabitants it therefore often presents an opportunity to escape from the influence of drugs and violence; see Mariz, Cecília L. 1998. "Deliverance and Ethics. An Analysis of the Discourse of Pentecostals who have Recovered from Alcoholism" in *More than Opium. An Anthropological Approach to Latin American and Caribbean Pentecostal Praxis*, edited by B. Boudewijnse, A. F. Droogers, and F. Kamsteeg. Lanham: Scarecrow Press, pp. 203–223; Höllinger et al. 2007, *Religiöse Kultur in Brasilien*, p. 125; Heck et al. 2014, *Religiöses „worlding“ in der Stadt*, pp. 220-223.

o cara bebe, é claro que, se ele beber e aprontar, é aquela história, né. Mas, você não pode controlar demais a vida das pessoas, não. É claro que no início, você realmente, como foi o Chiquinha Gonzaga nos dois primeiros ano no início teve que controlar muito, mas depois você tem que a pessoa tem que ter a vida dela, respeitando algumas coisas e ali tem muito isso que ... claro que todo mundo fala, percebe, né ... e você provavelmente percebeu que existe mais uma dependência quando você conversa com alguém da Chiquinha Gonzaga que quando você conversa com alguém de lá.¹⁶⁴

*Figure 20: Psalm as decoration near one of the doorways in Manoel Congo*¹⁶⁵



I agree that Pentecostal ideology, promoting obedience and self-control, certainly facilitated certain processes in the coordination of *Manoel Congo*. But the extent to which the recruitment of a high percentage of *evangélicos* in *Manoel Congo* really formed part of an explicit or active strategy of the movement's leadership to facilitate its control over the inhabitants—as stated by the national coordinator of the CMP—is difficult to ascertain. However, the

164 Interview with the national coordinator of the CMP, 06.05.2011.

165 Photograph: Bea Wittger, 2011.

statement of one of the national coordinators of the MNLM in the squat *Manoel Congo* at least suggested that this was a possibility:

Tem uma influência na ocupação, no movimento? Não! Não tem não. Não tem. Se tiver a gente corta. A gente mostra a linha política, aí a gente não brinca. A gente respeita. A gente respeita a fé deles. Teve um momentos aqui que eles se encontravam num apartamento e faziam os seus cultos. Aí ficavam gritando e tal ... aí depois fizemos a assembléia, e dissemos: olha, a manifestação da fé de vocês é interessante, mas tem que ter silêncio, porque o povo precisa dormir. Porque se deixasse ia ter uma igreja aqui, todo mundo cantando, rezando, todo dia e esquecer da luta. A gente mostra para eles que orar, a oração ela se manifesta através das lutas. Um bom cristão é aquele que pega na luta e vai à luta defender os seus direitos. Não é só ficar: Meu Deus e tal (...). Aí só que eu não trato muito dessas questões. Quem tem mais craquejo com essa discussão é a [Glória]. Eu que já tenho uma leitura determinada, pelo fato de já ter uma convivência ... eu tive uma convivência muito grande com esse espaço religioso. E achei por bem, assim: pra mim não é um instrumento de luta, mais. Foi um tempo. Agora não é mais. Quer dizer: afasta mais o povo do que ajuda. Essa é a leitura que eu tenho. A [Glória] acha que não, ela acha que a fé ajuda em algumas coisas. Então ta bom: se para você ajuda, para mim eu não conto ... é isso.¹⁶⁶

Even though he assured me of the strict separation between the issues of the squat and religion, he admitted at the same time that some of the coordinators sensed the influence of Pentecostalism as positive and even helpful.

After the establishment of a daily routine, the squat also became the starting point for other occupations. The preparatory meetings for the squat *Mariana Crioula*, which was planned to be located in a vacant public building in the neighborhood *Gamboá*, took place in the education room, and were led by some of the (overall female) inhabitants of *Manoel Congo*. The future inhabitants of *Mariana Crioula* passed through the same process of preparation as the inhabitants of *Manoel Congo* had previously.¹⁶⁷ Only the legal procedure of choosing the squat differed, because the movement started negotiations for the space before occupying, to increase the chances of later success.

Just as in *Chiquinha Gonzaga*, the political negotiations regarding *Manoel Congo* had been complex, time-consuming, and were not easy to look through. The negotiations led by the MNLM also aimed to achieve the regularization of

166 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with the national coordinator of the MNLM, a 51-year-old man, 03.05.2011.

167 The squat had been successfully established.

the building and to guarantee access to public funds for its renovation. The building originally belonged to the INSS, which after intense negotiations with several actors—*inter alia* also with the Ministry of Cities—was finally bought by the State of Rio de Janeiro in 2010 with funds of the FNHIS through the Program “Support for Social Housing Provision” (*Programa Apoio à Provisão Habitacional de Interesse Social*),¹⁶⁸ in order to transform the building into housing of social interest and guarantee its renovation. But, due to bureaucratic delay, the renovation of the building had not yet begun at the time of the interviews in 2011, and the MNLM was still fighting for the implementation of the legal provisions. In contrast to *Chiquinha Gonzaga*, where the situation apparently had not changed in 2015 and the inhabitants were still waiting for the implementation of the legal provisions, in *Manoel Congo* renovation of the building finally began in 2013. But, in 2014—again due to bureaucratic problems—the renovation of the building had to be stopped, and only after moving the contract of the squat with the FNHIS to the program MCMV-*Entidades*, where regulations were less bureaucratic and more funds available, could the construction work continue again.¹⁶⁹ The inhabitants managed to stay in the squat during its renovation, and were also, as they had planned, taking an active part in the construction work, which in 2015 had not yet been completed.

Since the beginning the negotiations for the purchase and renovation of the building had been accompanied by massive protests and mobilization by the MNLM. Just as for *Chiquinha Gonzaga*, the fact that a large and nationally organized social movement with the power to exert massive pressure on the government was leading the negotiations had clearly been an advantage, and had helped the negotiations. The advantages of the involvement of a national social movement was confirmed by inhabitants in both squats:

[T]odo esse processo, foi um processo de resistência. Agora no campo político, essa ocupação ela deu uma sinalização para os outros movimentos sociais de que era possível fazer uma política de ocupação no Centro. Mas requer todo um processo de enfrentamento, de mobilização, de articulação nacional.¹⁷⁰

168 Three occupations had applied for the inclusion into the Program: the squat *Manoel Congo*, the squat *Chiquinha Gonzaga* (see section 3.1.2) and the occupation *Matadouro*, which was led by the UNMP.

169 Queiroz e Mello 2014, *Trajetórias, Cotidianos e Utopias*, pp. 102f; Fornazin 2014, *Luta pela Moradia*, p. 58.

170 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with the national coordinator of the MNLM, a 51-year-old man, 03.05.2011.

Mas conseguiram uma coisa inédita que é ganhar um imóvel que pertence ao INSS. Eu acredito que isso pode servir de precedente para outras mais, mas é preciso organização política, é preciso organização interna, é preciso que as pessoas realmente estejam bem a par de como deve se dar esse processo.¹⁷¹

These quotes demonstrate that in addition to this, good internal organization of the squats—even for many inhabitants a new and sometimes not easy to handle situation—was also necessary, and increased the likelihood of being successful in the official negotiations with the government in the long term.

3.2.3 Preliminary Summary

The detailed descriptions of both squats have revealed important information about their internal organization and the everyday lives of the inhabitants. Through their comparison, specific aspects and characteristics of each squat came to light that would not have attracted as much attention if only one of them was observed. Even though both squats form part of the same citizenship process—namely the process of demanding the right to housing in practice—and therefore share common characteristics, they nevertheless differed considerably from each other, especially regarding their internal organization. As we will see in chapter 4, these differences also had an influence on the understanding of citizenship and gender within the squats.

The establishment of the internal organization and associated rules took different paths in both squats over time. While in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* the almost complete absence of common rules and political engagement seemed to be the main source of trouble, in *Manoel Congo* the exact opposite was the case, and the strict implementation and control of rules and engagement by the MNLM turned out to be very difficult for some of the inhabitants. In *Chiquinha Gonzaga*, over time the general active participation in the interests of the squat had decreased and had been reduced almost to the simple fact of still living there, fulfilling the needs of its inhabitants for housing. Further citizenship activities were only observable on rare occasions, and even then only a few people participated. Important meetings regarding the advancement of the negotiations with the government were furthermore often initialized by activists who were not living in the squat, and even then the participation of the inhabitants was low. It seemed as though the plans to make *Chiquinha* more than merely a residential building had changed, or were at least no longer the main focus of the inhabitants. Even though to a certain extent this may seem to be a

171 Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 45-year-old man, 21.03.2011.

normal development over time—since political activism is also subject to fluctuations depending on the situation and need for it—such a significant decrease could not be observed for the squat *Manoel Congo*.

There, unlike in *Chiquinha Gonzaga*, the responsible movement still had a strong influence and control over the squat. Regular participation in meetings and several other activities organized and promoted by the MNLM still formed part of daily life inside the squat. Especially the inhabitants who held a position in the movement's hierarchy made it quite clear that the aim of the squat was not only to provide housing for needy families, but also—and perhaps even more—to fulfil a political mission and act as an instrument to force the government to implement the existing legislation (see section 2.1.3.1). As a consequence, life in the squat had been organized around this political mission, and the obeying of rules and participation in political activities was strictly monitored, and even became a condition for the inhabitants to remain in the squat. The strict implementation of rules and activism had in fact led to political success, as the start of the renovation of the building in 2013 demonstrated. This also fits into the picture of research on social movements, which confirms that “movements are more likely to make a difference if they have the skilled leadership, formal organization as well as support networks necessary to monitor state bureaucracies.”¹⁷² However, this approach had not only found acceptance among the inhabitants but, as the interviews revealed, was also experienced as a big challenge, and in some cases even as a heavy strain on their everyday lives.

The reasons for the described internal differences between the two squats can also be found in the fact that they represented two different types or ideas of self-management, which in turn also had an important impact on the inhabitants' understanding of what it meant to live in a squat. While one squat was organized around a non-hierarchical self-government of the inhabitants (*Chiquinha Gonzaga*), the other was centered on the ideas of organization of a hierarchically organized social movement (*Manoel Congo*). Accordingly, this had led to different internal developments over time.

Hence, having now described the squats and their internal organization, in the following chapter I will focus on the inhabitants' life stories and personal motivations to participate in the occupation of empty buildings in Rio de Janeiro's city center. Together with the findings of this chapter, these accounts will then provide the necessary background for the analysis of how the

172 Hau, Matthias vom. 2015. “Advancing while Losing. Indigenous Land Claims and Development in Argentina” in *Development in Crisis. Threats to Human Well-Being in the Global South and Global North*, edited by R. L. Blumberg and S. Cohn. London: Routledge, p. 183.

inhabitants of *Chiquinha Gonzaga* and *Manoel Congo* understand and articulate citizenship and gender.

