

4. Doing Citizenship and Gender from Below

In this chapter I will provide a detailed analysis of how the inhabitants of *Chiquinha Gonzaga* and *Manoel Congo* understand and articulate citizenship and gender. The analysis starts by introducing the actors themselves. I will first describe the inhabitants' life stories and personal backgrounds, before examining in more detail why these people had decided to participate in the occupation of an empty building, and what had changed for them since living in the squats.

These first impressions of the inhabitants will then be deepened, and I will explore and document their understandings and experiences of citizenship beyond dominant discourses—trying to investigate the construction of a citizenship “from below.” I will therefore elaborate on the language used by the inhabitants to legitimize their participation, and illustrate how through their engagement in citizenship activities the inhabitants also participate in the urban imaginary.

In a third step, I want to highlight the gendered nature of mobilization around housing, and explore the impact of women's engagement in the squats. Hence, after analyzing the reasons for women's participation, I will elaborate on the prevailing gender roles, norms, and relations within the squats—elaborate, that is, on the construction of a gender “from below.”

4.1 GETTING TO KNOW THE SQUATTERS

Talking with the inhabitants about the origins and circumstances of the occupation of the two buildings also meant learning more about their life stories and personal backgrounds. The inhabitants' former living conditions and activities formed an important part of their narratives, and made it possible to gain a better understanding of the personal motivations behind their decisions to participate in the occupation. Thus, learning about the personal motivations for

participating in the squats also meant learning about possible reasons for engaging in citizenship activities. Citizenship has been previously defined as a dynamic concept, which is both a historically specific bundle of rights and obligations (formal status), and the constant processes by which this bundle is negotiated, and respectively the acts by which those rights are claimed (practice/process). Hence, participation in the occupation of empty buildings—in response to the lack of access to the constitutional right to housing in practice—can be understood as a way of exercising citizenship (see section 2.1.1). Thus, in order to ascertain to what extent the interviewees’ participation in the squats—their active citizenship—had also influenced and shaped their understanding of citizenship and gender, in this chapter I will first describe the inhabitants’ life stories and personal backgrounds before examining in more detail why these people had decided to participate, and what had changed for them since living in the squats.

4.1.1 “I am a survivor”:¹ Life Stories and Life Backgrounds

Depois que eu vim para cá eu posso dizer que a minha vida melhorou 90 %.²

During one of my regular visits to *Manoel Congo* I met Teresa, a 53-year-old woman. After first showing some mistrust and fear that the content of our conversation could be relayed to the coordinators of the squat,³ she opened herself up and turned out to be one of the most honest and critical persons I spoke to. Teresa had a brief and poor childhood. She was one of 14 siblings, and her mother had been more concerned with feeding her children than with caring about their education. Teresa therefore never went to school and instead had to take care of herself and her siblings at a very early stage of her life. At only 12 years of age she became pregnant for the first time, and she had her second child only one year after giving birth to the first. In the interview she described the difficulties she had to face during her childhood:

Eu fui mãe com 12 anos de idade! Com 12 anos fui mãe do meu primeiro filho, com 13 para 14 eu tive o segundo filho. Então a hora que era para brincar de boneca, eu tava brincando com um bebê mesmo. Fui mãe muito cedo. Então foi uma época muito difícil

- 1 Own translation from: “*Eu sou um sobrevivente*” (Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 46-year-old man, 18.03.2011).
- 2 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with a 42-year-old woman, 02.05.2011.
- 3 See section 3.2.2.

para mim. Na época, quando eu fui criança, mas uma criança que não teve oportunidade para nada, nunca fui à escola, a minha mãe não se preocupou em botar em escola. Nós éramos 14 irmãos. Então a gente, os mais velhos tinham que correr atrás para alimentar os mais novos. Que todo ano nascia um! Então a minha vida foi muito difícil, muito difícil.⁴

Teresa herself then had five children altogether and had raised them with her husband in one of the *favelas* of Rio de Janeiro, doing day-to-day work to guarantee her family's survival. When I asked her about her job, she laughed, telling me that she did a lot of different jobs in her life: "*Sou cabeleireira, sou costureira, cozinheira de forno e fogão, sou cantora, sou cantora evangélica, mas sou cantora.*" Living in the *favela*, she and her family had to cope on a daily basis with the lack of infrastructure, the presence of drug cartels, and violence. To her despair, her oldest son, at this time already the father of two children, had become addicted to drugs, and therefore had come into contact with the local drug dealers. She described—crying during the interview—her desperation and fear that her son would get into serious trouble, a fear that had finally become sad reality. In one of the confrontations between police and drug dealers, he had been confused with one of the drug dealers. As he was not willing to give the police information about the real dealer, he was murdered in cold blood by the police, shot in the head on the street in front of the eyes of everyone:

Ele era viciado. Então o que acontece: ele ia para o trabalho, ele não perdia um dia de trabalho! Quando ele voltava do trabalho, ele parava no meio dos meninos. Aí ele comprava a droga, e usava. (...) E aí foi me entristecendo aquilo ali, e eu pedindo a Deus que ele parasse com aquilo que eu via que uma hora ia acontecer alguma coisa ruim com ele. Ou ele podia se endividar, comprando, usando e não ter como pagar, e acabarem matando ele, conforme aconteceu: de eu ter que pagar conta dele. Ou mesmo acontecer da policia vir e matar ele. E foi exatamente o que aconteceu: ele no meio, usando a droga, veio aquela batida de policia no morro. Os meninos que estavam armados e com drogas, todo mundo correu. Ele estava sem droga, mas com a carteira assinada no bolso, então ele achou que não tinha que correr. Porque não tinha ameaça. Porque a droga que ele tinha tava na cabeça, não tava no bolso. E os policiais- não sei se estavam bêbados, ou drogados- eu sei que não levaram em consideração o que ele falou, começaram a gritar com ele, falaram para ele dizer para onde os meninos correram, e ele não ia falar porque ele foi nascido e criado no morro com todo mundo, todo mundo conhecia ele. Morro é assim. Todo mundo conhece todo mundo. Você passa, você cumprimenta, você fala. E aí ele pegou e falou: eu não vou falar. Ele correu, primeiro que morro a fora, e o nome de quem correu ele não falou. Aí começaram a gritar, a dizer que iam matar ele ... que era

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

para ele falar. E falando, gritando, chegou a sua hora, chegou a sua hora! Ele gritando: moço, pelo amor de Deus, eu tenho filho para criar, tenho família. Ele falou: não, você é vagabundo também, você é bandido também. E aquela gritaria, já dando banda nele, pernada nele, e ele gritando: pelo amor de deus, não faz isso comigo. E eles gritando também: você vai morrer, você vai morrer, aquela coisa. Aí o cara foi, deu uma banda de joelho, de joelho é para morrer. E teve uma porção de gente que viu, né? Todo mundo correu apavorado com aquilo, aí a polícia tomou uma arma e deu um tiro na cabeça dele! Deu um tiro na cabeça do meu filho. E deu mais dois, um pegou no peito, um pegou na cabeça. E meu filho caiu ali mesmo.⁵

After this experience, confronted with strong feelings of grief, anger, and impotence, Teresa did not feel able to stay where she had lived and decided to leave the place. Even though she expressed her growing discomfort with and the challenges involved in living and raising her children and grandchildren in a *favela*, there was no real alternative for her. Thus, they left their house and moved to another *favela*, where they had to change places every few months and had difficulty finding a permanent affordable place, until one of her friends told her about the organizational meetings for the squat *Manoel Congo*.

Teresa's story is a perfect example of the former living conditions and experiences of most of the inhabitants in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* and *Manoel Congo*. Listening to their stories and the difficulties they had experienced in their lives, it turned out that the similarities of the narratives in both squats were striking.

Commonalities

It turned out that most of the inhabitants originally came from the State of Rio de Janeiro (42%), followed by a big percentage originating from the Northeast of Brazil (30%) and from the State of Minas Gerais (18%) (see Figure 21). The interviewees who did not originate from the State of Rio de Janeiro had often left their natural states of belonging as children together with their parents, or had arrived later alone as young adults, hoping and searching for better living and working conditions in the metropolitan area of Rio de Janeiro.⁶

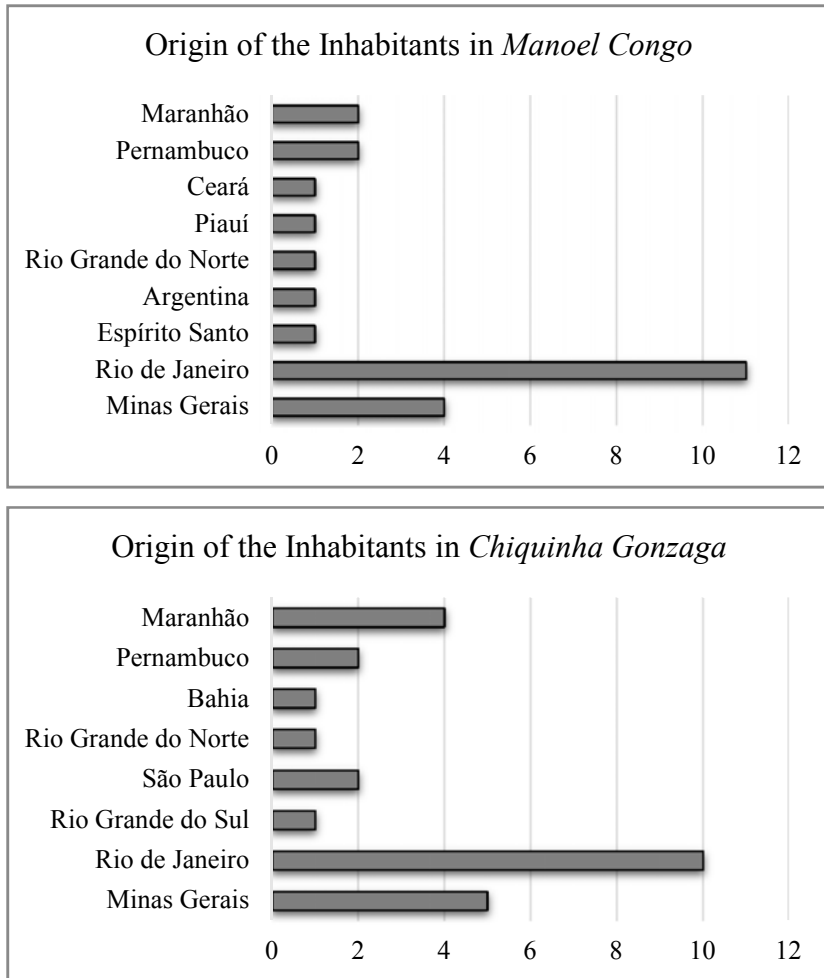
At the time of our interviews most of these inhabitants had already lived for at least ten years in Rio de Janeiro, and—just like those originally from the State

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

6 For studies on internal migration flows and their development in Brazil, see for example Baeninger 2011, *Migrações Internas no Brasil Século 21* or Brito 2006, *The Displacement of the Brazilian Population*; and also section 2.1.3.1.

of Rio de Janeiro—had lived before taking part in the squats in low-income areas, like the suburbs of the Baixada Fluminense⁷ and the *favelas* of the city.

Figure 21: Origin of the inhabitants in Chiquinha Gonzaga and Manoel Congo⁸

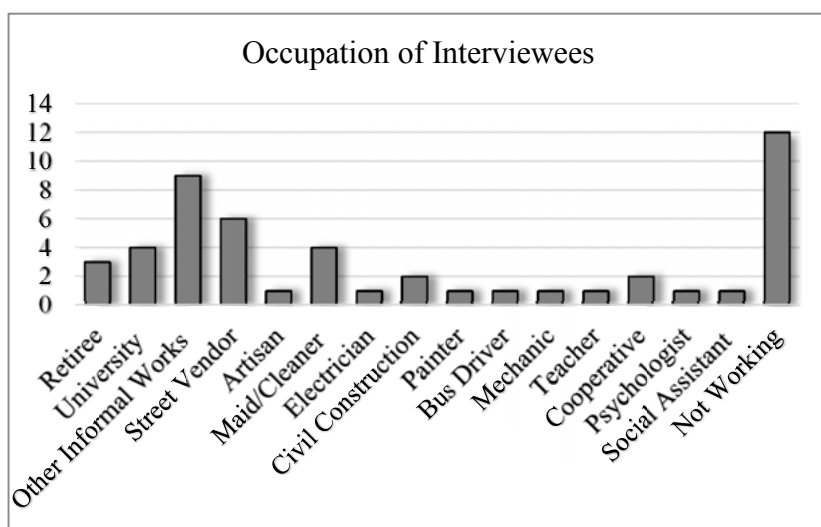


7 The Baixada Fluminense encompasses the municipalities of Duque de Caxias, Nova Iguaçu, São João de Meriti, Nilópolis, Belford Roxo, Queimados, and Mesquita. For more reading on the socio-economic situation in these areas see Perlman 1976, *The Myth of Marginality*.

8 Own data.

Thus, most inhabitants, especially before living in the squats, had been in a difficult economic situation and struggled to be able to cover their everyday living expenses. Especially the payment of rent had been experienced as a heavy burden. Many of the interviewees had had problems finding a job, and most of them had worked (and continued to work) in the informal sector, for example as street vendors, maids, or in the area of civil construction, as Figure 22 illustrates.

Figure 22: Occupation of the inhabitants interviewed in Manoel Congo and Chiquinha Gonzaga⁹



The interviewees in both squats had very often faced poverty and difficult living conditions from an early stage of their lives—often during their childhoods—and had to contribute very early to the subsistence of their families. Pedro, a 42-year-old inhabitant of *Chiquinha Gonzaga*, for example, described to me his difficult childhood, which had been marked by early work experiences, abandonment, and contact with drugs and drug addiction.

Eu perdi o meu pai com seis anos de idade. Ou sete. As coisas foram ficando difíceis. A minha mãe ficou com meia dúzia de filho, ganhando um salário mínimo como pensionista do meu pai, minha mãe não sabe ler, não sabe escrever, veio do interior. Para cuidar de seis filhos o dinheiro não dava para comer nem a metade do mês! (...) Não tinha condução,

9 Own data.

não tinha mercado, não tinha nada numa proximidade. Até para ganhar um dinheiro era difícil. Então eu comecei a trabalhar muito cedo vendendo verdura, com sete anos já vendia verdura, catava ferro velho. Com oito para nove fui vender jornal. Acordava às cinco horas para estar no ponto e pegar o jornal que era distribuído. E trabalhava e estudando. E todo esse processo fazendo os dois junto. Então a vida foi difícil demais. (...) por exemplo me envolvi com drogas muito cedo, comecei a trabalhar muito cedo. Então eu achei a minha independência muito fácil. Eu com onze anos de idade eu saía de lá, que eu estou te falando, para trabalhar aqui no Centro, na Central do Brasil. Eu saía de lá oito horas da noite e voltava às quatro e pouca da manhã. Quer dizer, eu passava a noite aqui no Centro da cidade. Eu era uma criança, já via o que era a prostituição, vendo drogas, vendo tudo aquilo.¹⁰

Other inhabitants of the squats also reported the difficult living conditions during their childhood, which they had often spent in poor neighborhoods affected by violence and drugs. Accordingly, the educational level inside the squats was quite low, as most of the inhabitants had only been to school for a few years and did not possess further formal education or any other qualification in a specific area. Interestingly, in *Manoel Congo* education turned out to be an important topic during the interviews, and after moving to the squat some inhabitants had started to go back to school. This decision was closely related to the fact that education formed an important part of the MNLM's agenda, and was therefore strongly promoted. The movement encouraged the inhabitants to go back to school, and even expected and controlled school attendance by the children in the squat (as outlined in section 3.2.1).¹¹

To live in the *favelas* of the city and the Baixada Fluminense meant in their cases not only to be forced to deal on a daily basis with insufficient infrastructure, but also, as already mentioned, to be confronted with the unpleasant presence of drug-dealing, militia, and police, and to run the risk of becoming involved in, or being affected by, violence. In the inhabitants' narratives one could therefore find regularly references to the difficult and dangerous living conditions in their former neighborhoods:

Porque onde a gente morava, não era um bairro de classe média, era uma favela. Tinha a pista, mas tinha o morro. Era muita violência. Todo dia tinha uma confusão. Era Terceiro Comando com Comando Vermelho. Então era muita violência. Era tiro, pessoa morrendo, e você naquela comunidade via isso tudo. Porque você está na comunidade, mas você está

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

11 In *Chiquinha Gonzaga* this was not the case.

no risco também. Você não sabe, a bala não tem alvo certo, né? Então você se arrisca muito.¹²

Accordingly, the interviewees frequently reported their need and wish to leave these areas. At the same time, their alternatives were limited, and often when they tried to improve their living conditions things even became worse, as for some even the rents in the other low-income areas were too high, and thus too difficult to afford.¹³ Many of the interviewees did not have a space to live on their own, but had to live together with their relatives, a situation that had often resulted in problems and conflict. Other inhabitants had to live on the streets of the city center. Due to their difficult economic situation, these interviewees had not been able to afford any housing; nor did they have any relatives or friends with whom they could stay. In their stories, one can find also indications of the heavy psychological burden which they confronted when trying to survive on the streets.

Num período de 2002, 2003 eu passei um pouco de dificuldade na vida: falta de emprego, e não tinha condições de pagar aluguel. Acabei parando na rua do Rio de Janeiro. Morei um tempo na rua, eu tento me lembrar quanto tempo eu fiquei na rua, mas não consigo. Se foi um ano, se foram dois. Porque na rua apagou algumas coisas da memória porque eu não contava as semanas, não conseguia contar. Nem mês, nem nada, assim.¹⁴

Differences

In sum, the inhabitants of both squats experienced very difficult and often existence-threatening living conditions before participating in the occupation of the two buildings. But despite these commonalities among the inhabitants, it is also important to emphasize that of course there were also individual differences between them. Thinking along the lines of citizenship, one difference between the interviewees in particular regarding their former lives attracted my attention.

During the interviews and informal talks, it turned out that some of them had already been engaged in citizenship activities, such as social movements, occupations of land, and community work. These inhabitants—often

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

13 Even in the favela rents were high, and people had problems affording housing, as the inhabitants in *Manoel Congo* emphasized: “*Hoje o aluguel aqui no Brasil é super caro. Seja numa favela, seja numa comunidade, seja aqui no Centro. A especulação imobiliária está em todas*” (Interview in *Manoel Congo* with a 32-year-old man, 24.05.2011).

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

women¹⁵—could already look back on long years of experience in political activism:

Quando eu conheci esse movimento, eu já estou no Movimento de Luta pela Moradia desde '94. Desde '94 que a gente faz trabalhos de assentar famílias. Mas assim: a minha especialidade é também assentar famílias de locais de terra né. Então em Anchieta tem um bairro que temos aqui no Rio, no município, que assentamos o que? Fizemos oito ocupações. E essas ocupações a gente fazia com famílias mesmo. Várias famílias, uma ocupação teve mil e poucas famílias, outra dois mil, outra 500 famílias, então nós temos lá em Anchieta uma ocupação que fazia parte do movimento.¹⁶

Thus, while for some the occupation had not been their first contact with political activism, for other inhabitants the occupation of the buildings had been their very first experience of getting involved in citizenship activities:

Foi na minha casa lá no Leme e falou para mim: Lígia, olha, é o seguinte: eu coloquei o teu nome no movimento aí, num negócio aí. E você tem que ir lá, na 3ª de tarde, às três horas. Leva os seus documentos e tal. E eu te encontro lá. Aí eu falei: O que é Solange? Não vai inventar moda? Não, vai lá, você vai gostar. Peguei fui, assisti à reunião, aliás duas reuniões que eu fui não teve. Que uma eu não fui. Aí da outra vez ela foi. Aí pegaram o número do meu documento, tudo né? Aí falavam para mim: olha, você vai ter que participar das reuniões e no Movimento Nacional de Luta pela Moradia, para você poder conseguir uma casa própria. Mas só quem mora de aluguel que pode. Tá bom. Eu falei: bom, morar de aluguel, eu posso. Quem ganha de zero a três salários mínimos. Bom, eu só ganho um salário, então tá tudo bom. Aí eu falei, vou fazer a pista, e vocês vão fazendo a reunião. E no dia de ocupar, eu aviso a vocês.¹⁷

This difference between the inhabitants is important, as one can act on the assumption that having been previously engaged in citizenship activities also means that a person already possesses a certain level of understanding, knowledge, and experience in rights-claiming processes and their organization. It is therefore likely that this fact also influenced the inhabitants' understanding of citizenship, and this will therefore be taken into account again in section 4.2, when analyzing the inhabitants' understanding of citizenship.

15 For women's citizenship see section 4.3.

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

17 Ibid.

In summary, the interviews revealed that the inhabitants of both squats had very similar life stories and backgrounds. They had very often faced poverty and difficult living conditions from an early stage of their lives, and had continually struggled to be able to survive and to cover their everyday living expenses. They did so mostly through informal work, since their educational levels had also suffered from their poor living conditions and circumstances. During the interviews it became clear that besides all these commonalities, there also existed a significant difference regarding their former experiences and engagement in citizenship activities. As we will see in the following section, these former living conditions and activities of the inhabitants were closely related to their personal reasons for participating in the occupation of the two buildings.

4.1.2 Personal Motivation and Real Changes in Everyday Life

Toda ocupação é feita por necessidade, ninguém ocupa um prédio público se não tiver necessidade a uma moradia.¹⁸

In order to learn more about the inhabitants, I was also interested in the reasons behind their decision to move into the squats, and in what had changed in their lives since living there. It turned out that the previously described former living conditions and activities of the inhabitants had greatly influenced their personal decisions to participate in the occupation of the buildings. Hence, two main reasons emerged out of their talks: the interviewees' personal necessity, and a political motivation.

Personal Necessity and Improvement of Living Conditions

The main reason behind the inhabitants' decision to participate in the squats was personal necessity. Taking into account their former living conditions, the interviewees had considered the squats to offer a real chance to improve their lives and the lives of their families. In fact, almost all interviewees agreed that there had been an actual improvement in their everyday lives because of living in the squats. The changes they mentioned that had occurred since moving to the squats were mainly related to the centrality of their new places of residence—in the city center of Rio de Janeiro—and the economic improvement of their households.

18 Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 62-year-old man, 24.03.2011.

The interviews demonstrated that the burden of having to raise money every month for living expenses and rent was extremely high.¹⁹ The opportunity to be liberated from at least one of these expenses therefore was a great relief and personal achievement for the inhabitants. Most of them had emphasized their former financial problems, and thus moving to the squats had also offered the potential to—at least partly—get rid of a big psychological burden: the daily pressure felt by many inhabitants to make sure to be able to provide for their families. As a result of not having to pay rent, the inhabitants then often had more money available for other living expenses, or even extra expenditures which had not been possible for most of them before, such as better electrical devices and sports activities.

Porque a questão financeira também foi apertando, apertando. E aqui que teve aquele auge de necessidade. Acho que ninguém está, ou não deveria estar, se não estivesse passando uma certa necessidade.²⁰

Foi bom porque eu não paguei mais aluguel. Ótimo. Porque eu já não sabia: ou eu pagava o aluguel ou a gente comia! Então foi muito bom.²¹

A motivação foi que a minha mãe me mandou sair fora. Aí eu tive que procurar um lugar para morar, aí eu vim parar aqui e envelheci muito. Aqui não é o paraíso que dizem. Só é melhor que uma prisão. Uma cadeia, mas é ruim, muito ruim. Eu moro porque não tenho para onde ir.²²

Even though the inhabitants had needed to find an affordable place to live and had therefore moved to the squats, the interviews also show that this fact did not automatically imply that they all liked to live there, or that they wished to stay there forever. Even though grateful for the opportunity to have a place to live and to be relieved of a financial burden, the interviewees also (or even at the same time) expressed, especially in informal talks, their wish to be able to leave the squats in the long term (see also section 4.2.2.2). This was mainly due to the challenges described in section 3.1.2 and 3.2.3, and problems the inhabitants (still) faced in the squats and struggled with on a daily basis.

19 Housing costs make up a big percentage of the daily expenses of low-income households, see Hainard et al. 2001, *Filling the Urban Policy Breach*, p. 36.

20 Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 19-year-old woman, 30.03.2011.

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

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

Regarding the centrality of the squats' location in the city center, the inhabitants stressed especially the fact of being now closer to work and therefore also being able to save money that they used to have to spend on expensive and poor transportation from the suburbs where they had lived before. They reported the difficulties they had formerly encountered while trying to survive in the periphery—due to the lack of sufficient infrastructure and the presence of violence in these areas. To find a job in the periphery had often turned out to be almost impossible, and as a result they had depended on insufficient and, for them, expensive public transportation to the city center. In practice, this had been a significant daily challenge for themselves and their families, because it had often involved hours of travelling to and from work. In the interviews, they described their experiences:

O local onde eu morava, a dificuldade de arranjar trabalho era muito grande. Até você sair para outro lugar para trabalhar, a condução é difícil, é ônibus cheio. Aqui eu to envolvido com trabalho. Eu to no meio do trabalho. Por isso que eu tenho essa oportunidade. Se eu morasse lá em cima, eu gastaria quatro ou cinco horas de viagem ou até mais, dependendo do engarrafamento, de acidente. De repente até mais, até seis horas de viagem. Da casa da minha mãe até aqui o Centro. Se eu morasse lá seriam seis horas de viagem, cinco horas de viagem, andando bem quatro horas e meia. Entendeu? Com velocidade mesmo, com transito livre, faz umas quatro horas e meia. Daí para a frente. Umas cinco, seis, às vezes até mais dependendo se tiver um acidente na estrada.²³

Porque de onde eu morava para chegar até aqui, leva duas horas e meia! E o que você gasta com condução, não compensa você trabalhar aqui em baixo. E lá não tem mercado de trabalho, na Baixada. Não tem. Então você gasta mais ou menos uns 15 reais. Então patrão nenhum quer dar esse valor para o funcionário. Patrão nenhum quer dar esse valor de passagem. Porque ele sabe que é prejuízo para ele. Então você acaba perdendo o emprego por morar longe.²⁴

For the inhabitants, the possibility of living in the city center meant not only being closer to better job opportunities, but also being able to escape from their often dangerous and violent neighborhoods. Their moving to the squats came therefore along with a feeling of greater security, not only for themselves but, especially, for their children and grandchildren. Interestingly, it was mostly the

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

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

women in the squats who referred to the safety of their children and described the difficulties they had faced to raise them in a violent environment.²⁵

E aqui eu também acho mais tranquilo por ser apartamento. Onde eu morava era uma casa, era tudo aberto. Tinha problema com o tráfico. Aqui tem o morro, mas eles não entram aqui. Então se a gente sai e deixa um filho em casa a gente fica um pouco mais tranquilo do que em determinados lugares em que você às vezes não pode nem sair direito de casa.²⁶

E você queira ou não queira, você é obrigado a criar os seus filhos no meio de tudo aquilo. Se amanhã o seu filho vai dar alguma coisa boa, você não sabe. Da mesma maneira que se vai ser um bandido que porta uma arma lá, você também não sabe. Então é uma vida que você está com o pé sobre um arame. Você tá sobre um arame. (...) Você está passando e vendo o seu filho ali, talvez até matando alguém, batendo em alguém. Poxa, é muito triste. Eu vou te dizer uma coisa: nenhuma mãe que mora em comunidade quer isso para o seu filho. Mas infelizmente a gente não sai da comunidade porque não tem para onde ir. (...) Porque se pudesse ninguém moraria no morro e todo mundo moraria na ocupação.²⁷

Besides living in a safer environment²⁸ and being closer to work, easier access to the city center also meant that the inhabitants were embedded in a better infrastructure and—again, as emphasized especially by the female inhabitants—also meant having much better access to healthcare. Before moving to the squats, some of the inhabitants had had traumatic experiences because of their lack of access to sufficient healthcare in the peripheries. One of the interviewees in *Manoel Congo*, for example, reported how she had lost her daughter during a desperate attempt to get transportation to a hospital in the periphery. Before being able to reach medical care, her daughter had died in the arms of her husband, due to the lack of a car or any alternative (public) transportation during the night. So for her, as for many of the other women in the squats, the better access to healthcare living there offered was an important and reassuring improvement:

25 I will go more into detail on especially women's motivation for occupying in section 4.3.1.

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

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

28 Even though the area around the squats was safer than their former living areas, especially in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* the inhabitants still faced serious problems and conflicts with the drug dealers. See chapter 3.

Mas eu acho que aqui é mais fácil. Médico lá eu tinha que ir, pegava um ônibus para ir para o médico, por exemplo. Aqui eu saio aqui na portaria, dou a volta e estou no médico! Lá, para marcar um médico você tinha que sair cedo! Cinco, quatro horas, quatro e meia, seis horas da manhã, apanhar um ônibus, para marcar um médico lá na Cidade de Deus por exemplo. Era o mais perto. Os outros eram na Barra, enfim ... tudo longe. Aqui não! Saio de casa às nove horas, vou ali na Cruz Vermelha, marco médico. Se não tiver dinheiro para eu ir, pegar um ônibus, eu vou a pé. Em 15 minutos eu estou lá.²⁹

Tudo é mais fácil. Médico aqui é mais fácil. Porque lá, a minha irmã, eu fiquei horrorizada: oito meses que eles marcaram uma consulta para a minha sobrinha! Oito meses antecedente. Se você vier aqui, na 13 de Maio, você pega o número no mesmo dia e se consulta. Então as pessoas na Baixada tudo quer vir. Porque tem essa facilidade. Mas como pode chegar aqui cedo? Não tem como chegar cedo. Primeiro porque é difícil sair com uma criança de madrugada. E outra que é hora do pico. Sabe o que é pico, né? (Rir) Então é a hora do pico. Então é difícil.³⁰

But, even though the inhabitants felt an improvement in terms of their access to healthcare in comparison to their former living areas, with their low or nonexistent income they still faced serious challenges in receiving adequate healthcare. They talked about the poor quality of the public health centers (*Postos de Saúde*) in general, and about problems with being attended to in emergency situations. One of the inhabitants of *Chiquinha Gonzaga*, for instance, reported being frustrated and angry about her experiences with the Brazilian healthcare system. After suffering a heart attack in the squat, she was sent back and forth from one hospital to another for hours before finally receiving a diagnosis and being attended by a doctor.

Eu saí enfartada daqui quase morta! Sozinha daqui. A vizinha entrou aqui por um acaso, viu eu passando mal. Eu falei: “Estou passando mal, muito mal.” Ela chamou, foi um sacrifício para vir o bombeiro, que não queria vir. Quando eles vieram aí teve a maior ... botou aqui e viu que a pressão estava alta- porque eu sou hipertensa- aí veio aqui, mandaram para UPA [Unidade de Pronto Atendimento] da Tijuca, não me aceitaram, mandaram para outra UPA não me aceitaram. A conclusão: depois de ter emendado, já eram quase dez e tanta da noite, me trouxeram pro [hospital] Souza Aguiar. O Souza Aguiar lotado, aí a minha família ligou, a minha comadre estava comigo na ambulância, aí falei: “Não, mas eu to na ambulância e nós estamos procurando um hospital”. E a minha família falou: “Nós vamos para aí, traz ela para Niterói, traz ela para Niterói!” Porque não

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

30 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with a 55-year-old woman, 27.04.2011.

tinha. Eu fiquei quase até meia-noite no Souza Aguiar para ser atendida. Para constatar que eu estava enfartando. Não tinha nem cadeira para eu sentar. (...) Mas quando acontecia qualquer coisa, eu tinha que ir para Niterói, a minha família ia pagar! Porque já fui para a Cruz Vermelha e não fui atendida. Fiquei o dia inteiro com essa que é a [Berta], ficamos o dia inteiro, não teve vaga e fomos embora para casa. Conclusão: tive que ir para Niterói, fui socorrida em Niterói.³¹

The described challenges faced by the inhabitants in the periphery on a daily basis had negatively influenced their quality of life, and also held limited promise of future improvement. Access to good education was as limited, as was access to healthcare, and schools in the periphery often lacked sufficient and adequate-quality resources.³² One of the inhabitants of *Chiquinha Gonzaga* described his experience with the schools in the periphery, pointing to their poor quality and to the frequent changing of teachers:

Então a escola brasileira foi para o caralho. Quer dizer, e nos grandes centros melhora um pouquinho. Agora nas periferias ... porque por exemplo: se você for professora, vai sair daqui do Centro para dar aula lá no Cesarão, uma distância de uma hora e tal de ônibus, chega lá ainda tem milícia. (...) Aí você mora aqui e vai dar aula lá. Está começando e vai lá dar umas aulas. No primeiro momento em que você encontrar uma brecha para vir pra cá perto da sua casa, você vai largar e vai vir embora. Então os professores não querem dar aula num lugar desses. Corre risco de vida. Só se o cara tiver muita ideologia, for um cara muito ideológico para ficar num lugar desses. E lá quase ninguém se forma. E se as pessoas se formassem em matemática por exemplo e morassem lá iam dar aula lá mesmo. Só que lá não tem oportunidade nenhuma. Não consegue se formar, não consegue nada. Quer dizer que cada dia que passa a escola lá é pior. O cara estuda história um mês, dois meses, três meses. No terceiro mês troca o professor. Quer dizer que o cara pega tudo de novo.³³

Thus, moving to the city center also offered new opportunities for the inhabitants regarding their and their families' education. Especially in *Manoel Congo* the inhabitants also used the opportunity to go back to school themselves and to gain

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

32 For further reading on educational inequalities in Rio de Janeiro see for example Koslinski Campelo, Mariane, Fátima Alves, and Wolfram J. Lange. 2013. "Desigualdades Educacionais em Contextos Urbanos. Um Estudo da Geografia de Oportunidades Educacionais na Cidade do Rio de Janeiro", *Educ. Soc. Campinas*, 34 (125): 1175–1202.

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

a better education in order to improve their chances on the job market, as well as to develop on a personal level.

Voltei a estudar de novo. Por mim mesmo, voltei porque tem que estudar e peguei firme. Eu acho que mudou muito. Porque eu penso de alcançar para a frente. Que é o futuro melhor para mim e para a minha família. Eu penso assim.³⁴

Porque até para a gente conseguir um emprego aqui, se você não tem estudo, fica difícil de arrumar um emprego. Ou você tem que ter estudo ou você tem que ter um conchavo. Se você não tem nenhum dos dois, então ... fica difícil. Ai eu estou estudando porque eu quero fazer alguma coisa de melhor. Quero sair de casa ... às vezes eu acho que a minha vida é muito parada. Fico dentro de casa, faço as coisas, aí não saio muito para fora, não conheço muita gente, né? Porque fico muito presa aqui dentro, né? Ai por isso que resolvi voltar a estudar. Para ver se no futuro eu tenho ... um futuro melhor. (...) Muita coisa mudou no pensamento. Essa vontade de estudar, eu não tinha. Acho que através do movimento e também vai chegando a idade, a gente tem que botar alguma coisa na cabeça. Se quiser melhorar de vida tem que pensar alguma coisa positiva. Senão não tem como.³⁵

On the one hand the centrality of their new location of residence facilitated this access to education. Because they lived close to their places of work, the inhabitants had more time available and were not obliged to pay expensive additional transportation to school. On the other hand—as outlined in section 3.2.1—the MNLM and its coordinators in the squat spurred the resumption of education by its inhabitants. In contrast, in *Chiquinha Gonzaga*, there was no such education-promoting force present or active in the squat. As a result the inhabitants did not refer explicitly to education as a change or improvement in their lives to the same extent as did those in *Manoel Congo*. If there was any reference to education in *Chiquinha Gonzaga*, it was mainly related to the fact of being closer to better schools for their children.³⁶

Another personal improvement mentioned by some of the inhabitants was the opportunity to finally have access to the cultural offerings of the city. Their statements show that due to their socio-economic situation, they not only suffered from exclusion from adequate housing, transportation, healthcare, and

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

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

36 Only one women I interviewed, who had already begun studying before moving to the squat, talked about the new advantages of being closer to her university.

education, but were *de facto* also excluded from the public and cultural life in the city.

Então aí eu vim já tinha 22 dias de ocupação quando eu cheguei aqui e para mim melhorou bastante. Porque aqui eu to muito próxima da faculdade onde eu estudo que é dez minutos de ônibus. O que é uma diferença muito grande que antes eram duas horas. Fiquei mais próxima ao mercado de trabalho também: tanto o formal quanto o informal, onde eu morava não tinha como sobreviver nem na informalidade. Porque as pessoas não têm dinheiro, se você for vender alguma coisa é mais difícil. Aqui já é mais fácil para isso. Então para mim modificou muita coisa. Meus filhos foram para uma escola melhor também, a gente aqui tem acesso a mais cultura, né, os teatros ... quando eu vim para cá os meus filhos foram pro teatro pela primeira vez! Depois que eu vim morar aqui.³⁷

[Q]ue você tem a possibilidade por estar no Centro, você está perto das coisas, você está perto da Biblioteca Nacional, você está perto da Academia Brasileira de Letras. Você está perto do Museu de Arte Moderna, perto do Teatro Municipal. Tem uma gama de possibilidades que te abre a outros horizontes.³⁸

The experiences described by the inhabitants—their exclusion from access to and the benefits of the urban space, such as adequate housing, transportation, jobs, healthcare, education, and culture—had generated their felt need to improve their lives, and had encouraged them to participate in the squats. Thus, the emphasis on this need as their reason to occupy also demonstrates the persistence of a historically rooted differentiated access of the inhabitants to their city (as described in section 2.1.3.1) and that the low-income population is still in practice excluded from constitutional social rights. As we can see for the inhabitants, this exclusion then forms the basis for the claims and practices of an insurgent citizenship, challenging their differentiated access to the city by occupying empty buildings.

Political Motivation and the Development of a New Consciousness

Talking about changes that had occurred in their lives after moving to the squats, the inhabitants often not only referred to the above described improvements regarding their daily routines, but also to the personal development they had gone through since, and because of, living in the squats. This personal development was on the one hand related to the new collective living situation

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

38 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with a 23-year-old man, 21.05.2011.

with its special rules and organization, and on the other to the development of a (new) political consciousness among some of the inhabitants.

For many inhabitants in both squats one major personal change and new experience had been that of adapting to live in a squat together (“*conviver*”) with the other inhabitants—to live in a *coletivo*—where they were exposed to new rules and living conditions. This new situation often also came along with significant personal development and change, in terms of learning about and tolerating the needs of others, or ignoring the opinions and prejudices of people not living in the squats:

Mudou a minha cabeça. (...) mas quando eu passei a viver a realidade que o outro vivia, foi pesado. (...) e eu não estava acostumada a morar em ocupação! Não estava acostumada com polícia, com divergência de ... e vindo para cá mudou porque eu fui aceitando e vendo as coisas de outra forma até ter a cabeça que tenho hoje.³⁹

O que mudou foi conhecer pessoas, ter pessoas que a gente aprende a amar. Outras a gente aprende a odiar. O sentimento nosso fica assim: altos e baixos. Mas a gente vai ponderando isso e aprendendo a cada dia mais a se policiar a si próprio. Então eu aprendi a conviver com todo tipo de pessoas. Isso mudou muito na minha vida.⁴⁰

Even though changes concerning the daily routines and the new collective form of cohabitation were similar and therefore mentioned in both squats, it was only in *Manoel Congo* that some of the inhabitants pointed to the creation or further development of a (new) political consciousness since living there. One of these inhabitants was Susanna, who had left her house in a *favela* and moved to the squat due to the growing drug conflict in her former neighborhood. She emphasized that it had not been a place where she had wanted to raise her children.⁴¹ Due to the presence of the drug trade selling the house in the *favela* then became difficult, and when her aunt told her that some urban land occupations had taken place in another area, she decided to participate and leave, even against the will of her husband—a quite common practice on the part of the women in the squats, as we will see in section 4.3.1.

É assim: eu morava aqui no Centro mesmo, no Estácio, só que no morro, na parte baixa do morro, que era a melhor parte de moradia daquela época. Justamente nessa época começou a guerra do tráfico. No caso os comandos. E eu estava com os meus filhos pequenos na

39 Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 19-year-old woman, 30.03.2011.

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

41 For women’s responsibility for the domestic sphere see section 4.3.2.

época e decidi que precisava me mudar para um local melhor para criar meus filhos. (...) Aí eu fui visitar uma tia minha e ela me falou que estava acontecendo umas ocupações nos morros lá (...) e estava até difícil para vender a casa ali onde eu morava porque já estava pesado mesmo o tráfico. Aí o que aconteceu? A gente saiu, eu saí dali, tomei a frente, o meu marido na época ... era o primeiro marido, do primeiro casamento. Não queria sair e largar o bem, e vender a casa que ganhou com tanto sacrifício. Mas eu bati o pé, falei (Rir): eu vou, porque não quero os meus filhos aqui. Eu vou criar num lugar que tenha mais segurança, que seja mais calmo, que eles não estejam nessa coisa de ah: drogas. Aí foi o que eu fiz. Saí, larguei tudo. E fui embora. Fui para um barraco. Na época não tinha nem o barraco. Foi construído na hora. A minha casa tinha 10 cômodos, era uma casa enorme, tinha móveis. Era uma situação boa! Aí larguei para lá, fui pro barraco. Era barraco, assentamento. Então alguns eram barracos, outros eram de plástico mesmo, feito de plástico. E fui morar lá. Lá eu criei os meus filhos.⁴²

Susanna started to live in a shack and became involved in community work, and organized child care and a library project in the new settlement. When she met another woman who was participating in the preparatory meetings of *Manoel Congo*, the settlement had already been established, and she became interested in the MNLM's work and decided to participate in it. Susanna emphasized that she had participated for political reasons (see below) but also admitted recognizing in doing so a certain necessity for her and her children to move to the city center, and participating held the possibility of facilitating such a move. Talking about changes in her life since living in the squat, she stressed the further personal development she had gone through, gaining even more social and political consciousness:

Mas eu acho que com a ocupação o meu crescimento foi muito grande. Me abriu muito o horizonte, a visão de muitas coisas. A consciência. (...) É uma transformação, eu digo o movimento nacional, ele vem como transformação de dentro para fora. As pessoas vão se transformando por dentro. E vão saindo, detectando, melhorando, construindo, crescendo. (...) Muita coisa mudou na minha vida. Mudou. Eu hoje sou outra pessoa. Consciência mudou. A minha consciência. O meu modo de ver as coisas, né? Mudou muito porque conscientizei muito das coisas. Passei a aprender. Apreendi muito. Já tinha ... já era satisfeita com certo tipo de coisa que acontecia. Mas através do movimento clareou mais as minhas ideias na questão política, na questão social. Entendeu? Então melhorou muito, melhorou muito. A visão de buscar melhorias e crescer como pessoa. Melhorar como pessoa. Então tudo isso veio mudar na minha vida, entendeu?⁴³

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

43 Ibid.

Susanna underlined in her statement the importance of the MNLM in the process of the creation of a political consciousness. The strong influence of the movement in *Manoel Congo* apparently had an effect on the inhabitants and their way of thinking over time. Even some of the inhabitants in *Manoel Congo* who had not been involved in other citizenship activities before expressed a certain change and development in terms of their political understanding. One women in *Manoel Congo* told me after the interview that it was in the squat that she had learned for the first time about her rights and the possibility of claiming them publicly. She had come out of necessity, and admitted her initial ignorance concerning the political aspects of the occupation: “*Eu achava que era simplesmente pessoas que moravam. Eu não tinha noção que era um movimento social que reivindicava um direito das pessoas (...). Então pra mim foi bom, mas muito surpreendedor.*”⁴⁴ Being confronted every day with the strong presence of a social movement and being obliged to take part in it, to participate in its citizenship activities and aims—such as meetings, demonstrations, and education—apparently had the potential to be a transformative force and to make a difference in terms of the development of a political consciousness.⁴⁵

Susanna’s case also demonstrated that besides necessity, some of the inhabitants also pointed to a political motivation to participate in the squats. These were especially the interviewees who had already been engaged in citizenship activities before taking part in *Manoel Congo* and *Chiquinha Gonzaga*.⁴⁶ Some of them had started their engagement at a very young age and had continued to exercise it since then, as the example of Mauro demonstrated. As a young man he came in contact with liberation theology,⁴⁷ and from then on, had continued to participate in various social movements.

44 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with a 25-year-old woman, 16.05.2011.

45 I will pick up this topic again in section 4.2.1.

46 A political motivation to participate emerged in both squats, but accounts mentioning this differed in their quantity. While in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* only four of the interviewed inhabitants referred to political reasons, in *Manoel Congo* at least twelve inhabitants did so (almost half of the interviewed persons).

47 A Catholic movement with the aim of liberating people from oppressive structures. For a further reading on liberation theology, see for example Pottenger, John R. 1989, *The Political Theory of Liberation Theology. Toward a Reconvergence of Social Values and Social Science*, Albany: State University of New York Press; Turner, J. D. 1994, *An Introduction to Liberation Theology*, Lanham: University Press of America; Berryman, Phillip. 1987, *Liberation Theology. Essential Facts about the Revolutionary Movement in Latin America and Beyond*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Eu sou do Movimento Sem Teto atualmente, mas eu fiz militância política no movimento de esquerda desde os 22 ou 23 anos. Antes eu era da igreja católica, eu era do grupo de jovens da igreja católica só que eu era da direção do grupo de jovens. E dentro da igreja eu conheci alguns colegas discutindo a política, discutindo religião, que é praticamente a mesma coisa né? E política no sentido de situação social, principalmente do país. A situação do negro, da mulher, do analfabeta, do nordestino, do gay, da prostituta, que são pessoas bastante preconceitadas nessa sociedade. E a partir daí, da discussão política dentro do grupo de jovens a gente vai saindo para outras discussões (...). Aí com isso eu começo a me envolver com o movimento popular. Que eu venho participando desde aquela época até agora. Primeiro na igreja, depois no movimento sindical, que eu trabalhava numa empresa metalúrgica e tal. Depois no Movimento da Associação de Moradores, não sei se você conhece. E por fim do Movimento Sem Teto. Do movimento estudantil também um pouco, que eu era estudante. Mas movimento estudantil eu militei pouco. E por fim no Movimento Sem Teto.⁴⁸

But inhabitants like Mauro, who mentioned a political motivation and had been engaged in citizenship activities before, had also come to their activism through their need and wish to improve their living conditions. As the previous section has shown, all inhabitants had suffered from the same poor living conditions. Thus, the squat was for them not only a political initiative, but also—as it was for the other inhabitants—the accomplishment of a basic need:

Eu estava quase na rua, não tinha mesmo como pagar aluguel, não tinha condições de pagar. Eu acho que nem quem está na militância tem condições de morar no Centro do Rio de Janeiro, e hoje muito menos. Com a forma que a especulação imobiliária trabalha. Eu acho que não vai poder. Aí eu cheguei aqui na ocupação e foram abertas as portas para mim. Estou morando aqui até hoje.⁴⁹

In summary, the interviews demonstrated that the previous living conditions and activities of the inhabitants of both squats—as described in section 4.1.1—had greatly influenced their decision to move to the squats. The inhabitants' need to improve their and their families' living conditions—their exclusion from access to and the benefits of the city—was the main reason and stimulus for becoming engaged in the occupation of the buildings; that is, for becoming engaged in citizenship activities. Additionally, the inhabitants who had formerly engaged in citizenship activities, particularly in *Manoel Congo*, highlighted a political motivation for their participation.

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

49 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with a 23-year-old man, 21.05.2011.

When talking about changes that had occurred in their lives after moving to the squats, all interviewees stressed the improvements that came along with the central location and with saving for the cost of housing. Somewhat in contrast to what I had first expected, the answers the inhabitants offered were not related to the daily routines in their private family lives, such as changes in daily tasks or responsibilities. However, it seemed as if especially the women also emphasized the improvements they felt for their children or even grandchildren. Thus, talking about their former living conditions and reasons for participation also led to the first indication that there existed a gender-specific difference in people's motivation to participate in the squats. This aspect will therefore be further analyzed in section 4.3.

The interviews also revealed that some inhabitants referred to a personal development they had gone through since, and because of, living in the squats. This personal development was on the one hand related to the new collective living situation inside the squats (as described in section 3), and on the other hand to the emergence of a (new) political consciousness. That such references to the creation or further development of a (new) political consciousness were only made by residents in *Manoel Congo* suggests that this development was also related to the internal differences between the squats. With the strong guidance of a social movement within *Manoel Congo*, apparently there seemed to be a greater potential for the inhabitants to (further) develop a political consciousness. The question to what degree this was really the case will be dealt with in more detail in section 4.2, when talking about the inhabitants' understandings and articulations of citizenship.

4.1.3 Preliminary Summary

The interviews demonstrated that the inhabitants had come to their engagement in the squats mainly through personal necessity. The improvements they described after having moved to *Manoel Congo* and *Chiquinha Gonzaga* also reflected these needs, which were caused by a *de facto* exclusion from constitutional social rights in their daily lives in the city, such as the right to education, work, healthcare, and housing (see section 2.1.3.1). The case of the two squats has thus demonstrated and confirmed the ongoing unequal access of certain parts of the Brazilian population to rights and privileges, and provides a vivid example of how the extension of formal rights in the Brazilian Constitution has not led to their consistent recognition and application in practice. Thus, the testimonies of the inhabitants of the squats demonstrate the ongoing daily

experience of a differentiated citizenship in Brazil, as described in section 2.1.2.1.

The inhabitants' emphasis of their needs as the main reason for their engagement in the squats also indicates that citizenship is something that can develop from an everyday practice and is not bound to a former political education or consciousness *per se*. The interviews have revealed that not all inhabitants had been engaged in citizenship activities before moving to the squats, and sometimes had even barely known what to expect from the occupation. Thus, when analyzing citizenship processes such as the occupation of an empty building, we also cannot take for granted any previous political consciousness of the actors involved, or see this as a precondition for engagement in citizenship activities. The interviews further suggest that such a political consciousness is also not necessarily something that develops afterwards. But comparing the accounts given by the inhabitants regarding the changes that had occurred in their lives after moving to the squats in *Manoel Congo* and *Chiquinha Gonzaga*, it seemed that if embedded in and promoted by certain structures—such as a social movement—it is more likely that an engagement in citizenship is accompanied by a (further) development of a political consciousness.

These first assumptions regarding citizenship will be picked up and further analyzed in the following chapter, where I will go into greater detail regarding the inhabitants' concrete understandings and articulations of citizenship.

4.2 UNDERSTANDING (OF) CITIZENSHIP

Little is yet known of how rights and citizenship are understood by poor people themselves, how they are realised in practice across different conditions and contexts, and with what impact.⁵⁰

Since the 1990s academic literature and social movements have adopted the notion of citizenship and increasingly included it in their scientific and political vocabularies (as outlined further in section 2.1). Scholars emphasize that it is the broadness of the concept that helps to encompass a wide range of social and

50 Gaventa 2002, Introduction, p. 4; Jones, Emma and John Gaventa. 2002. "Concepts of Citizenship. A Review", *IDS Development Bibliography* (19): 28.

political issues and universal as well as particular claims.⁵¹ Even though the concept of citizenship on an academic and political level has in many cases turned out to be useful for the description, denunciation, and analysis of processes of inclusion and exclusion, it has also been criticized for hitherto offering little insight into how affected people themselves understand citizenship.⁵² It has therefore been argued that “[m]ost scholarship on citizenship focuses on institutional and structural analyses and extrapolates these to individual citizens’ experiences. This renders citizenship a static and uniform concept that is divorced from individuals’ understandings.”⁵³

In fact, to date there have been only a few studies that have focused on the understanding of citizenship among the participants of housing movements, and even then they often take the relevance and validity of the concept for the participants for granted, thereby ignoring alternative argumentations and running the risk of missing relevant details.⁵⁴ Hence, in order to explore and document how the affected people themselves understand and experience citizenship and what it actually means to them—to explore the construction of a citizenship “from below” in the squats *Chiquinha Gonzaga* and *Manoel Congo*—in the following chapter I will first elaborate on the language used by the inhabitants to legitimize their participation. I will then sketch out additional ways in which the inhabitants expressed their views on their struggles in the city; that is, through their dreams, hopes, and wishes for the future—creating and participating thus in urban imaginaries.

51 Molyneux 2001, Women’s Movements in International Perspective, p. 163; Hearn, Jeff, Elżbieta H. Oleksy, and Dorota Golańska. 2011. “Introduction. The Limits of Gendered Citizenship” in *The Limits of Gendered Citizenship. Contexts and Complexities*, edited by E. H. Oleksy, J. Hearn, and D. Golańska. New York: Routledge, pp. 4.

52 Gaventa 2002, Introduction; Kabeer 2005, Introduction.

53 Miller-Idriss, Cynthia. 2006. “Everyday Understandings of Citizenship in Germany”, *Citizenship Studies*, 10 (5): 541–570.

54 None of the small number of studies, which also focus on the understanding of citizenship of the participants of housing movements (Earle 2009, *Occupying the Illegal City*; Macedo Filho 2010, *Onde Mora a Cidadania?*; Carle-Marsan 2013, *Luttes de Brésiliennes pour le Droit à la ville*) really question the meaning and importance of the concept of citizenship for the participants. While the studies by Macedo Filho and Carle-Marsan focus on women’s citizenship, Earle focuses on how understandings of citizenship shape the interrelationship between the social movements—in her case of the UMM in São Paulo—and the state.

4.2.1 The Legitimacy of Action: Articulation of Rights and Needs

Nessa ocupação nós vamos aprender coisas que a gente nunca imaginava que nós tínhamos o direito.⁵⁵

Citizenship has been defined as a formal status and a practice. Hence, from an academic viewpoint, people's participation in the occupation of empty buildings in Rio de Janeiro—in response to the lack of access in practice to the constitutional right to housing—can be understood as exercising citizenship. As highlighted in section 2.1.1, to integrate the formal status and the social processes of its negotiation into one definition of citizenship allows us to also explore the performative dimension of membership and thus to incorporate the views and voices of social actors often excluded from the dominant discourses, such as the inhabitants of the squats.

Hence, seeking to capture the inhabitants' own understandings and construction of citizenship, I myself avoided using or introducing the term *citizenship* (*cidadania*) during my interviews.⁵⁶ In this way, I tried to avoid pre-shaping their answers with my theoretical framing of their struggles. Indeed, it turned out that the interviewees barely used the term *citizenship* explicitly of their own accord to describe and justify their engagement in the squats. Instead, the inhabitants used their own language during the interviews. Even though they often mixed several arguments to make their point, I detected two—as we will see, closely related—approaches which the inhabitants used to legitimate their participation in the occupation of the buildings: a rights-based, and a needs-based approach. The interviewees developed a language of rights—consisting of the reference to “text-based rights” and the reference to “contributor

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

56 As mentioned before, other scholars have not really questioned the meaning and importance of the concept of citizenship for the participants of housing movements. They have even often explicitly included the notion of citizenship when talking with the interviewees (for example Earle 2009, *Occupying the Illegal City*, p. 300 or Macedo Filho 2010, *Onde Mora a Cidadania?*, pp. 216f) and thus, in my opinion, have risked pre-shaping the answers and reducing the space for the interviewees' own interpretations.

rights”⁵⁷—and a language of needs—consisting of a reference to their basic needs—which in I will elaborate on and discuss in detail below.

4.2.1.1 Text-based Rights and Contributor Rights

[L]ittle is known about how rights languages are actually used in situated struggles, by different individuals or groups, and to what effect.⁵⁸

In approaching the inhabitants’ understandings of citizenship, I was interested in the kinds of justifications they used to legitimate their actions. It turned out that they used a language of rights, which meant on the one hand referring directly or indirectly to “text-based rights”—that is, “to the constitution and the legal codes”⁵⁹—and on the other hand referring to “contributor rights”—that is, to the payment of taxes.

Text-based Rights

In *Chiquinha Gonzaga* squat there were only a small number of inhabitants—eight out of the 26 interviewees—who referred on their own initiative to the Brazilian Constitution to justify their occupation of the building. Most of them had been engaged in citizenship activities before participating in the squat. The ones who had not—three out of the eight—were nonetheless playing an active role in the squat during my stay and were more engaged in its activities than the other inhabitants, who did not mention the Constitution unless explicitly asked about it. The interviewees justified the occupation, for example, in the following way:

[N]a própria Constituição. Não sei se é na Constituição Brasileira, mas é num livro de leis aí, um livro de legislação aí, tem o seguinte: moradia é um direito do cidadão e um dever do estado. (...) Então é o seguinte: a gente simplesmente faz valer o nosso direito. Só isso.⁶⁰

57 These two terms owe their inspiration to James Holston, who also describes the justifications used by the residents in the peripheries of São Paulo to legitimate demands (Holston 2008, *Insurgent Citizenship*, pp. 260, 246).

58 Jones et al. 2002, *Concepts of Citizenship*, p. 28.

59 Holston 2011, *Contesting Privilege with Right*, p. 28.

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

Até porque esta na nossa Constituição. No artigo cinco da nossa Constituição, que todo cidadão tem direito a moradia digna. É todo prédio, todo imóvel tem que ter uma função social. Qual é a maior função social de um imóvel do governo? Se vira moradia.⁶¹

Nós ocupamos o espaço público que o governo larga. Ainda, mas agora que a nova lei implica até que se por ventura for mesmo de um particular, mesmo da iniciativa privada, o Estatuto das Cidades prevê um dispositivo chamado “A função social da propriedade”. Que quebra um pouco aquilo que eu te falei no início que a Constituição preserva muito o patrimônio, a propriedade privada. Com essa emenda complementar, que chama Estatuto das Cidades, então essa lei que permitiu que nós também pudessem entrar (...).⁶²

In *Manoel Congo* the number of inhabitants—19 out of 24—who referred of their own volition to the Constitution to justify the occupation of the building, was much higher than that in *Chiquinha Gonzaga*. Also, here the majority of them had been previously engaged in citizenship activities, and those who had not—eight out of 19—were actively taking part in the squat. Of course, active engagement by the inhabitants in *Manoel Congo* was also more likely as active participation was required and strongly controlled by the leading MNLM movement.⁶³

Eu acho justo para a gente ter uma moradia digna, que o pobre não tem que morar afastado do centro urbano, em termos de emprego. E que a cidade hoje tem prédios que podem ser ocupados, que podem ser utilizados e que está na Constituição de que todo mundo tem direito a moradia.⁶⁴

A leitura que a gente tem é assim: o déficit habitacional no país existe, no estado, existe. E tem prédios público que devem ser direcionados para a habitação de interesse social. Para moradia. Tem que ser! O que justifica o uso social desse prédio é morar.⁶⁵

Não está cumprindo a sua função social! Então é uma forma de reivindicação e de denúncia. Tá errado. Não tem que construir mais casa para mim. Tem um salário de zero a três? Vamos construir um prédio para vocês morarem, uma casa ... não, a gente tem espaço ocioso que você pode construir política para preencher esses espaços. (...) E a

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

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

63 For the differences in the internal organization of the squats see chapter 3.

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

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

justiça seja feita. Então isso é uma forma de denúncia! E reivindicar o nosso direito que está na Constituição. Nada mais, nada menos. A gente não está fazendo nada de errado! A gente ocupa para reivindicar e se fazer valer o nosso direito.⁶⁶

As the quoted examples from both squats show, the level of knowledge about the law and its configurations varied between the interviewees. While most referred to the right to housing in the Constitution, in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* two out of eight, and in *Manoel Congo* eight out of 19 interviewees also elaborated on the legal conditions in more detail by mentioning the social function of property, thereby referring to a passage of the City Statute (see section 2.1.3.1). In doing so, these inhabitants not only demonstrated a detailed knowledge of their formal rights, but also expressed a collective approach to housing.

The social function of property implies the promotion of a collective interest and the well-being of society over individual interest and enrichment. Referring to the social function of property in order to justify the occupation of vacant buildings then also means framing the occupation beyond the individual's need for housing, as a collective action aiming to contribute to a better society. This argumentation—the emphasis of the collective interest—could also be found in the line of reasoning of one of the national coordinators of the MNLM, who was living in *Manoel Congo*:

Os imóveis do Centro. E a outra é que estão vazios. Eles não cumprem a função social. Isso é uma garantia legal! A propriedade tem que cumprir a sua função social. E a função social é aquilo que faz bem à sociedade. Não é aquilo que faz bem ao indivíduo. Isso tá na Constituição!⁶⁷

As described in section 3.2, in *Manoel Congo* especially, the inhabitants who held a position in the movement's hierarchy had made it quite clear that the aim of the squat was not only to provide housing for needy families, but was also—and perhaps even more so—a political undertaking and an instrument to achieve a more equitable society:

Então que lógica de cidade é essa? Agora mudar essa lógica não se muda com um ato. Não se muda com um decreto. É um processo de luta, de formulação, reflexão, mobilização, enfrentamento, negociação ... num consenso! E que o movimento nacional está comprometido com ele, porque a lição do Movimento Nacional de Luta pela Moradia,

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

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

quando a gente organiza uma ocupação, a gente não tá convidando as pessoas a terem uma casa. Estamos convidando eles a participar de uma luta por uma outra cidade.⁶⁸

This kind of argumentation forms an integral part of the discourses and struggles promoted by social movements fighting for housing. As described in section 2.1.3.1, these movements had struggled for the implementation of legal instruments, especially for the social function of housing, to justify pressure on the authorities in their demands for decent living conditions. The reference to text-based rights thus forms an important part of their discourses in order to legitimate their actions and claim their demands. As a consequence, these discourses had also been passed to the participants of these movements—that is, to the inhabitants of the squats. The interviews, especially with the inhabitants formerly engaged in citizenship activities, revealed that in *Manoel Congo* active measures had been taken to inform the participants about the legal context of their actions and the collective aim of the movement:

E você falou de formação política: o que quer dizer formação política para você? Na verdade a gente está tentando fazer uma comissão. Porque a gente percebe a necessidade, que a gente passou muito tempo da questão da necessidade cotidiana, né? Daquela coisa do despejo daqui, lá também ... da necessidade de se conquistar o espaço, de ficar muito ... e a gente acaba meio que necessitando de uma formação para entender: por que que há tantos bloqueios? Por que é tão difícil acessar as coisas? Que sociedade é essa que limita o nosso direito fundamental, entendeu? Tá na Constituição do país. Por que que eu não posso ter acesso a uma moradia? E para você tentar fazer esse tipo de reflexão e juntar, o que me une por exemplo ... o que me leva a falar que aqui eu não estou só por causa do meu espaço, mas eu to também com a vontade, o direito, de outras comunidades de ter essa sua moradia. Então para isso você tem que ter uma certa leitura, você tem que ter um certo suporte. Então a gente tá meio que tentando organizar essa comissão.⁶⁹

E vamos ocupar um espaço aí, já está no projeto destinado, e eu acompanho essas famílias. Uma vez por mês a gente faz reuniões com essas famílias. Conscientizamos elas dos direitos da moradia, do direito do cidadão, constituinte, moradia não é mercadoria ... dever do estado de estar fornecendo de graça essas moradias. Então o trabalho eu trabalho com essas pessoas todas. Porque as pessoas infelizmente não sabem os seus direitos né. Se a gente não falar para eles vai ficar naquela inércia lá.⁷⁰

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

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

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

Hoje eu e [Glória] sentamos e falamos: olha, nós estamos acertando no caminho, porque estão surgindo novas pessoas. Então a gente entra num processo assim: de tentar se afastar para que eles possam mostrar, mas nem sempre por perto. Porque a gente não sabe até que ponto eles estão acertando. Então a gente sempre está num processo de acompanhamento.⁷¹

These quotes from interviews with some of the coordinators of the MNLM also indicate that not all the inhabitants in the squat were conscious of the political dimension of the squat or their legal rights. In fact, the coordinators emphasized the necessity of raising consciousness among the inhabitants about their formal rights—that is is, following my definition, ultimately about citizenship.

As we see in section 4.1.2 some inhabitants in fact reported the emergence or further development of a political consciousness and the importance the MNLM played in it. Some stated that they had learned about their rights and ways of claiming them for the first time in their life in the squat:

Com o passar dos dias, semanas, meses, anos, é que você vai conhecer com quem você está vivendo. Então é muito difícil. Mas a experiência valeu a pena. Valeu a pena. Apreendi muito. Apreendi várias coisas de leis, a respeito de direitos, dos nossos direitos. Porque nós temos direitos que o governo nos tira, né? Apreendi a reivindicar, né? A lutar por aquilo que a gente deseja. A abrir a boca no meio da rua e falar mesmo. Para o governo saber que você está ali, reivindicando por aquela causa. E foi muito bom.⁷²

Bom, na verdade, Bea, eu não tenho muita experiência nisso. De dizer para você: como é uma ocupação, como não é. Porque eu nunca havia conhecido o que é uma ocupação. Eu vim conhecer através dessa que estou fazendo parte.⁷³

Inclusive depois que veio uma moça do aeroporto, uma moça até simpática, bem vestida. Depois eu fui saber que ela faz, assim, entrevista com as pessoas, que ela é do aeroporto mesmo. Então ela chegou perto da [Marta], da minha filha, e começou a fazer um monte de pergunta. E gravando. Aí ... enquanto ela soube responder, ela tava respondendo. Quando ficou complicado ela chamou a [Glória]. Aí a [Glória] veio, explicou, falou. Porque tem muita coisa que eu mesma não entendo. Mesmo você me explicando tá difícil de eu entender. Porque é complicado o negócio. E a minha filha já entende mais do que

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

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

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

eu. Porque ela participou mais, ela frequentou mais, ela andou mais. E tudo mais do que eu.⁷⁴

These observations, together with the abovementioned fact that in *Manoel Congo*—where the MNLM still had a strong influence—the number of inhabitants who referred on their own initiative to the Constitution or even the social function of housing to justify the occupation of the building was much higher than in *Chiquinha Gonzaga*, where the social movement had lost its influence over time—indicate the importance and influence of political actors such as social movements in the implementation of a citizenship-related knowledge and vocabulary among its participants. This citizenship vocabulary does not make significant use of the term *citizenship* itself, but is mainly a knowledge of the existence of formal rights in the Constitution. Using a language of rights to justify the occupation of empty buildings is then an important instrument or even a strategy of the social movements, but not something that is usually developed automatically by the participants simply because of their living in the squats, as the comparison with *Chiquinha Gonzaga* especially revealed.

The insights from the fieldwork not only indicate that the language of rights is mainly implemented by social movements, but also that the intensity and consistency of the implementation of this language played an important role in its adaption, reproduction, and, as is shown below, understanding over time. This assumption was further confirmed through another justification some of the interviewees used (additionally) to legitimate their actions. Inhabitants in both squats emphasized the difference between “to occupy” (*ocupar*) and “to invade” (*invadir*) and thereby differentiated a legitimate from an illegal or even criminal act. Some scholars doing research on housing movements⁷⁵ have also observed the importance for these movements of differentiating between the two terms in order to legitimate and also valorize the occupation of land or buildings. While the term *invasão* refers to a negative public discourse trying to denounce the movement’s actions, the term *ocupação* refers to a legitimate act authorized by the law—the Constitution. The geographer Regina Bega dos Santos notes:

74 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with a 55-year-old woman, 27.04.2011.

75 Santos 2004, Movimentos Sociais Urbanos; Tramontani Ramos 2012, As Barricadas do Hiperpreariado Urbano, pp. 207–209; Gonzalez, Emilio. 2005. “Memórias que Narram a Cidade. Experiências Sociais na Constituição Urbana de Foz do Iguaçu” Dissertação de Mestrado, Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo, São Paulo, p. 154; Macedo Filho 2010, Onde Mora a Cidadania?, pp. 38–42.

Antes de mais nada é importante enfatizar a questão da nomenclatura: há um termo muito empregado pela grande imprensa e pelo poder público: “invasão”. Os participantes dos movimentos populares se autodenominam ocupantes e não invasores. A diferença não é simplesmente semântica. No uso do termo invasão estão implícitas a ilegalidade e a violência de ação: invadir a privacidade ou a propriedade de outrem. Trata-se de uma ação ilegítima. O termo ocupação relaciona-se à conquista de um direito: ocupa-se o que é de direito.⁷⁶

This kind of reasoning is thus also ultimately based on the written law, and therefore—even though at first glance less explicitly—a reference to text-based rights.

Reference to both terms was not only made by the interviewees when asked directly about their justification for the occupation, but also popped up as a justification when describing the squat or talking about relationships with others. The differentiation of the terms thereby also highlighted the existence of prejudices the inhabitants had to face regularly due to their living in the squats. While some inhabitants reported a loss of their former social contacts, such as friends or sometimes even family members, due to their living in the squats, others described difficulties in gaining access to daily essential services, for example opening bank accounts when they revealed their current address.

The differentiation between the terms *invasão* and *ocupação* is therefore an important discourse for social movements in order to avoid the stigma of illegality, and also forms part of their internal political instruction.⁷⁷ Just as the abovementioned directly references to the Constitution, it is also not a self-made differentiation by the inhabitants, but forms part of a knowledge and vocabulary used and implemented by the respective social movements. That this process of implementation existed, and also needed time and continual supervision by the movement responsible, was confirmed during the interview with one of the national coordinators of the MNLM, while explaining to me the difference between *invasão* and *ocupação*:

As pessoas, quando eles falam ocupação, na verdade o que está no imaginário deles, não é a ocupação, é invasão. Até você quebrar com essa categoria invasão. A gente não invade, a gente ocupa o que está ocioso, e valoriza aquilo que foi produto do trabalhador. Isso aqui foi construído por trabalhadores. E quer dizer ... tudo que foi investido aqui é do governo federal. Então isso aqui tem que ser devolvido para quem construiu esse país. O

76 Santos 2004, Movimentos Sociais Urbanos, p. 132.

77 This has also been observed by Tramontani Ramos 2012, As Barricadas do Hiperprecariado Urbano, p. 207.

trabalhador que está aqui, ele não está de graça. Então até essa palavra “ocupação” para os moradores é um processo longo, didático, até eles entenderem que ocupar é um processo de resistência e para denunciar a especulação imobiliária desse país. Tanto em terras públicas, terras de prédios públicos e terras privadas também. Então é só a prática que vai demonstrar o que é a ocupação. E a ocupação ela não é simplesmente ocupar um prédio. Ela é todo um processo que engendra a forma de como se garantir esse resultado político. De ocupar. É você constituir famílias, você construir laços, é você ter normas e comportamentos totalmente diferentes, e também é uma ação política de qualidade. Porque você está mostrando para a sociedade o que é ocupar. Aqui a gente- eu e [Glória] a gente fala assim de vez em quando: Olha [Glória], porque as pessoas não percebem isso, mas quem tem a leitura, percebe. Assim como nós ocupamos o espaço, dois meses depois nós orientamos todo mundo para estudar.⁷⁸

The national coordinator’s statement indicates the difficulties the MNLM faced in communicating an understanding of a certain language and its political implications, and therefore the need for a long-term strategy—in this case the promotion of school education⁷⁹—in order to do so. The MNLM not only promoted school education, but was also—as seen in section 3.2—imparting knowledge about the movement, its aims, and strategies during the numerous—and often for the participants obligatory—meetings, assemblies, and demonstrations.

Figure 23: Meeting room in Manoel Congo with educational material about the history of the MNLM⁸⁰



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

79 For the importance of education in *Manoel Congo*, see section 3.2.1.

80 Photograph: Bea Wittger, 2011.

Yet despite these measures, difficulties in instigating an understanding of a certain language and its political implications, as described above by the national coordinator, were also confirmed during the interviews with inhabitants who had not previously been engaged in citizenship activities. These interviews not only confirmed the implementation of certain discourses from the movements (see quotes below, for example: “*Eles dizem que (...)*”, “*Então eu aprendi aqui que (...)*”), but furthermore demonstrated that the adaptation of these discourses by the inhabitants did not necessarily go hand in hand with an understanding of their content:

Tem diferença entre invasão e ocupação? Eu não sei. Eles dizem que tem. Mas para mim não. Para mim é a mesma coisa. Invasão e ocupação. É, para mim é. Porque eu acho que a partir do momento em que a gente ocupa, a gente ocupa para morar. A partir do momento que a gente está ocupando uma coisa que não é da gente, a gente está invadindo de qualquer maneira. Porque até a sua privacidade, se eu tiver aqui, eu estou invadindo. Então eu acho que a partir do momento que a gente está ocupando, igual eles falam, é a mesma coisa de invadir. Em qualquer outro lugar tem o mesmo significado. Aqui que para eles não. Quando a gente fala uma invasão, é uma ofensa. Mas eu entendo como a mesma coisa.⁸¹

Olha só! Eu para mim essa experiência é nova porque eu nunca tive, nunca tinha nem ouvido falar nisso. Eu não sabia desse tipo de movimento assim de ... porque eu sempre morei na Baixada. Inclusive a gente falava: ah, invadiram. Então eu aprendi aqui que não é invadiu, é ocupou! Que aqui não pode existir essa palavra “invadir”. Então assim: eu não tinha experiência, eu nunca tinha ouvido falar em ocupação desse tipo assim. Que tem o movimento, né? Não só aqui. Em vários lugares. Até em outro estado tem também. Porque o pessoal daqui, até tem pessoas que participam. Mas para mim isso aqui foi novo, porque eu não sabia que existia isso. Inclusive eu não ocupei. Eu vim depois. Eu vim depois de já estarem aqui há um ano.⁸²

While the first interviewee explicitly stated that for her, there was no difference between the two terms *invasão* and *ocupação*, the second, at the end of her statement, pointed out that she “did not occupy” the property, and thus revealed that in fact she had not understood the meaning sanctioned by the movement—as she was obviously taking part in the occupation of the building. In *Chiquinha Gonzaga* especially, there were even some inhabitants who still used the term

81 Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 35-year-old woman, 11.03.2011.

82 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with a 55-year-old woman, 27.04.2011.

invadir instead of *ocupar* to describe their act of entering and taking over the building, and others who offered no justification at all for their participation.⁸³

E a gente invadiu o prédio, que a gente foi levando os grupos de pessoas, orientando, tudo. E para a gente já estar na ocupação, já tinha uma vivência aqui. Só que no primeiro dia, as mulheres esquentando a minha cabeça, só mulheres barraqueiras, só mulheres faveladas, só gente suja, não sei o que. Aí eu já me estressando, já querendo bater nos outros, eu falei: mãe não consigo, não é vida para mim! Eu não volto para lá não.⁸⁴

This lack, or in some cases even total absence, of a socially desirable understanding of the terms and their reproduction—even as apparently empty key terms in certain contexts—could be observed much more easily in *Chiquinha Gonzaga*, where the movements FLP and CMP had failed to exert a continuing influence. Due to this fact, over time, there had been fewer measures taken in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* to “educate” and ideologically sustain the inhabitants. Interestingly, and at a first glance surprisingly, there were numerically more inhabitants (15) who mentioned the difference between the terms *invasão* and *ocupação* than there were in *Manoel Congo* (eight). But a closer look revealed that the understanding of the meaning of these terms and the ability to explain it differed significantly between the squats.

In *Chiquinha Gonzaga* nine out of the 15 interviewees who referred to the difference between the terms *invasão* and *ocupação* were also individuals who had mentioned the Constitution on their own initiative⁸⁵ (see above) and/or who had been politically active before living in the squat.⁸⁶ Most of these interviewees were thus not only reproducing the terms, but also demonstrated an ability to elaborate to a greater or lesser extent on them and to emphasize the legality of their actions:

Você invade uma coisa que não é sua, a que você não tem direito. E quando você ocupa, você tá ocupando um espaço que está vazio, que é do estado, e que o próprio estado diz que todo mundo tem direito a ter uma moradia. Então a partir do momento em que você

83 Some inhabitants even had difficulty in understanding the related interview questions. Two of the interviewees in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* even thought it was wrong to live in a squat.

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

85 Six inhabitants.

86 The ones who referred to the Constitution (see above) plus two other interviewees. One interviewee had not been active before, but was 19 years of age at the time of the interviews, and had grown up inside the squat.

ocupa um espaço que é do estado, ou seja, que é seu, que te pertence, então você não ta invadindo nada. Você ta ocupando.⁸⁷

Aqui no Brasil, eu acho que não tem mais ocupação por isso mesmo. Eu acho que é falta de informação mesmo porque as pessoas acham que um prédio abandonado, durante 22 anos como esse que estava, acham que é um crime você chegar e ocupar esse espaço. Eles falam que é invasão. Mas aí tem uma diferença entre invasão e ocupação. A invasão, se tivesse alguém no local morando, isso seria uma invasão. Mas no local não tinha ninguém.⁸⁸

The other six inhabitants—who had also not been engaged in citizenship activities before moving to the squat—mentioned the two terms, or indicated that *invasão* especially was a negative term used mainly by external actors to condemn the squats, but could not elaborate further on the meaning or link it to the Constitution. These interviewees mainly seemed only to reproduce a vocabulary they had learned while the FLP and CMP had still influenced the interests of the squat. Thus, in *Chiquinha Gonzaga*, out of 15 interviewees only nine really seemed to understand and to be able to elaborate on the vocabulary of rights they used. These interviewees, just as observed regarding the reference to the Constitution before (see above), were mostly those who had been engaged in citizenship activities already before moving to the squat. This fact further confirmed that time and some kind of continual supervision by political actors—for instance, social movements—were necessary for people not only to adapt, but also to internalize a citizenship vocabulary, such as a language of rights. Because, as stated before, having been previously engaged in citizenship activities also meant having spent more time than others being confronted with certain movement discourses, and thus already possessing a certain understanding, knowledge, and experience in rights-claiming processes, which then were eventually further deepened and cultivated in the squats. Thus, as indicated in section 4.1, the differences between the inhabitants with regard to their previous engagement indeed influenced the understanding and adaptation of a citizenship vocabulary.

In contrast, in *Manoel Congo*—where the movement continued to “educate” its participants—the interviewees who alluded to the terms *invasão* and *ocupação* tended to elaborate with much greater detail on their different meanings, and particularly included the legal aspect of the occupation. Seven out

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

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

of these eight inhabitants⁸⁹ were also individuals who had mentioned the Constitution on their own initiative (see above) and most of them had also been politically active before living in the squat.⁹⁰ Overall they disclosed a quite profound knowledge of the law:

Invasão seria quando um espaço está ocupado por outra pessoa e um segundo elemento entra a força. Nós ocupamos áreas abertas, abandonadas, que estão lá sem cumprir. Aí a gente vai para a lei, porque a gente tem que ... estamos ali dentro da Constituição! A Constituição diz que a terra tem que ser, que a função da terra é o que? Ela tem que ser produtiva, né? Até cumprir o papel dela, que é ser de produção e moradia!⁹¹

In summary, I argue that the explicit or implicit reference to text-based rights, through reference to the Constitution or to the differentiation of the two terms *invasão* and *ocupação* in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* and *Manoel Congo* is a language of rights used and implemented by social movements to legitimate their actions and to operate effectively in the public sphere. It is thus not something that develops automatically among its participants. It also seemed as if an adoption of this language—despite the educational measures employed by the movements—does not always imply an understanding of it, especially not if ongoing supervision by, for example, a social movement was lacking over time, as in *Chiquinha Gonzaga*. The mere reproduction of key terms, then, cannot always be taken as an indication of a political consciousness or even of a politicization of the actors, but rather demonstrates the need to look behind dominant discourses and to engage in a deeper analysis of the understanding of the actors involved.⁹²

89 Only one of the interviewees who referred to the differentiation of the terms was not really able to elaborate on its content (see quote above).

90 Four out of the eight had been involved in citizenship activities before. But, as already mentioned above, due to the internal structure of the squat, by the time of the interview the others were also actively involved.

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

92 Marianne Carle-Marsan, in her study on *Manoel Congo*, for example, does not question the meaning and importance of citizenship for the inhabitants, and therefore does not focus on the participants who do not use a language of citizenship or do not develop a political understanding regarding the squat. She states generally for the women of the squat: “*De plus, ces femmes ont pris conscience de leurs droits et ont lutté pour les obtenir, de là émerge le potentiel d’une citoyenneté locale*” (Carle-Marsan 2013, Luites de Brésiliennes pour le Droit à la ville, p. 135), or: “*Depuis que les femmes participent au mouvement, notre recherche montre qu’elles ont pris*

Contributor Rights

The inhabitants of both squats used not just one, but often several arguments to justify their participation in the occupation of *Manoel Congo* and *Chiquinha Gonzaga*. Apart from the reference to text-based rights, another common justification some of the inhabitants used to legitimate their action (eight interviewees in both squats) was to emphasize their payment of taxes. They stated, for example:

Eu acho justo porque eu vejo aquele prédio ali, aquele prédio foi construído com o nosso dinheiro, dinheiro de imposto que a gente paga, imposto caro. E eu acho que você tem o direito à educação, saúde, moradia, lazer, cultura. E um mês de ocupar um prédio, se é o meu direito, eu quero. Se é meu, se é construído com o meu dinheiro, eu vou morar ali, entendeu? Então eu acho que é isso. Eu acho que a gente tem que ... se a gente ficar esperando o direito nosso vir, ninguém vai dar. Então eu acho que a gente tem que correr atrás do direito, entendeu? Porque com o salário que a gente ganha, a gente não consegue comprar uma casa, não consegue construir uma casa nunca.⁹³

Tem muitas pessoas ainda que acham que: aí, é fora da lei, que não sei o que ... que é irregular. Não! Você não está ocupando um espaço de alguém que pagou ou está pagando. Você está ocupando um espaço que é direito nosso. São espaços que são nossos rendimentos de todos os impostos que nós pagamos. Está lá. Tem prédios que estão ociosos há 20 anos, fechados. Poderíamos estar usando.⁹⁴

E ocupar o espaço público é mais que o nosso dever. Não vejo nenhuma complicação de dizer que ocupar um espaço público que é dinheiro, construído pelo próprio trabalhador, essa cidade que está aqui, foi construída pelos trabalhadores. O que gera de renda, de acumulação de capital em torno disso aqui, foram frutos nossos. Então a gente tem que usufruir desse fruto. Que para usufruir desse fruto é morar perto dele. Não é jogar esse povo fora dessa relação dos bens de serviço da cidade. Então o que o estado faz é pegar

conscience de leurs droits” (Carle-Marsan, Marianne. 2011, *En Mouvement pour le Droit au Logement. L'Expérience des Femmes de l'Occupation Manoel Congo, Rio de Janeiro, Brésil*. 8^o Colloque de la Relève VRM, 26-27 Mai 2011, Montréal. <http://www.vrm.ca/colloque-de-la-releve-8e-edition-saisir-lire-et-interpreter-la-ville/> (01 Jun 2015), p. 4). This observation, as my analysis so far has shown, cannot be confirmed in such a general manner.

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

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

você, que trabalha no Centro, mas não te dá o direito de usufruir dos bens culturais, dos equipamentos da cidade.⁹⁵

As these quotes demonstrate, in the interviewees' understanding their right to occupy derived from their personal contribution, from their "stake to the city,"⁹⁶ in the form of their individual tax payments. But, to what kind of taxes did they refer?

As demonstrated in section 4.1.1, apart from the few inhabitants who were working as *registered* wage-earners with the so-called *carteira assinada*, most of the interviewees in both squats worked in the informal sector, and were thus most likely not paying personal income taxes. Therefore, as the interviews revealed, they were primarily referring to less visible taxes, which are indirect taxes such as taxes on consumption:

Eles não entendiam nada! Aí: invasora, você invadiu! Você entrou no prédio dos outros sem morar! Passei decepção, luta até na minha igreja. Que eu sou evangélica, né? Aí passei luta lá na minha igreja, fui disciplinada, porque não poderia ter feito isso. Quer dizer que eles não entendem que quando você compra você já está pagando imposto, através de tudo o que você compra. E esse dinheiro vai para o governo! Então esse dinheiro dá direito à moradia. Mas as pessoas não entendem isso. E aí acabam achando que eu estava errada.⁹⁷

A invasão, se tivesse alguém no local morando, isso seria uma invasão. Mas no local não tinha ninguém. E era um prédio do governo, praticamente nosso, que a gente paga os nossos impostos. A partir do momento em que a gente compra um palito de fósforo no mercado eu acho que a gente já está pagando o imposto. Então é isso.⁹⁸

Tax payment in Brazil is a constitutional requirement in order to finance public policies, which in turn should guarantee social rights, such as housing, education, and health.⁹⁹ Hence, to emphasize the payment of taxes as a

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

96 Holston 2011, *Contesting Privilege with Right*, p. 18.

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

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

99 Barcarollo, Felipe. 2013. "O Dever Fundamental de Pagar Impostos como Condição de Possibilidade para a Implementação de Políticas Públicas", *Revista de Finanças Públicas, Tributação e Desenvolvimento – RFPTD*, 1 (1): 2; the importance of tax

contribution from which social rights, such as the right to housing, can be derived means to emphasize the duties and obligations¹⁰⁰ of citizens within the nation-state. The inhabitants thus justified the occupation with their own obedience as citizens, since obligations and their fulfillment form an integral part of citizenship (see definition section 2.1.1).

That social rights should be guaranteed through the payment of taxes was expressed by the inhabitants through reference to the non-fulfillment of the original purpose of the buildings, namely to provide housing. In this reasoning, this non-fulfillment legitimated the occupation and implied the accusation of a misuse of the inhabitants' taxes by the state. The interviewees expressed the sentiment of not having received what they were entitled to in exchange for what they (or sometimes even their forebears)¹⁰¹ had paid in the past, and thereby also articulated, both explicitly and implicitly, that they had been betrayed by the state. This entitlement was additionally emphasized through a claim of ownership many of the interviewees expressed by using the word "our" ("nosso"), when talking about the buildings.¹⁰² Hence, the dominant discourse was then reversed, and in this reading the occupation became merely a logical necessary step—a legitimate act—in order to contribute to the well-being of society, a well-being not realized and ensured by the state. Through the occupation of the buildings the inhabitants thus took this well-being into their own hands and confronted the state with its—according to this understanding—criminal and illegal activities (the misuse of taxes).¹⁰³

Sendo público, é parte de nossos impostos, parte do nosso próprio trabalho que mantém essas instituições públicas que estão abandonadas. Então seria uma troca para ocupar, trabalhadores terem um espaço onde morar, que já pagaram essa cota. Porque já pagaram a cota. Com os impostos, já estão pagando. Como estão também pagando a saúde e

payment, especially for the enabling of social rights, has also been emphasized by T.H. Marshall. Marshall 2009, *Citizenship and Social Class*, p. 153.

100 Other citizens' obligations are for example military service and voting. Of course tax payment is not only limited to citizens, but also affects Brazilian residents.

101 One of the inhabitants stressed for example that the building had been paid for by the taxes paid by her father and grandfather (Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 52-year-old woman, 14.03.2011).

102 It is then not surprising that two interviewees even considered the act of occupation as a "*dever*," a duty.

103 That housing movements are denouncing the state's behavior as criminal has also been observed by Earle, Lucy. 2011. "Citizenship, the 'Right to the City' and State Fragility", *Crisis States Working Papers Series No.2* (87): 5.

educação que não tem. Se fosse a moradia, a moradia teria que ser mais um bem que a gente teria que ter por direito. Mas não temos por direito (...).¹⁰⁴

E outro motivo também: o prédio público é feito com o dinheiro do povo. No Brasil, rico não paga imposto. Isso é mentira, dizer que rico paga imposto. É mentira. O rico tem a função de repassar o imposto que o pobre paga. E ele nem repassa. Ele fica, e além de não repassar ele ainda pega, dá um jeito do dinheiro ficar para ele. Além de não pagar ainda rouba o imposto para o bolso dele. Assim é no Brasil. (...) Dessa elite, do patrão, dessa elite canalha que eu te falei no início da conversa. Então você fala que o indivíduo não tem uma leitura política da realidade. Ele é alienado como o estado quer que ele seja alienado. De não ter direito à moradia. Está na Constituição ... o prédio foi construído com o nosso dinheiro! Do povo, do trabalhador. Trabalhadora. Mantido com o dinheiro do povo! Mantido. Então você tem vários motivos. Você tem a legitimidade, tem a legalidade, tem razão, tem tudo. Para você estar ocupando.¹⁰⁵

To deduce the right to occupy an empty building from the accomplishment of citizenship obligations, such as the payment of taxes, is then also a way to stress one's own agency and active contribution to society. In his study on insurgent citizenship in the peripheries of São Paulo, James Holston likewise observed the legitimization of right claims through the payment of taxes among the residents of the peripheries. For him, the reference to tax payment is not only a legitimization, but also "gives residents the sense that they are citizens of the city, for many a first substantive understanding of their citizenship and its agency."¹⁰⁶

This "substantive understanding of citizenship" certainly, as we have seen before, had the potential to develop inside the squats. But, did it, in the case of the reference to contributor rights, also emerge as a consequence of the implementation of a certain knowledge by political actors, such as the housing movements, or did it develop automatically among the interviewees through their participation?

There is evidence that the references to tax payment, like the references to text-based rights, also form part of a discourse introduced by the social movements in the squats. To refer to their own accomplishment of obligations, and thus to reverse the dominant, often discriminating, discourses of illegality, is also a common way in which social movements tend to justify their actions. The conviction of being active agents, who are contributing through their actions to the improvement of society as a whole, can especially be found in their

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

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

106 Holston 2008, *Insurgent Citizenship*, p. 262.

discourses (as described above). The reference to tax payment is thus also—even though more implicitly than the direct reference to the Constitution—a way of evoking social rights. Which is, as noticed with reference to text-based rights, an important reference used and implemented by social movements to legitimate their actions and to operate effectively in the public sphere.

The assumption that the reference to tax payment also forms part of a discourse introduced by the social movements was further confirmed by the fact that in *Chiquinha Gonzaga*, the inhabitants who mentioned contributor rights to justify the occupation had all—with but one exception—been engaged in citizenship activities before. As mentioned above, this meant having spent more time than others being confronted with certain movement discourses, and thus already possessing a certain understanding, knowledge and experience in rights-claiming processes. It thus made the adoption of a language of rights much more likely. In *Manoel Congo*, as seen in section 4.1, the strong and constant presence of the MNLM meant that the inhabitants who had not previously been engaged were more likely to adapt and be influenced by certain movement discourses than in *Chiquinha Gonzaga*, where the influence of the FLP and CMP had only been strong at the beginning. Indeed, in *Manoel Congo* the situation was different, and five of the eight inhabitants who justified the occupation in terms of the payment of taxes had not been engaged in citizenship activities before.

In summary, the inhabitants justified the occupation in terms of their own obedience as citizens, referring to their obligatory tax payment through everyday consumption. They thereby emphasized not only their active contribution to the city, but also the failure of the state to guarantee their well-being. The reference to tax payment is then also a way to call attention to existing rights by emphasizing the obligations from which they should derive. It is likely that this language of rights is—just as for the reference to text-based rights—also used and implemented by social movements to legitimate their actions, and not something that automatically developed among its participants.

Having examined the existence of a language of rights within the squats, the following subchapter will take a closer look at another language used among the inhabitants of the squats to legitimize their participation: the language of needs.

4.2.1.2 Perceiving Rights through Needs

E eu não sabia o que significava ocupar.¹⁰⁷

The interviews have revealed that inside the *Chiquinha Gonzaga* and *Manoel Conogo* squats some inhabitants used a language of rights in the form of references to text-based and contributor rights. I have argued earlier that this language of rights is in fact an important instrument for social movements to legitimate their actions and to operate effectively in the public sphere in order to claim housing from the state. In fact, as Bernd Reiter for example states, being able to talk the “right” language is central for marginalized groups in order to achieve inclusion:

People who do not look or talk “right”—that is, people unable to reproduce elaborate language codes (...)—are kept outside. Exclusion and transformation of citizenship into a set of entitlements—accessible only to those with money, power or access to other sort of symbolic capital—have alienated the common people from democracy in Brazil and elsewhere.¹⁰⁸

As the language of rights used inside the squats implies the reference to a historically specific bundle of rights and obligations (formal status) and is a practice of negotiating and claiming it (practice/process), it can also be called a language of citizenship. Hence, this language, as the interviews have shown, was deliberately implemented by the movements within the squats through educational measures—albeit with different intensities—and did not develop automatically among its participants. These educational efforts—especially observable in *Manoel Congo*—were realized through the promotion of school education, meetings, assemblies, and demonstrations—and indicate that a certain knowledge and language, such as for example a language of citizenship, must be learned, and is only accessible through education.

The fact that citizenship is something that has to be learned through formal or informal education has also been emphasized in different contexts by other scholars.¹⁰⁹ It demonstrates that citizenship knowledge cannot be taken for

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

108 Reiter, Bernd. 2013, *The Dialectics of Citizenship. Exploring Privilege, Exclusion, and Racialization*, East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, pp. 130f.

109 For example Lister, Ruth. 2008. “Inclusive Citizenship, Gender and Poverty. Some Implications for Education for Citizenship”, *Citizenship Teaching and Learning*, 4 (1): 3–19; Kabeer, Naila. 2002. “Citizenship and the Boundaries of the

granted and that it is therefore necessary to focus on the individual's understanding and acquisition:

In any case, formal education is not the only means by which definitions of self and others are challenged and transformed. The various ways in which people acquire knowledge and information about their status and rights, about the capacity to reflect on their situation, to question it and to act on it are all ways of "learning" citizenship (...). How people view themselves, how they view the issue of citizenship, the processes by which they acquire these views and what account for changes in their views which promote their agency as citizens are some of the questions that research might address.¹¹⁰

As we have seen in section 4.1.1, most of the squats' inhabitants lacked education, or had only attended school for a few years, and therefore had not really benefited from formal education. In this reading, the MNLM then also took over the state's responsibility to educate its citizens about their rights and further opportunities in society.

However, the interviews in the squats also revealed that despite these educational efforts, not only did not all of the inhabitants use a language of citizenship, but even when this language was to some extent adopted by the inhabitants this did not necessarily go hand in hand with an understanding of its content. It turned out that it apparently needed time and some kind of continual supervision to not only adopt, but also internalize a citizenship vocabulary, such as a language of rights.¹¹¹ For some of the inhabitants a language of citizenship

Acknowledged Community. Identity, Affiliation and Exclusion", *IDS Working Paper* (171): 32.

110 Kabeer 2002, *Citizenship and the Boundaries*, p. 32.

111 Interestingly the fact that not all participants possess citizenship knowledge is not much emphasized by most scholars and often only mentioned as an aside. James Holston for example admits for his case study only in a small footnote: "That it is generally only the most active members of neighborhood organizations who exhibit the competence of law talk is beside the point for my arguments about new citizenship. Although the rank and file typically do not understand the complex legal reasoning involved and are unable to produce it, they refer problems to those who do—namely, their community leaders and attorneys—rather than express their frustrations violently. Neighborhood leaders and archives constitute a collective resource that residents as a group construct and utilize individually and collectively when necessary. Thus, law talk among them is publicized, generalized, and becomes public knowledge" (Holston 2008, *Insurgent Citizenship*, p. 348). I do not agree with Holston on this point and find it highly problematic to relativize this fact.

was apparently not their “natural” way of talking about their participation in the squats, and could not explain their feelings of being entitled to occupy empty buildings. Hence, if we want to take the heterogeneity of the actors involved into account and not only focus on the dominant discourses—especially when analyzing a citizenship “from below”—we must also include the voices of the inhabitants who did not, or did not exclusively,¹¹² use a language of rights; but what other language, then, did the interviewees use to explain their participation in the squats?

Talking with the inhabitants about text-based rights revealed a central attribute regarding the perception and importance of citizenship in their everyday lives. Their way of talking about the Constitution reflected the lived experiences of a differentiated citizenship, and demonstrated the scant impact and relevance that formal rights in Brazil still have with regard to the daily lives of people affected by poverty. When the interviewees were asked directly about the constitutional right to housing and its meaning, it turned out that there existed a clear awareness and knowledge among the inhabitants about the discrepancy between the written law and its implementation in practice. They expressed this knowledge for example in the following ways:

Isso aí é num papel, né. Eles colocam uma coisa assim num papel que tudo mundo tem direito a moradia mas se você for olhar quantas pessoas (...) ou seja quem tem direito a moradia [é] quem tem mais dinheiro. Então se você tem mais dinheiro, se você já veio de uma família já mais estruturada, já [há] mais tempo (...) você tem o direito a uma moradia digna. Como você não veio, como sua família [é] pobre, é difícil você ir construindo, você vai caminhando mas não é tudo de uma vez. Assim o direito fica meio isolado né, só pra uns e não pra outros.¹¹³

Eu acho que eu não tenho direito à Constituição, direito a moradia eu não tenho, porque nunca tinha moradia. Eu vivo aqui porque não tenho pra onde ir.¹¹⁴

Doing so means in my opinion to ignore the understanding of a big part of the participants and to focus again only on leadership discourses, which ultimately gives an inaccurate, or at least one-sided impression of how citizenship is experienced in everyday life.

112 As mentioned before, the inhabitants often mixed arguments.

113 Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 29-year-old man, 11.03.2011.

114 Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 29-year-old woman, 21.05.2011.

E existe uma lei no Brasil que você, todo cidadão brasileiro, tem direito a moradia, né, à educação e saúde e trabalho. É que a gente vê, na nossa volta aqui assim. Que isso é só por escrito mas na real mesmo é mentirosa.¹¹⁵

O governo tem que dar moradia, educação, saúde. E segurança! Agora o presidente da República criou ainda mais uma: alimentação. Não cumpriu nenhuma até hoje ... para a gente não cumprir, se não for brigando, botando o povo na rua, brigando por esse direito. Para já estar na Constituinte isso. Não precisa brigar para fazer cumprir.¹¹⁶

Eu achava que era simplesmente pessoas que ... moravam. Eu não tinha noção que era um movimento social que reivindicava um direito das pessoas. Tem direito (...) porque uma coisa que no papel tem, mas na prática não acontece. Então, se você não for pra rua, se você não denunciar (...) parece que não acontece.¹¹⁷

Even though the nature and extent of the interviewees' understanding regarding the Constitution varied (see previous section), all inhabitants shared the experience and awareness of being excluded from access to basic needs, such as housing, work, and healthcare, and therefore felt that the law had little or no impact upon or validity in their everyday lives.¹¹⁸ Thus, the lack of access to basic needs became a central point of reference during the interviews and was repeated on numerous occasions. When talking about how the inhabitants had come to engage in the squats, it turned out that it had been mainly due to personal necessity—which was caused by a *de facto* exclusion from constitutional social rights in their daily lives in the city, and also that the improvements they experienced after moving to *Manoel Congo* and *Chiquinha Gonzaga* had reflected their longing to have their basic needs met (see section 4.1.2).

Hence, to legitimate their participation in the occupation of the buildings, most of the interviewees—regardless of whether they had been formerly engaged in citizenship activities or not—consistently used a language of needs to explain why they felt entitled to do so. In this reasoning the squats then became less a political project, and more a practical opportunity for its inhabitants to have a better life and access to their city:

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

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

117 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with a 25-year-old woman, 16.05.2011

118 This was stated independently of having been formerly engaged in citizenship activities or not.

Porque a necessidade me obrigou. Eu ia morar aonde, na rua? Ia ficar na rua? Entendeu. Eu não tinha outra opção. Pagar aluguel eu não podia. O companheiro no hospital. Os filhos não trabalhavam. Se fosse hoje eu não precisaria. Porque os meus filhos já estão grandes, trabalham, podem pagar um aluguel. Eu vou abandonar? Depois de sete anos de luta?¹¹⁹

Eu acho justo ... o que eu entendo, né? Eu acho justo porque é melhor do que a gente estar debaixo de uma marquise, não é? Você chega aí na rua, você vê tanta gente aí debaixo das marquises aí. Dormindo aí no relento ... sem ter um teto, sem ter um canto para viver.¹²⁰

Para quem não conhece uma ocupação, e diz que não deveria existir, tem que entender um pouco o processo de concentração de riquezas desse país, e de concentração de ver quais são os valores para você morar nesse país. Ninguém aqui tem condições para morar aqui perto. Tem que pagar dois mil reais! 2.500. Que o aluguel está assim, exorbitante. Então recebendo 505 do estado, como salário mínimo (...). A gente estuda, a gente trabalha, a gente transforma, gente como todo mundo, trabalhador do dia a dia, precisou morar num lugar fixo que tivesse mais possibilidades como no Centro. Então a moradia é direito de todos. E se ela é direito de todos, ela não pode estar só limitada a alguns morarem há três horas do Centro e outros morarem a dez minutos do Centro. Por isso que a nossa luta não pára. Porque a gente mora no Centro. (...) a gente está aqui perto de tudo. Só (...) tem um monte de gente que está longe de tudo (Rir). Por isso que a gente ainda continua na luta, trabalhando, e dizendo que colocar as famílias dando casa, lá para, sei lá ... longe. Não vai mudar a vida das pessoas. Elas lá não têm emprego, essas pessoas lá não tem escola, não têm saúde, não têm as possibilidades básicas do Centro. (...) E a ocupação Manoel Congo, e outras ocupações que tem no Centro, são ocupações de trabalhadores que precisam mesmo, que são organizados e construíram a ocupação. E estão coordenando ela até hoje.¹²¹

For the inhabitants, their needs thus constituted a major factor influencing their engagement in citizenship activities, as well as for their legitimization. They perceived their right to occupy in terms of meeting their individual basic needs¹²² and thus also used a language of needs to express themselves. This language was not learned or merely reproduced—as was the language of citizenship—but

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

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

121 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with a 23-year-old man, 21.05.2011.

122 These were, for example, their need of affordable housing, healthcare and education for them and their children, work opportunities, security and transportation, as described in section 4.1.2 in detail.

rather emerged spontaneously out of the everyday life and experiences of the inhabitants, and had its concrete origins in the exclusion of the low-income population from access to basic necessities in the city (see also section 2.1.3.1).

Hence, to summarize, there existed two languages which the inhabitants fell back on when justifying participation in the occupation of the buildings: a language of rights, and a language of needs. These two languages, I argue, were not contradictory but closely related, as one had the potential to emerge out of the other. Other scholars—for example Nancy Fraser in her chapter “Struggle over Needs: Outline of a Socialist-Feminist Critical Theory of Late Capitalist Political Culture”—have also advocated a synthesis of needs and rights, instead of understanding them as a dichotomy.¹²³ She argues:

[N]eed talk functions as a medium for the making and contesting of political claims: it is an idiom in which political conflict is played out and through which inequalities are symbolically elaborated and challenged. (...) in welfare state societies needs talk has been institutionalized as a major vocabulary of political discourse. It coexists, albeit often uneasily, with talk about rights and interests at the very center of political life.¹²⁴

In her approach to the topic, Fraser identifies three interrelated axes of what she calls a “politics of needs”: First, the struggle to “deny or establish the political status of a given need,” second, “the struggle to validate the need as a matter of legitimate political concern,” and third, “the struggle over the satisfaction of the need, to secure or withhold provision.”¹²⁵ In her opinion social movements play a central role in this struggle for needs, as they are the agents that politicize previously depoliticized needs “from below.”¹²⁶

Transferring this logic to our case, we have observed the long, but ultimately successful struggle of the housing movements for the inclusion of the right to housing in the Brazilian Constitution (see section 2.1.3.1), thus succeeding in establishing the political status of a given need and also validating the need as a matter of legitimate political concern. However, that justified need claims are

123 Petchesky, Rosalind P. 2000. “Rights and Needs. Rethinking the Connections in Debates over Reproductive and Sexual Rights”, *Health and Human Rights*, 4 (2): 19; Fraser, Nancy. 1989, *Unruly Practices. Power, Discourse, and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 161-187.

124 Fraser 1989, *Unruly Practices*, pp. 161f.

125 Ibid., p. 164.

126 Ibid., pp. 171, 175.

translated into social rights¹²⁷ does not imply that those needs are therefore satisfied. There are still struggles over the satisfaction and provision of needs, for example in the form of the occupation of empty buildings, such as *Manoel Congo* and *Chiquinha Gonzaga*, in order to pressure the government to accomplish the formal right to housing in practice. Hence, needs and rights are closely related, and the squats are a good example of how a language of needs and a language of rights—just as Fraser has emphasized—coexist:

On the one hand, the case of the squats has demonstrated that the movements—especially the MNLM in *Manoel Congo*—have taken measures to educate the inhabitants about their aims and the political context of the occupations, and have thereby implemented a language of rights, which showed up in the form of a reference to text-based and contributor rights. The reference to existing legislation is much more powerful than a mere reference to the need for housing, and is an effective tool for social movements to address the government and remind it of its legal obligation to provide housing. A language of rights permits a positive self-positioning of the actors, since “the discourse of rights implies a certain inevitability of government action: in the context of a right-based claim, certain actions by government are considered illegitimate.”¹²⁸ To denounce the state’s behavior as illegitimate or even illegal has been a common way to legitimate action, as section 4.2.1.1 shows. Hence, I would argue that when movements struggle for the provision of needs which have been successfully translated into formal social rights, the use of a language of citizenship among participants becomes more likely. It enables a more effective negotiation with the state, as it implies a more political vocabulary of rights and obligations. A language of needs then transforms into a language of rights.

On the other hand, this transformation, as the case of the squats has also revealed, does not necessarily occur among all participants and in the absence of continual guidance and instruction by actors already speaking a language of rights—a language of citizenship. The fact that the inhabitants of the squats continued to speak in a language of needs also revealed the still limited impact and relevance of formal rights on their everyday lives (see above). Even though formalized as a constitutional right, people in the squats suffered on a daily basis from a lack of fulfillment of basic needs, and therefore expressed themselves in a corresponding language. In contrast to the language of rights, a language of needs emerges out of the daily lives and experiences of the inhabitants and does not have to be learned, as it reflects and forms part of their concrete reality.

127 Fraser 1989, *Unruly Practices*, p. 183.

128 Johnson, Rebecca. 2002, *Taxing Choices. The Intersection of Class, Gender, Parenthood, and the Law*, Vancouver: UBC Press, p. 160.

Thus, I argue that even though a language of rights becomes more likely after needs have converted into rights, a language of needs persists, especially when these rights are not accomplished and satisfied in practice and thus remain contested needs.

Having captured the languages the inhabitants used to frame their struggles, the following chapter will take a closer look at other ways in which the inhabitants expressed their views on their struggles for general access to basic needs in the city; that is, through their dreams, hopes, and wishes for the future—thus creating urban imaginaries.

4.2.2 “I hope for the best”: Urban Imaginaries

The city can be judged and understood only in relation to what I, you, we and, lest we forget, ‘they’ desire. If the city does not accord with those desires, then it must be changed.¹²⁹

The occupation of empty buildings in Rio de Janeiro’s city center is also an expression of how the participants imagined the urban space they live in. Their everyday experiences and narratives thus also form part of the so-called urban imaginaries which shape the patterns of inclusion and exclusion in the city, and which challenge hegemonic ideas of who belongs and who does not. These ideas—as section 2.1.3.1 has demonstrated—have also found their explicit expression in the urban structure itself, which in Rio de Janeiro was from early on marked by social segregation.

Scholars suggest that these urban imaginaries encompass not only materiality, but also the subjective perspectives of the actors themselves, their dreams, emotions, fears, memories, and wishes as part of the urban collective and individual experience.¹³⁰ As Andreas Huyssen puts it:

129 Harvey 2006, *The Right to the City*, p. 83.

130 Soto Villagrán 2013, *Zum Geschlecht (in) der Stadtforschung*, p. 195; see also Huyssen, Andreas. 2008. “Introduction. World Cultures, World Cities” in *Other Cities, other Worlds. Urban Imaginaries in a Globalizing Age*, edited by A. Huyssen. Durham: Duke University Press, p. 3; Cinar, Alev and Thomas Bender. 2007. “Introduction. The City: Experience, Imagination, and Place” in *Urban Imaginaries. Locating the Modern City*, edited by A. Cinar and T. Bender. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp. xi–xvii.

An urban imaginary marks first and foremost the way city dwellers imagine their own city as the place of everyday life, the site of inspiring traditions and continuities as well as the scene of histories of destruction, crime, and conflicts of all kinds. Urban space is always and inevitably social space involving subjectivities and identities differentiated by class and race, gender and age, education and religion. An urban imaginary is the cognitive and somatic image which we carry within us of the place where we live, work and play. It is an embodied material fact. Urban imaginaries are thus part of any city's reality, rather than being only figments of the imagination. What we think about a city and how we perceive it informs the ways we act in it.¹³¹

Thus, exercising citizenship—by, for example, participating in the occupation of empty buildings in Rio de Janeiro's city center as a response to the lack of housing in Brazil—also shapes and forms part of the urban imaginary, and *vice versa*. As defined earlier, citizenship is both a formal status and a social practice, and thus we are able to focus not only on the dominant state discourses, but also on the “performative dimension of membership which define the meanings and practices of belonging in society”¹³²—that is, also on the meanings and practices in the city, which—as discussed in section 2.1.3—is one of the many arenas from which the nation-state is shaped and *vice versa*. Focusing on the performative dimension of membership thus means incorporating the views and also voices of excluded social actors (see section 2.1.1). These actors express their views on the struggles for general access to basic needs in the city in different ways, such as for instance through their dreams, hopes, and wishes for the future, and also construct by this means a vision of a city they want to live and build their futures in. Through their engagement in citizenship, they thus participate in the urban imaginary. Hence, in order to learn more about these urban imaginaries, we will next take a closer look at the inhabitants' perspectives—their dreams, hopes, and wishes—regarding future politics and their future private lives.

4.2.2.1 Imagining Future Politics

The interviews were conducted at a point in time when Dilma Rouseff, from the Worker's Party (*Partido dos Trabalhadores*, PT), had just become president of Brazil.¹³³ When the inhabitants were asked about their expectations of this new government, they expressed their views basically in three ways: first, they referred to their wishes for the provision and fulfillment of basic needs; second,

131 Huyssen 2008, Introduction, p. 3

132 Holston et al. 1999, *Cities and Citizenship*, p. 200.

133 She was president of Brazil from the 1 January 2011.

they expressed their general hopes that the new government would “do better”—that is, their hope for better governance in general—and third, they articulated their skepticism and distrust regarding a possible change in their living conditions through politics.

As we know from previous chapters, the interviewees suffered from limited access to basic necessities in the city. As a consequence, during the interviews they frequently expressed their wishes and expectations that the new government would care more about the provision and fulfillment of these basic needs. They brought up their longing for more healthcare, education, work, decent salaries, and housing. Additionally, especially for the women in the squats, the lack of access to good education for their children constituted a major concern.

O que eu esperava dela? Esperava que melhorasse muita coisa. Nas escolas, na saúde. Na moradia digna. Moradia então ... acho que para mim esses são os três pontos que eu acho que falta melhorar muito aqui, sabe? Educação, saúde e moradia. (...) Mas assim, se a gente conseguisse ter uma saúde decente, uma moradia decente, uma escola para a gente e os nossos filhos, para a gente estudar, sabe?¹³⁴

Um Brasil melhor. Que ela cuide mais da escola, da educação, saúde, que os nossos hospitais estão um caos, né? Nossas escolas também. Esperamos mais emprego para o povo né? Uma cidade melhor, né? (...) A saúde no Brasil é terrível. Você não tem condições de pagar um plano de saúde. O plano de saúde é caríssimo. Se você for colocar só você não dá, você tem que botar a sua família! Porque toda a sua família precisa. Então sai muito caro. Então a gente precisa de uns hospitais dignos, coisa boa, onde você pode entrar, ser bem atendida.¹³⁵

However, not all of the interviewees identified concrete needs, and many of them also expressed their expectations in a less specific manner. They articulated these expectations mainly in the form of a general hope that the new government would “do better”—a hope for better governance that would finally address and change their living conditions:

A gente espera muita coisa dela. Que ela dê uma continuidade, que faça melhor. A gente espera que ela faça melhor. Vamos ver como é que vai ficar porque a gente já está no cinco mês do ano e eu não estou vendo nada acontecendo aí não. Inclusive tenho ouvido falar muito mal dela. Em várias questões aí.¹³⁶

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

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

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

Ah, eu espero melhorias, né? Vamos ver o que ela tem aí a fazer pelo povo.¹³⁷

Eu espero que faça um governo bom. Espero que ela saiba liderar, né? Eu espero que seja um governo bom. Ela tem jeito de ter o pulso firme, então...¹³⁸

O melhor. Que ela saiba realmente governar esse país.¹³⁹

Que o Brasil melhore 100%.¹⁴⁰

Their hope that the new government would “do better” demonstrated a clear dissatisfaction among the inhabitants with the existing politics and its impact on their everyday living situation. Even though most of them referred in a positive way to the former president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (Lula), they agreed that his efforts to address the problems of the low-income population had not been sufficient. But despite their disappointment and dissatisfaction regarding former politics, the articulation of a certain hope also demonstrated that they had not completely lost their trust and belief in politics and its ability to finally bring about a real change in their living conditions.

However, this trust and optimism was not observed among all of the inhabitants, and in many other cases confidence in politics had faded. Many interviewees also expressed their skepticism and distrust regarding the ability and will of the government to bring about real changes for the low-income population. Interestingly, these statements were mainly recorded among those inhabitants who had already been active in citizenship activities for a long time. They explained their lack of belief in change in much greater detail than the other inhabitants did when describing their hopes, and often elaborated on their previous personal experiences with politics. In their opinion, it was corruption, the strong influence of the interests of the upper class and foreign investors, or just other political priorities that prevented the government from initiating fundamental changes in politics directed towards the low-income population:

Eu não espero muito desse governo não. Eu sei que ela é uma mulher que vai trabalhar, eu espero que ela realmente faça esses projetos dos que ela tá falando, aí com a questão da desigualdade, da desigualdade social do Brasil. A questão da juventude que ela fala muito nessa questão dos jovens. A questão dos micro-créditos para desenvolvimento de geração

137 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with a 55-year-old woman, 27.04.2011.

138 Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 35-year-old woman, 11.03.2011.

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

140 Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 50-year-old woman, 11.03.2011.

de renda mais popular. Para as classes mais baixas. Mas eu não espero grandes coisas do governo dela não (...). É um desafio para Dilma. Mas não tenho a ilusão de ela fazer um grande governo não. Com a turma que ta aí, com essa questão partidária que ta aí, com a quantidade de empresários, de políticos sujos que estão lá no Planalto, na câmara de deputados e do senado. Aqui do lado.¹⁴¹

E o que você espera da política dela? Alguma esperança especial? Não tenho não. A única coisa que eu espero é que nós tenhamos força para lutar contra ela nas besteiras que ela já vem fazendo. Sempre a gente tem a esperança da pessoa voltar atrás, né? (...) Mas eu tenho a Dilma como uma tecnocrata, fria, desenvolvimentista, sabe? Que acha que nós realmente vamos para o primeiro mundo, sem parar para pensar que a minoria do Brasil vai para o primeiro mundo e a maioria vai ficar aqui passando fome do mesmo jeito. E ela gosta muito de política compensatória, gosta muito de esmola, não tem comprometimento para mudanças estruturais, porque isso é outra visão de estado que não é o estado mais democrático, o trabalho em função da emancipação do povo, ela já faz as coisas, já fazia antes quando estava na Casa Civil, já fazia as coisas contra a organização do povo. (...) em nenhum momento ela abriu alguma discussão aqui para os movimentos sociais mesmo sabendo que tinha movimentos nacionais aqui que faziam parte do sistema de desenvolvimento urbano junto com o Ministério das Cidades. Ela passou por cima de tudo. Assim foi em vários outros estados, ela fez as alianças: Eduardo Paes e Sérgio Cabral, ela e Lula, fizeram as alianças em detrimento de todas as angústias que os movimentos passam, no estado, no capital. (...) Ah, ela é ex-militante de esquerda, durante a ditadura militar. Isso para mim também... eu acho que é muito importante para museu, para passar o momento histórico, mas nós não vivemos só de história. Basta ter sido um dia quando era juvenzinha, gostava de adrenalina. Depois pode rever os conceitos, e ela reviu os conceitos.¹⁴²

Certainly, their trust in the government had faded as a result of their own ongoing and daily experience of exclusion from basic necessities, and their personal disappointment with this situation. Additionally, their active engagement in a social movement had probably made them more sensitive to and aware of the dimensions of social injustice around them and—especially in the case of some of the coordinators—also of the difficulties involved in achieving real changes and the implementation of policies when negotiating with the government.

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

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

However, their disappointment and their distrust in politics had not prevented them from getting involved in the squats—to negotiate their citizenship—and had perhaps even fostered their participation. In fact, as section 4.1.2 shows, particularly the interviewees who had already been engaged in citizenship activities before *Manoel Congo* and *Chiquinha Gonzaga* had in addition to issues of necessity, also indicated a political motivation for their participation. The conviction that the government would not improve their situation may also have motivated them to “take their fates into their own hands” and to adopt more radical measures in order to escape being at the government’s mercy. This conviction could also be read in the statements of some of the longstanding politically engaged inhabitants:

Não espero muita coisa não. O que nós aqui no Rio de Janeiro, a gente quer mais é luta, né. A gente tem que mostrar que tem que arrancar algumas decisões na luta. Para o nosso entendimento é continuísmo do governo Lula. Nada mudou na estrutura, a nível nacional. Nada mudou.¹⁴³

Eu acho que a Dilma não vai fazer nada pela gente (Rir). Eu acho que também nem gente tem que esperar que político faça alguma coisa pra gente. A gente tem que lutar (...).¹⁴⁴

In summary then, the inhabitants expressed their wishes and expectations that the new government would care more about the provision and fulfillment of basic needs. Their views on future offered by politics thus again clearly reflected the unequal access of the low-income population to the benefits of the urban space. While some inhabitants continued to at least hope for changes through the government, others had lost confidence and no longer believed in the future politics. Hence, the fact that existing legislation and thus also politics had so far had no impact upon or validity in their everyday lives was also reflected in their discussions of future politics.

But the inhabitants’ imaginations of an urban space in which its benefits would be equally accessible for all of its inhabitants also carried the potential for change, as it could foster the conviction to take action—to engage in citizenship—and thus to challenge dominant excluding practices and produce counter-imaginaries of the city, attempting to overcome its social segregation.

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

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

4.2.2.2 Imagining Future Life

The inhabitants not only articulated their hopes and wishes regarding future politics, but also talked about their personal dreams for the future. All interviewees continued to dream about a better life for themselves and their families. The dreams they talked about were mostly related to the issues of housing, work, and education—that is, again, to basic needs. Often they articulated not just one, but a combination of these three wishes, as the fulfillment of one of them was very much related to the others. Without housing, for example, access to healthcare, education, and work, becomes much more difficult or even impossible, and *vice versa* (see also section 2.1.3).

Housing was still an important topic in the life of the inhabitants. This was due to their fear of being evicted, and the continuing insecurity they therefore felt from not knowing if they would be able to stay permanently in the squats. Thus, some interviewees expressed their wish to be able to stay there in the future, and that the related—and at the time of the interviews, still unresolved—problems regarding the squats, such as the beginning of construction work, would finally be resolved. Besides their desire for security, the wishes of the inhabitants that the renovation of the run-down buildings would begin also reflected their hope to be able to improve their living conditions in the squats, which—as we have learned in chapter 3—were still challenging and precarious.

[Q]ue a gente tenha o nosso espaço para a gente não ter que ficar levando louça para lá, trazendo louça para cá, indo para o banheiro para lá. E geralmente o banheiro está ocupado. Então agora é a obra que está também, sabe?¹⁴⁵

Ah, sobre a ocupação, eu queria muito que esse dinheiro saísse e reformasse, que a gente vivesse com segurança. Como já te falei. Porque eu tenho muito medo, do negócio, mais pelos meus filhos. Esse negócio da gente não ter nem uma segurança, então se fizer a reforma, que nem eles falam que vão fazer, a gente vai ter uma segurança. Porque não vai ficar desse jeito, que vai ser inspecionando esse prédio. Só vai morar se ficar segurando.¹⁴⁶

The challenges the inhabitants faced inside the squats were also reflected by the wishes of some of the interviewees to be able to leave the squat in the long term, and to be able to have a house on their own (“*ter uma casa própria*”). When telling me this dream, they sometimes laughed at themselves, painfully aware that it would probably never come true.

145 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with a 55-year-old woman, 27.04.2011.

146 Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 35-year-old woman, 11.03.2011.

Eu ter uma casa (Rir). Meu sonho é ter uma casa! Ter uma casa! Que eu possa abrigar eu, meus filhos, meus netos. Minha! Isso aqui não é meu. Na verdade isso aqui não é meu. Não tenho nenhum documento que prove que é meu. Que eu possa bater no peito: é meu. Eu comprei, eu ganhei. É meu, está no meu nome aqui. Não posso. Nunca falo que isso é meu. Isso aqui é emprestado. (Rir) Eu moro emprestado.¹⁴⁷

O que eu queria mesmo hoje era uma casa maior. Assim, tudo bem, apartamento para criança é ruim porque não tem onde brincar, mas assim: porque aqui a gente não tem privacidade. Nem eu, nem as crianças. De ter um quarto. Porque por mais que você não tenha um lugar para brincar, mas se a criança tem um quarto, vai para o quarto dele. Então as crianças não tem. Ai hoje o que eu mais queria, hoje, era ter um canto maior para viver com os meus filhos. Mas não longe do Centro.¹⁴⁸

The inhabitants also wished for more financial stability and work. We have seen in section 4.1.1 that most of the inhabitants were working in the informal sector, and therefore also in the lowest-paying sectors of employment. Their wishes to get a job or a better salary were thus always related to the desire to be able to improve their living conditions in general, to being able to afford a better life.

Ter uma casa própria, um trabalho digno, salário decente, que nem o estudo, que é o principal, eu não tenho, né? Mas eu espero uma vida melhor.¹⁴⁹

Meu sonho ... eu quero montar meu negocio, comprar um local pra sair daqui com a minha filha, entendeu?¹⁵⁰

Women and men in the squats almost always referred, when talking about their dreams for the future, to the dreams they had for the futures of their children or grandchildren, which essentially involved the latter being able to have a better future and life than they had themselves. Hence, their wish for better housing and work was often related to the desire to be able to offer their children a better life and especially a better education. The interviewees often emphasized that they had not had the opportunity for a good education for themselves, but hoped to make it possible for their children. This wish was not only expressed in *Manoel Congo*, where, as we know from section 3.2.1, the inhabitants had been sensitized to the importance of education, but also in *Chiquinha Gonzaga*. The

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

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

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

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

knowledge that education could make a difference to the future of their children was expressed in their statements:

Ah, para mim eu quero ter um lugar sossegado. Para morar. Quero ter um lugar sossegado. Dar estudo para os meus netos. Eles terem um futuro melhor né. Um futuro que eu não tive. Quero que eles tenham um futuro melhor. Que tenham estudo bom. E cheguem aos 18 anos, terminem a faculdade, com 19, 20. E ter um emprego bom deles. Eu quero é isso.¹⁵¹

Ah eu acho que para mim não tem muita coisa, né. Para mim é continuar vivendo do jeito que eu to vivendo. Mas pelo menos ver os meus filhos ingressando numa universidade, entendeu? Tendo ... ah, um dos objetivos de eu ter vindo para cá é por uma questão de necessidade é sim. Só que também lá em cima onde eu morava os colégios são péssimos. E um dos motivos de estar vindo para cá é estar dando a oportunidade para meus filhos de estudar num colégio melhor. De amanhã terem condições de passar minimamente nivelados numa universidade, e seguirem a vida deles não sofrendo tanto igual a mim. Eu já sofri muito!¹⁵²

Eu não sonho muito alto. Agora com os meus netos que estão começando agora a vida, seria uma educação legal.¹⁵³

Talking about dreams and wishes for the future usually did not involve talking much about self-realization. As the quotes have demonstrated, the inhabitants' primary goal was to achieve a decent life for themselves and their families. When it came to the topic of education, only a very small number of the inhabitants expressed a desire to go back to school or university themselves. These were mostly interviewees in *Manoel Congo*, and were those who had already been active in social movements for a long time, or who were even active in coordinator positions. It is therefore very likely that they had also already been in contact with certain "education-promoting structures"¹⁵⁴ which had encouraged this self-realization.

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

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

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

154 For the importance of education, see also section 4.2.1 and 4.3.4.

Eu tenho um sonho pessoal. Meu sonho agora, no momento, é passar na prova da Ordem dos Advogados, estou estudando para isso. E poder fazer um mestrado e depois um doutorado.¹⁵⁵

Pessoal, assim ... eu tenho vontade de fazer história, fazer uma faculdade de história, trabalhar em pesquisa. Até porque eu gosto muito de história, a própria história da minha família, pela própria história do mundo, no caso do Brasil, dos movimentos sociais da minha origem, que é africana. Então a minha realização pessoal seria essa. Uma dela né.¹⁵⁶

Assim, o meu sonho ... você tem os sonhos pessoais e os sonhos para (Rir) todos. O meu sonho pessoal, eu tenho muita vontade de terminar a minha faculdade e fazer o meu mestrado. Eu gosto muito de literatura, então eu queria fazer mestrado em literatura. Esse é o meu sonho pessoal.¹⁵⁷

However, perhaps their former engagement was not the only reason for these dreams of self-realization. In the course of the interviews I began to wonder whether their participation in the squats—their engagement in citizenship—had somehow affected their dreams and wishes for the future. Approximately half of the interviewees told me that this was not the case—that their dreams had always been and remained the same—whereas the other half admitted some changes, for example due to the fact of having a place to live now, or feeling they were being more realistic about their futures. The most interesting change some of the interviewees—both women and men—mentioned was the emergence of a new self-confidence they had gained due to their participation and experience of success in occupying the buildings. They reported feeling much stronger, more confident, capable, and hopeful about achieving things and making changes in their future lives.

Eu acho me deu mais força ainda de lutar cada vez mais que eu tenho a oportunidade de sonhar mais alto ainda. A ocupação me deu a oportunidade de sonhar mais alto.¹⁵⁸

Eu acho que fiquei uma pessoa um pouco mais dura, forte. Sinto mais coragem.¹⁵⁹

Tive mais garra para tentar conquistar, para sonhar mais (...).¹⁶⁰

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

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

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

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

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

Não, ganhou mais força ainda ... a ocupação me deu mais um ... na dimensão da minha vida me deu uma outra segurança. Que é a segurança de um teto. O que eu não tinha! Tinha um teto para construir a minha família, então me deu essa segurança de hoje estar tentado para a família que estou construindo.¹⁶¹

Mudou. Mudou para melhor. Porque é tanta coisa que a gente quer, para a vida da gente. E na ocupação você consegue.¹⁶²

Hence, even though citizenship had not changed their dreams fundamentally, at least in some cases it had influenced their self-perceptions and had encouraged the inhabitants to continue dreaming of a better future.

In summary then, the interviews have demonstrated that the inhabitants' dreams for the future were also dominated by needs. They imagined a life in the city in which their basic needs would be met in order to improve their living conditions, and thus be able to live decent lives and be able to guarantee their children a better future. Hence, they dreamt of reliable shelter, work, and education, not only for themselves but for their families. Their dreams involved little self-realization or political activism. Only when it came to education did inhabitants who had been active for a long time express some self-interest. Most notably, in some cases their engagement in citizenship seemed to have led to a greater self-confidence and sense of security with respect to facing and resolving difficulties in the future.

4.2.3 Preliminary Summary

The interviews with the inhabitants have demonstrated that when talking about citizenship it is important to consider the individual experiences and understandings of the people involved. Even though from an academic point of view it seems adequate to frame the struggles for housing within the concept of citizenship, we cannot assume that in practice it has the same importance for the affected people.

On an analytical level, the concept of citizenship, when defined as a formal status and practice, is able to detect the “blind spots” and uncover the concrete patterns of inclusion and exclusion within the nation-state. By looking not only at rights in theory, but also at people's ability to exercise these rights in practice,

160 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with a 25-year-old woman, 16.05.2011.

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

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

the gap between formal and substantive citizenship becomes obvious, and one can observe exactly how rights are configured and in what ways people try to shape and negotiate their inclusion (see section 2.1). Citizenship then allows us not only to focus on dominant discourses, but also to examine the “performative dimensions of membership which define the meanings and practices of belonging in society”¹⁶³ and thus to directly incorporate the views and voices of excluded social actors, which are important agents in the creation of a citizenship “from below.” As a consequence, an analysis of citizenship should then also seek to include the understandings and construction of citizenship of precisely these actors. By this means we are able to learn more about mechanisms of exclusion within the nation-state and how to integrate the concerns of marginalized actors into politics to a greater extent. Jones et al. correspondingly assume “that a more nuanced understanding of how poor and excluded groups interact with the state has much to offer policy makers and development practitioners interested in questions of state building and governance, especially in the context of a fragile peace.”¹⁶⁴

On the concrete level of interaction—at which the practices of citizenship are lived and experienced on a daily basis—the actors develop their own language to describe their struggles. The case of the *Chiquinha Gonzaga* and *Manoel Congo* squats has shown that the inhabitants used both a language of rights and a language of needs to describe and legitimate their engagement in citizenship activities in Rio de Janeiro’s city center. It turned out that the language of rights was used and implemented by the housing movements as an important instrument to legitimate their actions and to effectively operate in the public sphere—to effectively address the government and enforce their interests on a political level. Even though the inhabitants did not explicitly refer to the concept of citizenship, they argued in its margins, as the language of rights used in the squats implied reference to a formal status, and constituted a practice of negotiating and claiming this status (practice/process). Thus, a language of rights can, from a theoretical point of view, also be called a language of citizenship.

However, as the interviews have also revealed, this language of citizenship did not develop automatically among the inhabitants of the squats, but did so due to the active educational measures undertaken by the housing movements. These movements assume the responsibility of state institutions to educate citizens

163 Holston et al. 1999, *Cities and Citizenship*, p. 200.

164 Jones, Nicola, Binod Bhatta, Gill Gerard, Sara Pantuliano, Hukum Bahadur Singh, Deepak Timsina, Shizu Uppadhaya, and David Walker. 2009. “Governance and Citizenship from Below. Views of Poor and Excluded Groups and their Vision for a New Nepal”, *Overseas Development Institute Working Paper* (301): vii.

about their rights and further opportunities in society. They thereby also create a vision of how citizenship should be understood and practiced. However, the adoption of this language by the inhabitants did not always go hand in hand with an understanding of it, especially not if continual supervision was lacking over time, as in *Chiquinha Gonzaga*. Thus, an engagement in citizenship activities may, but does not necessarily, lead to a stronger sense of rights or a political understanding of them. Apparently, for the inhabitants of the squats a language of citizenship was thus not their “natural” way of talking about their participation, and could not fully explain their feelings of being entitled to occupy empty buildings.

Instead, the inhabitants perceived their right to occupy often through their individual basic needs, and correspondingly also used a language of needs to express themselves. This language was not learned or merely reproduced—as the language of rights was—but emerged automatically out of the everyday lives of the inhabitants, which were characterized by the experience of exclusion from access to basic necessities, such as housing, education, and healthcare, in the city (see also section 2.1.3.1). It turned out that the inhabitants of the squats were painfully aware of the discrepancy between formal and substantive citizenship. They expressed the limited nature of their citizenship through their awareness of being excluded from access to basic necessities, and the feeling and knowledge that the written law had little or no impact upon and validity in their everyday lives. The case of the inhabitants is thus also a concrete illustration of how those in Brazil who possess formal state membership can nevertheless be excluded from social, civil, and political rights, and instead experience the results of a historically rooted differentiated citizenship (see section 2.1.2).

Hence, languages of rights and needs coexisted inside the squats. They did not contradict each other, but were closely related, since one—the language of rights—had the potential to emerge out of the other—the language of needs; and both contained the demand for change. But, as rights were not accomplished and satisfied in practice, they remained contested needs and were also expressed as such. For many inhabitants, then, the squats became less a political project and more a practical opportunity to have a better life and improved access to the city. Thus, the participants’ occupation of empty buildings in Rio de Janeiro’s city center—that is, their engagement in citizenship activities—is also an expression of how they imagine the urban space in which they live and want to construct their futures. Their everyday experiences and narratives form part of the so-called urban imaginaries which shape the patterns of inclusion and exclusion in the city and challenge hegemonic ideas of who belongs and who does not. Urban imaginaries encompass the subjective perspectives of the actors themselves, such

as their dreams, hopes, and wishes for the future. Talking with the inhabitants about future politics and life revealed that their dreams and wishes were again dominated by needs. They imagined an urban space in which its benefits would be equally accessible for all of its inhabitants, and in which they would be able to live a decent life and guarantee their children a better future. Some inhabitants had lost confidence in politics and its ability to bring about real changes for the low-income population, due to their ongoing everyday experience of a historically rooted differentiated citizenship (see section 2.1.2). But in some cases their engagement in the squats had also led to more self-confidence and personal security in being able to face and resolve difficulties in the future on their own. Thus, dominant excluding practices also produce counter-imaginaries of the city, which may lead to concrete intentions to overcome social segregation and inequality, and can lead to an insurgent citizenship, contesting the historically deep-rooted formulations of citizenship (see section 2.1.3).

Having analyzed the inhabitants' understanding of citizenship, the following chapter will focus on women's engagement in the squats and its effect on the inhabitants' understanding and articulation of gender relations.

4.3 APPROACHING WOMEN'S CITIZENSHIP

Quando nós ocupamos, 80 % eram mulheres.¹⁶⁵

During my visits in the squats *Chiquinha Gonzaga* and *Manoel Congo*, it became impossible to ignore the strong presence and activism of women. Just as in other popular urban movements, women constituted an essential part of the squats, being strongly involved in their initial organization and maintenance over time (see section 2.3.2). The high number of women engaged in mobilization around housing—as well as the need for further specific research on this fact—has been noted by several scholars,¹⁶⁶ but to date only few case studies have focused on the topic.¹⁶⁷

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

166 For example Earle 2009, *Occupying the Illegal City*, p. 48; Gohn 2010, *Movimentos Sociais e Redes de Mobilizações*, p. 51; Holston 2009, *Insurgent Citizenship in an Era of Global Urban Peripheries*, p. 257.

167 These are the PhD thesis of Renato Maceo Filho (Macedo Filho 2010, *Onde Mora a Cidadania?*) and related articles and talks, for example Macedo Filho, Renato and Fabiane Alves Regino. 2008, *Caminhos da Cidadania. Visibilizando a Participação*

A participação das mulheres no Movimento Sem Teto está presente a cada dia na luta pela moradia nas diversas ocupações na cidade de Salvador e em outras tantas cidades disseminadas pelo Brasil afora, são vozes que precisam ser escutadas e sujeitos sociais e políticos que precisam ser visibilizados.¹⁶⁸

das Mulheres no Movimento Sem Teto – Salvador /BA. Fazendo Gênero 8 – Corpo, Violência e Poder, Florianópolis, de 25 a 28 de agosto de 2008. http://www.fazendogenero.ufsc.br/8/sts/ST28/Filho-Regino_28.pdf (04 Sep 2015); Macedo Filho, Renato and Fabiane Alves Regino. 2010, *Mulheres, Mães e Movimento Sem Teto. O Discurso Maternalista e a Construção da Cidadania.* Fazendo Gênero 9 – Diásporas, Diversidades, Deslocamentos, 23 a 26 de agosto de 2010, Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Florianópolis. http://www.fazendogenero.ufsc.br/9/resources/anais/1277867340_ARQUIVO_ArtigoRenatoMacedoeFabianeRegino.pdf (04 Sep 2015); Macedo Filho, Renato, Fabiane Alves Regino, and Raquel de Aragão Uchôa Fernandes. 2009, *A Casa como Conquista da Cidadania. A Luta de Mulheres por Habitação.* XX Congresso Brasileiro de Economia Doméstica / VIII Encontro Latino-Americano de Economia Doméstica / I Encontro Intercontinental de Economia Doméstica, 14 a 19 de setembro 2009, Fortaleza. http://www.xxbed.ufc.br/arqs/gt7/gt7_01.pdf (04 Sep 2015); master's thesis by Marianne Carle-Marsan (Carle-Marsan 2013, *Luttes de Brésiliennes pour le Droit à la ville*) and related articles and talks, for example Levy, Charmain, Anne Latendresse, and Marianne Carle-Marsan. 2013. "Movimento Popular Urbano e Mulheres no Brasil. Uma Experiência de Feminização das Políticas Públicas de Habitação", *Cadernos Gestão Pública e Cidadania*, 18 (63): 310–334; Carle-Marsan 2011, *En Mouvement pour le Droit au Logement*; and also Oliveira, Nathalia C. 2012. "As Mulheres e os Movimentos dos Sem-Teto no Brasil. Análise das Relações Sociais de Classes e Sexos", *Lutas Sociais* (29): 144–159, Souza, Helaine P. de. 2011. "Mães da Resistência. Histórias de Vida de Jovens Mães do Movimento dos Sem-teto da Bahia." Tese de Mestrado, Universidade Católica de Salvador, Salvador and Moreira, Marianna F. 2011. "'Um Palacete Assobradado'. Da Reconstrução do Lar (Materialmente) à Reconstrução da Ideia de 'Lar' em uma Ocupação de Sem-Teto no Rio de Janeiro." Dissertação de Mestrado, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro.

While so far there are no studies on gender for the *Chiquinha Gonzaga* squat, only the smaller master's thesis by Marianne Carle-Marsan (and related articles and talks) is dedicated to the topic of gender in *Manoel Congo*, and therefore analyzes the topic in much less detail and based on a smaller number of interviews (18), which in contrast to this study were exclusively obtained from women: Carle-Marsan 2013, *Luttes de Brésiliennes pour le Droit à la ville*.

168 Macedo Filho 2010, *Onde Mora a Cidadania?*, p. 139.

Thus, in response and in order to approach and document women's citizenship in the case of the squats in Rio de Janeiro, this chapter will explore the question of the reasons for their participation and also look at their daily lives and the broader impacts of their mobilization.

Hence, this study also aims to contribute to addressing the main question raised in the academic literature on women's engagement in citizenship activities (see section 2.3.2)—that is, whether one can observe a lasting impact on their lives with regard to the gendered division of labor and the gender equality within their homes. Most scholars agree that the consequences of women's engagement in popular protest can be twofold. On the one hand, their entry into and engagement in the public sphere has a significant potential for change and can therefore lead to a rupture of the—hitherto prevailing—traditional patterns of gender roles.¹⁶⁹ On the other hand, it can also lead to an extension and reinforcement of women's traditional reproductive roles and responsibilities in the private sphere, especially as they often already have to perform a double or even triple shift.¹⁷⁰ To find out to what extent similar impacts can be observed for the cases of *Chiquinha Gonzaga* and *Manoel Congo*, this chapter will, after analyzing the reasons for women's engagement, elaborate on the prevailing gender roles, norms, and relations within the squats—on the construction of a gender “from below.”

4.3.1 Women's Participation

E as mulheres elas são fundamentais. Isso aqui é uma ocupação que foi feita com mulheres. Na época os homens não vieram. Vieram elas.¹⁷¹

During the assemblies held by the inhabitants, as well as demonstrations¹⁷² and other activities related to the squats, one could frequently observe the presence of more women than men. It was they who mainly promoted the citizenship

169 Such as, for example, the case studies by Andujar 2005, *Mujeres Piqueteras*, and Schütze 2005, *Wir kämpfen um Raum*, show.

170 Jelin 1990, *Citizenship and Identity*; Molyneux 2001, *Women's Movements in International Perspective*; Flores et al. 2006, *Género, Empoderamiento y Movimientos Sociales*; Lind et al. 1996, *Gender and Urban Social Movements*; Hainard et al. 2001, *Filling the Urban Policy Breach*.

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

172 During my stay, in contrast to *Manoel Congo*, the inhabitants of *Chiquinha Gonzaga* did not participate as members of the squat at any demonstration.

activities in the squats. For example, during two of my visits to *Manoel Congo*, the preparatory meetings for the new squat *Mariana Crioula* took place (see also section 3.2.2). In order to facilitate the participation of everyone, these meetings were scheduled at night, after work time. Nevertheless, it was mainly women who came from their often distant neighborhoods to the city center in order to participate and to secure a place for themselves and their families in the new squat. Counting the participants on both occasions, at the first meeting only two out of 14 participants were men, and at the second meeting they made up only three out of 27 participants. These meetings were also organized and led by women. I was not the only one who noticed the fact that the majority of the participants were women during these meetings; at one point, the woman who had organized the meeting started to laugh, observing the participants, and called the group a *mulherada* (bunch of women).¹⁷³

My observations inside the squats, along with the narratives of the inhabitants, thus made it impossible to ignore the strong participation and presence of women.¹⁷⁴ I therefore started to include gender-related questions into my interviews in order to illuminate how the inhabitants approached the topic of women's citizenship.¹⁷⁵ The majority of the inhabitants confirmed my observations and told me that there were in fact more women than men present in the squats, and that from the very beginning they had also participated more actively:

Eu acho que as mulheres são mais participativas do que os homens. Eu acho que isso é bem visível. As mulheres são mais participativas. Os homens têm uma tendência a recuar, ou a, sei lá, desconfiar, não sei o que se passa na cabeça deles. Mas a participação feminina com certeza é maior. (...) É, a gente fica se perguntando. Tanto que quando se deu a ocupação, em sua grande maioria eram mulheres. Os maridos, poucos homens

173 Preparatory meeting of the squat *Mariana Crioula*, inside the squat *Manoel Congo*, 31.05.2011.

174 The strong presence of women in *Manoel Congo* has also been noted for example by Fornazin 2014, *Luta pela Moradia*, pp. 35f, 42; Carle-Marsan 2013, *Luttes de Brésiliennes pour le Droit à la ville*; Rodrigues da Silva 2010, *Ocupação Manuel Congo*, p. 150; Queiroz e Mello 2013, *Ramifications of the Social Housing Movements*, p. 19; Macedo Filho 2010, *Onde Mora a Cidadania?*, pp. 2f.

175 As emphasized earlier (see for example in chapter 3.2.2), not only gender, but also other social categorizations played a role in the squats. For example, many inhabitants were of Afro-Brazilian origin. But, as ethnicity did not turn out to be an important topic for the inhabitants themselves during the interviews, it is not included into the framework of this study.

vieram. Os maridos vieram depois. O meu mesmo veio depois. O da [Renata] veio depois. O da [Renata] ainda custou muito para vir. Para entender. E é uma pessoa totalmente esclarecida, formada e tal. (...) A gente tem que trabalhar muito a cabeça dos homens. Entendeu? Então pelo menos aqui existe uma resistência dos homens, as mulheres são sempre mais participativas do que os homens. Sempre foram.¹⁷⁶

Talking with me during the interviews about their own experiences and motives for participating in the occupation of the buildings, the female inhabitants also often referred to the participation and support (or lack thereof) of their partners, especially at the beginning of the squats. Not only single mothers, but very often married women too had come alone and had participated in the occupation even against the wills of their husbands, who for their part had often refused to engage.

Interestingly, it was mainly in *Manoel Congo* that women talked about this kind of personal challenge at the beginning of their participation. One of these women was Zilda. She, like many other women, revealed during our interview the conflict she had faced with her husband during and after making the decision to occupy the building.

Ele também participou da ocupação? Não. Porque ele diz que não gosta dessas coisas. Ele falava que não gostava dessas coisas não. Eu não gosto dessas coisas, eu gosto de comprar com o meu dinheiro. Eu digo: ah, mas a gente não tem. Então fica aí que eu vou embora. E fui embora. Larguei ele para trás com os meus dois filhos, meus dois filhos mais novos, né? E a minha filha na época estava separada, também estava em casa. Foi essa que veio comigo. Quando eu vim, viemos eu e ela. Aí eu deixei ele com os meus dois filhos mais novos, e ela tinha uma filha de cinco anos, aí ela foi e deixou o marido também para trás com a filha e viemos embora nós duas. Para tentar uma vida melhor, né? Com uma casinha, direitinha ... já que a minha amiga tinha me falado que era para dar um apartamento, nós viemos! (...) Aí ele disse que não vinha, não vinha, não vinha ... não queria nem me ver porque eu tinha abandonado ele com os filhos. E eu digo não, não abandonei você! Mas você está me largando! Não estou largando, nem abandonando, só estou tentando uma vida melhor para a gente. Já que ele não tinha coragem! Aí depois eu vou. Seja o que Deus quiser da minha vida. Só peço que não aconteça nada comigo. Aí vim. Deixei eles para trás e vim. Depois de seis meses, não lembro direito, sei que foi com o tempo. Aí ele veio para cá. Aí veio me visitar. Veio me visitar, aí dessa visita tá aí até hoje.¹⁷⁷

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

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

Even though her husband had refused support, she had nevertheless decided to leave him and some of her children in order to occupy the building and, as she explained, to take advantage of the opportunity for her family to “have a better life” (“*Para tentar uma vida melhor*”). The need felt by Zilda to improve her family’s living conditions was apparently so urgent that she was willing to take certain personal risks and even to sacrifice her marriage. Other women reported similar stories and pointed to initial problems and struggles with their male partners, and emphasized the important role women had played in the construction process of the squats.

Apparently women often felt more responsible and motivated to take action in order to change their families’ living conditions than their male partners did. Those women in *Manoel Congo* who had already been active and gathered experience in social movements before moving to the squat indicated that this was a common and, for them, well-known behavior of women. Leila, for instance, herself a long-term activist, reported on her experiences with women’s activism in contrast to men’s and confirmed that women—at least initially—always used to participate much more.

Eu tenho 20 anos de luta, em movimentos sociais e ocupações. No perímetro de áreas abertas, onde a gente faz barraquinho, faz barracas, e é um esforço tremendo. Quem carregava as madeiras eram as mulheres, furar buraco para botar as vigas do barraco eram as mulheres, e quem tava na luta, no confronto, era o confronto que se dava, com violência... eram as mulheres. Os homens ficavam com medo. Eu tenho vários homens que eu convenci. (...) Falei assim: olha, a sua mulher tá certa. Você pode pagar um aluguel? (...) Aí ele se convenceu, foi, mas ele falou assim: aí, depois de tempos ele falou assim: eu tinha medo. Primeiro que na minha cabeça isso era errado. E segundo que eu tinha medo. Quando via a polícia, tinha medo.¹⁷⁸

Hence, taking these observations and narratives into account, the question emerged as to why women were apparently more willing to engage in citizenship activities than men. How can we explain the strong presence and participation of women in the two squats? During our interviews and informal talks, the inhabitants revealed not only their thoughts about the reasons for women’s participation, but, as we shall see, also offered interesting insights into their understanding of gender.

In order to explain the strong presence and participation of women inside the squats, the inhabitants in some way or other referred to a gendered division of

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

labor, which allocated the task of the provision for the family and the defense and organization of living conditions to women. Hence, women's traditional responsibility in the private sphere—which also implied finding a solution to the lack of adequate housing for their families—led, as will be demonstrated below, many of the female inhabitants to engage in the occupation of and activities coordinated by the squats.

One way in which the inhabitants referred during the interviews to the existence of such a gendered division of labor was to talk about women as *chefes de família*. To be a woman *chefe de família*, as the interviews revealed, meant to them to be confronted with the difficult task of performing domestic and income-generating work at the same time—to be forced to perform a double or triple shift—often without any male support.¹⁷⁹

A mulher hoje virou chefe de família, né? É a mãe solteira, mulher que casa e se separa, e aí tem que trabalhar e cuidar de filhos, e eu acho que a mulher agora está tomando mais ... você vê hoje na Chiquinha, a maioria das famílias lá- tem homem solteiro- mas a maioria são as mulheres solteiras com filhos.¹⁸⁰

A família mudou. Nas décadas passadas, a família era formada por o marido, a mulher e os filhos. Hoje a família está diferente. A maioria das famílias, o chefe da família é a mulher.¹⁸¹

Talking about women's intense workloads and responsibilities in the domestic sphere also led some of the inhabitants to characterize women as both “mother and father.” This description provided an interesting insight into their understanding of the gender roles within the family, as such a characterization implied that there existed two separate and clearly gendered spheres of responsibilities inside one family, which now had to be fulfilled by only one person—the woman.

A maioria hoje que é chefes de família são as mulheres. São mães solteiras, separadas, que assumem a responsabilidade dos filhos, porque nós homens, (...) não temos esta responsabilidade. (...) A mulher que sustenta a família, sustenta aos filhos, crie os filhos e proveem todo necessário para uma família. (...) É mãe e pai. Justamente muita das vezes ela não tem aquele tempo de educar, de conversar, dar carinho ao filho porque ela tem que

179 For a detailed discussion of the term *chefe de família* see section 3.2.2.

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

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

prover também. A alimentação, o lazer, o vestuário da criança (...). A falta da responsabilidade do homem, do macho, que deveria estar (...).¹⁸²

The inhabitants clearly associated one of these spheres of responsibility with being female—specifically, with being a mother—and it included *inter alia* the responsibility to “educate,” to “talk,” and to “care.” The inhabitants associated the other sphere with being male—especially with being a father—and it included mainly the responsibility to “sustain their family,” that is, to provide financially. Thus, even though in their everyday lives women often had to perform both roles, the idea of a male breadwinner was present in their accounts, and the traditional spheres of responsibility were therefore mostly not questioned.

The inhabitants frequently characterized women as mothers¹⁸³ when explaining women’s strong participation in the squats. In doing so, they were drawing, on their own initiative, a strong connection between women and the task and responsibility of undertaking childcare. Thus, they were associating women mainly with the domestic sphere and were again referring to a gendered division of labor in society:

Então vamos fazer o seguinte: a mulher precisa mais por conta de ter os filhos e ela vai ter trabalho dobrado. Então elas ficam aqui. Eu acho que tem um pouco disso.¹⁸⁴

É que as mulheres tem muitos filhos. Os homens dão um jeito de viver e saem de casa, largam as mulheres cheio de filhos, mas eles não querem ficar com os filhos na rua, então (...).¹⁸⁵

E as mulheres elas são fundamentais. Isso aqui é uma ocupação que foi feita com mulheres. Na época os homens não vieram. Vieram elas. Porque a mulher brasileira ela tem muita sensibilidade. Se ela tem filho então, ela não ta pensando nela, ela ta pensando no filho, na comunidade, nos filhos das amigas, então. A vinda para cá foi um pouco isso. Essa experiência das mulheres brasileiras de quererem uma vida melhor para os seus filhos. Para os seus familiares, para os seus amigos. (...) Porque geralmente as mães são preocupadas com os seus filhos, creche, (...) o homem no Brasil, por causa da nossa sociedade machista, ele tem privilégios. Então um homem sair daqui e ir trabalhar em São Paulo e deixar a mulher aqui, é normal. Não é normal uma mulher deixar o filho com o

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

183 I will go into detail more on the topic of motherhood in section 4.3.3.

184 Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 19-year-old woman, 30.03.2011.

185 Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 38-year-old woman, 21.03.2011.

homem e ir trabalhar fora, né? Então essa forma das mulheres se organizarem também é uma forma de sustentar a sua vida. Elas acreditam mais. Quando você tem filho, você tá preocupado com o futuro. Elas tiveram essa preocupação. Pensar no filho, pensar na casa. Hoje uma família que não tem casa tá na rua! E na rua brasileira mora o perigo, mora muita gente.¹⁸⁶

As part of their fulfillment of their responsibility as mothers, it was they who had to find an affordable place to live for their families. Due to their often difficult former living conditions and their lack of access to the benefits of the city—as described in sections 4.1.1 and 4.1.2—the squats for women especially turned out to be a good opportunity to escape from distress and to offer their children a better life by providing for their basic needs in this way, such as ensuring a better education, healthcare, and housing (see section 4.1.2). Women’s main responsibility for housing, and its connection to motherhood, has also been noted in the academic literature.¹⁸⁷ For example, in his study on community mobilization in Brazil, Kevin Neuhouser argues that women’s collective mobilization resulted from their problems in obtaining the necessary resources to fulfill their role as mothers, and even goes as far to state that “women were far more willing to pay the costs of invasion because they needed houses to be mothers.”¹⁸⁸

As the quotes from the interviews also demonstrate, the inhabitants often described women’s difficult situations and need to take over responsibility as a consequence of the irresponsibility of, and their abandonment by, men. Characterizing women, for instance, as being responsible and men as being irresponsible, meant acting on the assumption of the existence of inherent and different masculine and feminine attributes and characteristics. In their statements, the female inhabitants mostly tried to explain their participation in the squats and their main responsibility for the domestic sphere as something positive that formed part of their nature as women. One of these female characteristics, which according to the inhabitants increased the probability of women’s participation in contrast to men’s, was the description of women as warriors (*guerreiras*). The interviewees thereby characterized women as strong and powerful, willing to fight for their own good:

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

187 Moser 1989, *Gender Planning in the Third World*, p. 1805; Neuhouser 1998, “If I Had Abandoned my Child”, p. 355.

188 Neuhouser 1998, “If I Had Abandoned my Child”, p. 335.

Porque, olha, eu não sei lá na Alemanha como é que é. Eu só digo uma coisa: o brasileiro, ele é muito acomodado. Eu tiro o homem brasileiro muito preguiçoso. As mulheres brasileiras elas são guerreiras, você vê que elas é que sustentam a casa. A renda maior que tem é da mulher. Porque falam: a mulher ganha menos, a mulher é mais sacrificada no campo. Ela é, ela é explorada? Ela é. Mas é ela que traz o sustento para a sua casa. Ela que vai catar papelão na rua, é ela que vai catar lixo na rua, para seu marido comer, seus filhos comerem. São elas. Entendeu? E aqui acontece muito disso: as mulheres são guerreiras: elas vão trabalhar, elas vão trabalhar na casa de Madame, elas que vão lá para fora para trazer sustento para dentro de casa. Infelizmente eu acho que é quase mundialmente também que as mulheres são muito sacrificadas. Muito, muito.¹⁸⁹

Porque as mulheres são guerreiras. Os homens ficam mais escondidos atrás das mulheres. Porque elas que dão a cara, as mulheres que falam. As mulheres são determinadas. (...) As mulheres que estão à frente do negócio aqui. Quando nós ocupamos, 80 % eram mulheres. (...) Porque os homens não têm a coragem que as mulheres têm. Os homens não têm essa coragem.¹⁹⁰

While the inhabitants described women in a positive way, ascribing to them qualities such as “fighter,” “determined,” “forward,” “courageous,” and so on, men were characterized more negatively, for instance with words such as “lazy” and “coward.”¹⁹¹ To characterize women in such positive terms allowed the interviewees to convert women’s strong participation into something positive and powerful, and not allow it to be regarded merely as an expression of their gender subordination. It offered the potential for them to portray themselves as independent and active agents who were able to take their fates into their own hands, despite the obstacles existing in their everyday lives. In this sense, for them being able to bear up and to cope with a double or triple shift was also something that could be turned into an expression of their strength, their will, and their independence from men, as well as their victimhood.

For a few of the interviewees in the *Manoel Congo* squat,¹⁹² another explanation for the fact that it was mainly women who were visible and participating in the squat was simply that the men were working outside the squat during the day, and were therefore not as present there as women. They pointed out that due to their work, men had much less time to participate—in contrast to their female partners, who normally stayed at home during the day.

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

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

191 I will go into more detail on the topic of gender stereotyping in section 4.3.3.

192 In total, six of the interviewed inhabitants.

Eu acho que as condições de tempo, de estar trabalhando num movimento social a mulher tem mais facilidade. Por não trabalhar fora. Quem não trabalha fora, o trabalho de casa te dá a oportunidade de se organizar e sair. Sai por duas ou três horas e volta e está tudo tranquilo. Agora quando trabalha fora fica difícil de se envolver direto.¹⁹³

Mas em algumas atividades, em sua maioria são mulheres. Mais por questões de trabalho dos homens. Aí vai estar cansado, pede para a mulher, para a esposa, a companheira ir. Porque tem que ter um membro da família. Não precisa estar todo o corpo familiar numa atividade. A condição do movimento aqui é que tenha pelo menos um.¹⁹⁴

On the one hand, these statements reinforced the assumption of a gendered division of labor within the families in the squats—the existence of a traditional women’s sphere (housework and childcare) and men’s sphere (paid work)—which fostered women’s participation out of their sense of domestic responsibility. On the other hand, the interviews also demonstrated that women’s work and activities in the private sphere, such as for example childcare, were valued much less, or even not valued at all, compared with activities and work in the public sphere—something that has been frequently criticized by the feminist movement (see section 2.3.1). To emphasize that women apparently had more time to participate because they were at home during the day risks failing to recognize that childcare and housework during the day are just as intense and time-consuming as men’s paid work outside their homes. Interestingly, this argument was made not only by men inside the squat, but also by women:

Mas o homem está, por exemplo, dentro daqui, eles estão trabalhando. A mulher vai para a manifestação. E ele vai para o trabalho. Alguém tem que trabalhar. Há quem não trabalhe e vai para a manifestação porque não tem trabalho. Mas a maioria que trabalha não acompanha. Mas acompanha as assembléias, igualmente são mais mulheres que homens. São. São mais mulheres.¹⁹⁵

Even though it may be true that due to a gendered division of labor women in the squats were more present there during the day, this fact is not enough to explain women’s significant participation in the squats. The men were not working outside the squat at weekends or at night, and were therefore able to participate as much at those times as their female partners. Their engagement, or lack thereof, therefore did not depend on a physical presence, but was related to a

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

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

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

gendered division of labor which allocated the responsibility for the care of housing, and therefore also for the maintenance of the squat, to women. This assumption was confirmed during one of my talks with Elena:

Aí por exemplo: Se tiver um encontro como teve ontem. Ele não pode ir. Quem foi, foi a mulher dele. E nós mulheres que estamos mais em casa. Eu por exemplo trabalho dois dias na semana e tenho o resto dos dias. Se tiver alguma coisa, por exemplo na segunda, quarta, ou quinta, eu posso ir. Já o meu marido não pode. Entendeu? (...) Se tiver, por exemplo, só no domingo que ele pode. Como teve ontem, ele foi. Então eu acho que é por conta dos horários de trabalho. Que trabalham direto! Tem mulher que não trabalha, que nem um dia na semana! Então a qualquer dia está disponível. Para ir atrás de qualquer coisa. (...) E a noite ... também realmente tem mais mulher nas reuniões. (Rir) eu acho que é porque os homens não gostam muito desse ... dessa coisinha de ... vamos falar sobre coisas domésticas. Que é o que mais sai ali. Confusãozinha que foi doméstica. Foi de casa, foi do lado do vizinho. Então eles não participam muito. O meu por exemplo, além dele não gostar por conta do tumulto que o pessoal faz, ele trabalha com cozinha, ele é cozinheiro, ele chega em casa a noite estourado. Aí quando ele toma banho, janta, morreu. Ele vai dormir, ou ... como ele tá um pouquinho acima do peso, né? (Rir) Ele chega em casa com as pernas cheias de dor. Aí toma banho e vai deitar.¹⁹⁶

When Elena started to talk about the regular meetings in *Manoel Congo* which took place late at night to facilitate everyone's participation, she had to admit that even then there were more women than men participating. The same could be observed for activities at the weekend, when men did not work outside but still participated in much smaller numbers. After admitting this fact, Elena tried to find an explanation, and ultimately justified the absence of men with reference to a gendered division of labor inside the squat. She asserted that the topics discussed during the meetings would mainly concern domestic issues, and therefore that the meetings were not interesting to men. By this means, she classified the daily issues and organization of the squat—which were discussed during these meetings—as a sort of domestic work, and therefore something that was not relevant to men, thereby implying clearly demarcated spheres. She thus presented engagement with issues in the squat as a women's task, and thereby indirectly confirmed that housing was considered mainly the responsibility of women.

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

Figure 24: Inhabitants of the squat Manoel Congo participating at demonstration on May Day 2011¹⁹⁷



In summary, my conversations with the inhabitants and my observations inside the squats revealed that there was a difference in the intensity of participation and presence between women and men. The inhabitants confirmed and emphasized women's stronger involvement and presence in the squats, and to explain it, they pointed to a gendered division of labor in which women were mainly responsible for the domestic sphere. They did so, for example, by explaining that women were *chefes de família* and mothers, or by referring to their nature as women, or to the fact that men had much less time to participate. The women in the squats, as we have learned, were willing to assume this responsibility even against the wills of their husbands or partners, who very often refused to contribute their own participation and support. Thus, one can establish that the reasons for women's participation in both squats were the same as identified by many other scholars for women's involvement in popular urban movements (outlined in section 2.3.2): their engagement in citizenship activities

197 Photograph: Bea Wittger, 2011.

was mainly motivated by practical gender interests based on a gendered division of labor in their homes which allocated the responsibility for provision for the family, and for the defense and organization of living conditions, to women.¹⁹⁸

In the following chapter, we will take a closer look at the inhabitants' daily lives and daily routines in order to find out more about the actual gender relations in the squats. This will also bring us closer to answering whether traditional patterns of gender roles, which had played a role in motivating their participation, actually prevailed, or whether their engagement in citizenship activities—their participation in the squats—had affected gender relations.

198 My analysis thus cannot confirm the findings of Renato Macedo Filho for the case of the Movimento Sem Teto in Salvador, who states: “*cabe ressaltar que a inserção na luta pela moradia para as mulheres que participam do Movimento Sem Teto, não pode ser entendida somente como “necessidade” de ter uma casa, mas também como uma possibilidade de empoderamento para essas mulheres, inseridas na luta para suprir essa necessidade. Isso porque o Movimento quando percebido como um espaço de ação coletiva e de luta política pode possibilitar às mulheres inseridas nesse espaço como protagonistas, na medida em que transitam da sua condição inicial de “desconhecimento” político, para lideranças em ocupações ou do Movimento*” (Macedo Filho 2010, Onde Mora a Cidadania?, pp. 118f). This section and section 4.1 have revealed the needs of the participants as the main reasons for their participation. The notion of a “*possibilidade de empoderamento*” was not evident from the interviews as a motivation to participate. Only a few interviewees were also motivated by political reasons, and these were only those inhabitants who had already been politically engaged before (see also section 4.1.2). As we will see in section 4.3.4, women can of course engage in leadership positions and develop on a personal level (as also outlined in section 4.1.2), but this was not the case for all women, and happened after their engagement (if they had not already been active before living in the squat). Thus, the initial decision to participate in the case of the *Manoel Congo* and *Chiquinha Gonzaga* squats, overall, had been their need.

Figure 25: Demonstration and camping at the Defensoria Pública do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, 11-12.05.2015¹⁹⁹



4.3.2 Daily Routines in the Squats: Organization and Division of Labor

E a mulher ainda participa mais ainda que o homem. Porque além de você ter as suas tarefas para fazer, ainda tem o trabalho dentro de casa, né? Ainda tem o seu trabalho dentro de casa. Você tem que arrumar a casa, tem que cozinhar.²⁰⁰

The previous chapter has shown that practical gender interests prevailed as the main reason for the engagement of women in the squats. But to learn more about

¹⁹⁹ Photograph: Bea Wittger, 2011.

²⁰⁰ Interview in *Manoel Congo* with a 53-year-old woman, 09.05.2011.

the inhabitants' understandings of citizenship and gender, it is not enough to look purely at the reasons for women's citizenship. In order to identify whether and how citizenship activities affected gender relations, we must take a closer look at the inhabitants' daily lives and routines, at the division of labor both within and outside the family in the squats. Only then will we be able to bring the impact of women's engagement in the squats to light, and determine whether traditional gender roles have changed, persisted, or were even reinforced after the occupation.

4.3.2.1 Family Life: Domestic Division of Labor

Então assim, o meu dia a dia na ocupação é: acordo, lavo, passo, cozinho, limpo e cuido de neto.²⁰¹

During my regular visits and talks in *Manoel Congo* and *Chiquinha Gonzaga* I tried to learn more about the everyday making of the private, domestic sphere of the inhabitants. In both squats, I observed that women, more than men, assumed responsibility for childcare and other daily tasks such as cleaning, cooking, and laundry. Walking around inside during my visits to the squats, I almost never observed men at the sinks cleaning dishes, doing laundry, or carrying purchases. Moreover, as already mentioned in the previous section, men were less visible inside the squats during the day than women, and to obtain interviews with the men I often had to come back at night—after their work hours—or at weekends, because they mostly worked outside the squats. Apparently, there was a women's sphere which included housework and childcare, and a men's sphere, which included paid work. The impression that I gained during my visits that there existed a gendered division of labor within the households, was then, as we will see, also confirmed during the interviews.

Private Life in *Chiquinha Gonzaga*

It turned out that in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* 11 out of the 17 women interviewed were living in the squat without a male partner. At the time of the interviews, 15 of all interviewed women had, or had had in the past,²⁰² children living with

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

202 In one case the child had died some years ago due to cancer. Before this had happened, the child had lived only with his mother. In two other cases the children had lived with their mothers during their childhood but were now grown up and living with their own families.

them at home—most of them (12 women) had at least two or more. Nine of these women were living without a male partner at the time of our interviews. Most of the female interviewees (13 out of 17) were working in the informal sector,²⁰³ generating income—as, for instance, cleaners and street vendors—on a regular or occasional basis (see Figure 26). Thus, most of the women in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* I talked to were or had been at some point in their lives *chefes de família* (see section 2.2.2). As single mothers they often had to deal with a triple shift—taking care of their children and being the main person responsible for both the household and the economic maintenance of their family. After their separation from the fathers of their children, most of these women were left alone with all the responsibility and work.

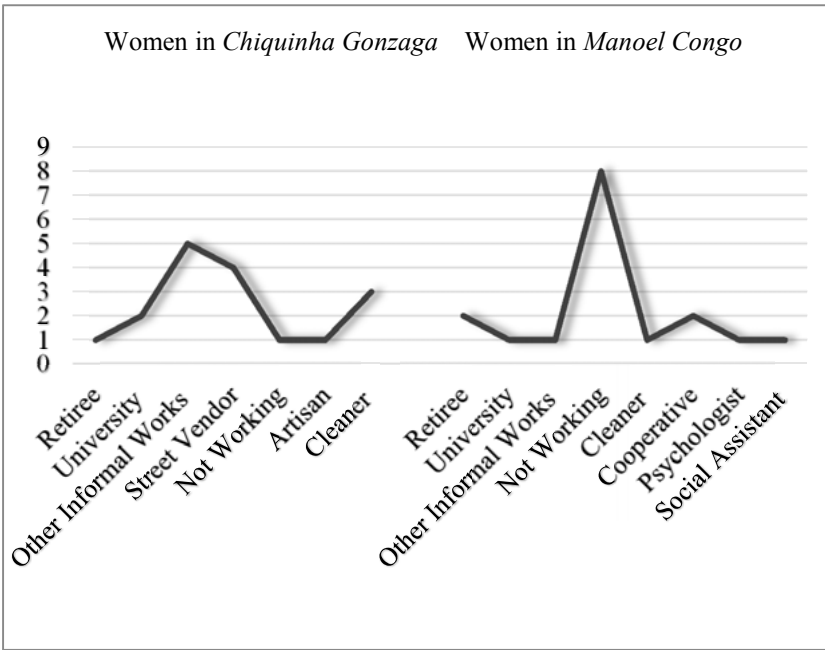
In the case of the men in the squat, the situation was different. To my knowledge, there was only one man in either squat who was a single father performing a triple shift comparable to these women. His name was Elias²⁰⁴; he was 40 years old, had two daughters—14 and 15 years old—and at the time of the interview had already been taking care of one of the girls for three years. Following his separation, his two daughters had first stayed with their mother, but after both girls had experienced abuse by their new stepfather, one of his daughters had expressed her wish to live with her father in *Chiquinha Gonzaga*. He had fought for five years for custody of his daughter before finally being able to fetch her away. When I observed at the end of our interview that he was the first man in the squats I had met who took care of his minor child alone, he confirmed my observation and told me that it was because “normally” the children stayed with their mothers and not their fathers.²⁰⁵ Childcare was thus, also in the opinion of the interviewees, a task much more related to women than to men.

203 Among the remaining four were two women studying at university, and one retiree.

204 Elias was an evangelical Christian. I will expand a bit more in section 4.3.3 and 4.3.4 on religion and how it related to gender and citizenship in the squat.

205 Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 40-year-old man, 16.03.2011.

Figure 26: Occupations of the women interviewed in the two squats²⁰⁶



The other eight men interviewed in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* were also, like Elias, mostly living without a female partner. Only two of them lived with their partner or ex-partner. At the time of the interviews, five of these men had children, and in four cases (one of them was Elias) they lived with them in the squat. But two of these four cases were men living with a female (ex-) partner, who (also) took care of the children. Besides Elias, then, only one other man was living alone with his son. In contrast to Elias' case, however, the son had already come of age (he was 22 years old), was earning his own money, and had only recently come to live with his father in the squat out of necessity. The rest of his children—six altogether—had lived or still lived with their mother.²⁰⁷

Regarding their jobs, almost all of the men interviewed in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* were, like the women, working in the informal sector. They gained

206 Own data.

207 He had six children, aged 41, 40, 38, 36, 28, and 22, and already had 14 grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

income working as, for example, construction workers and street vendors (see Figure 27).²⁰⁸

Private Life in *Manoel Congo*

In *Manoel Congo*, far fewer of the women interviewed—only six out of 17—were living without a male partner in the squat.²⁰⁹ At the time of the interviews, 13 of all interviewed women had, or had had in the past²¹⁰ children at home—most of them (11 women) at least two or more. Three of these women were living without a male partner. Among the women living with a male partner at the time of the interview, at least four had experienced being a single mother at previous stages in their lives, and therefore had also experienced what it meant to perform a triple shift. There were also fewer women among the interviewees who were working in remunerated jobs (only six out of 17).²¹¹ These women worked in the informal as well as in the formal sector on a regular or occasional basis (see Figure 26). The other eight women, who had reported not working in remunerated jobs, were in part searching for a job or had worked in the past in the informal sector. All except one were living with a male partner who was contributing to the income of the family.

Just like the women interviewed, most of the men interviewed in *Manoel Congo* were also living with a female partner (five out of seven). Only two of them were living alone in the squat. At the time of the interviews, five of these men had children, and in all cases they did not live with them, but somewhere else, with their mothers. In two of the cases in which the men had children, these men were living in the squat together with their new partners' children; meanwhile, their own children were living with their mothers—the men's ex-partners. As in *Chiquinha Gonzaga*, it seemed common that after a separation the children stayed with their mothers, who then had to take over the responsibility mostly on their own. Men's abandonment had also been mentioned by many women, when talking about the reasons for their participation in the squats (see section 4.3.1).

Depois da separação? Não. Aí já muda. Porque aqui os maridos, eles acham que largam as mulheres e largam os filhos também. Eles largam e vão dando os filhos. Então é complicado isso. Vão se distanciando. Tem muitos anos que eles não vêm o pai.

208 Only one of them was working in the formal sector, as a bus driver.

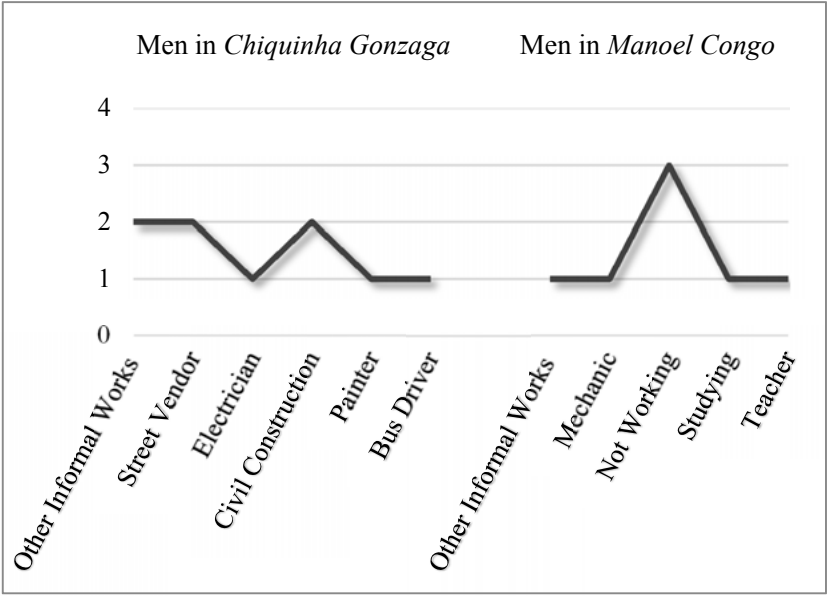
209 One of them had a steady boyfriend living outside the squat.

210 In three cases the children had lived with their mothers during their childhood but were now grown-up and living with their own families.

211 Among the remaining 11 was one woman studying at university, and two retirees.

Entendeu? Porque eles arrumam outra família, então é raro os casos (...). Muito difícil. Eles se separam da mulher e se separam dos filhos também, entendeu? Ela fica sozinha para levar isso.²¹²

Figure 27: Occupations of the men interviewed in the two squats²¹³



One thing that caught my attention in relation to men in both squats whose children were living with their mothers was how they always emphasized their financial support when talking about taking care of their children. It sounded like a justification, as if they wanted to show that they also fulfilled “their part,” which for them was mainly to take financial care of their families.

Eu pago pensão. Não mora comigo, mora com a mãe, então ... eu tenho que contribuir com a questão financeira, que é a pensão.²¹⁴

Não, não. A minha filha, a primeira ou segunda? A de 18 não mora comigo. Ela tem uma casa, de aluguel. A mãe dela até já casou de novo. (...) Mas sempre ela liga para mim, eu

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

213 Own data.

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

ligo para ela, a gente conversa. *Então você cuida dela também.* Também. Sempre mando dinheiro para ela.²¹⁵

Regarding their jobs, three out of seven of the men interviewed in *Manoel Congo* were working in the informal or formal sector. Another three were without a job, and one was studying to enter public service (see Figure 27).

Division of Everyday Domestic Labor

Listening to and watching women's daily routines in both squats showed that it was still they who assumed the main responsibility for childcare and domestic labor, such as cleaning, cooking and laundry, irrespective of whether they were living with a male partner or not. More than half of the female interviewees (19 out of 34) were also working in remunerated jobs and thus performing double or even triple shifts. They were—like many women in low-income urban households—working in the informal sector, and thus were particularly represented in the lowest-paying sectors of employment (see section 2.2.2). In order to be able to organize their daily lives, often they (had)²¹⁶ had access to an assistance network and were supported by other women, such as sisters, mothers, mothers-in-law, older female children, or even female neighbors.

Fui eu que criei sozinha! O pai não. Porque eu me separei logo e fiquei com ele. O pai nunca, nunca, nunca. Sempre fui eu. (...) A minha madrastra que sempre esteve do meu lado com ele. Que ela adora ele. Isso aí, nós duas não nos colamos muito, mas ele apoia.²¹⁷

The women in the squats were in many cases grandmothers and mothers, who helped their children with taking care of their grandchildren whenever necessary. Sometimes, they even raised them together or treated them like their own children. Generally, these women had become mothers at a young age—on some occasions they had still been children themselves—and often their own children in turn had also become parents very early. It was therefore common to talk to women in their 30s who were already grandmothers, and the number of young parents inside the squats caught my attention.

Então o meu dia a dia: antes eu acordava, trabalhava, que eu sou técnica de enfermagem. E aí tirava plantões de até 36 horas e depois retornava para cá, era assim. Aí depois veio o

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

216 In some cases their children were already grown up and were living on their own.

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

neto, que aí eu tive que optar por sair do serviço para estar com o neto. Então assim, o meu dia a dia na ocupação é: acordo, lavo, passo, cozinho, limpo e cuido de neto.²¹⁸

Aquele é meu. Aquele que ela ganhou com 16 anos, que ela engravidou com 16, então ela era mãe solteira, adolescente, então ficava dentro de casa comigo, fui eu que cuidei. Ele é muito meu.²¹⁹

Cuido. Cuido toda vez que ela precisa. Para ir para o mercado, para ir para a escola, ou ela tem um cabelo para fazer, alguma coisa. Aí eu fico com eles. Eu assumo.²²⁰

Isso que eu entrei sozinha com o meu neto de colo. Esse neto. Ele tinha um ano, porque eu fiquei cuidando dele. A minha filha quando teve ela estava solteira. Morava comigo. Quando eu vendi a casa, essa coisa toda, ela pegou, casou, foi morar com a sogra. E eu não deixei ela levar o garoto. Aí eu fiquei com ele. Quando eu entrei para a ocupação. Ele estava com um aninho mais ou menos.²²¹

In contrast to the female inhabitants of the squats, the male inhabitants never mentioned taking (such intensive) care of their children or grandchildren.

Regarding assistance in carrying out tasks inside their homes, two other aspects caught my attention during our conversations. First, if the family had children, it seemed that the daughters were much more supportive of their mothers in the homes, and performed more domestic tasks than their male siblings. Even though the inhabitants also sometimes referred to their sons' domestic tasks, it seemed to be much more common and accepted that they did not always accomplish them, or were only "helping" their sisters. Thus, at an early age already a gendered division of labor was coming into effect and—through the parents' placing of more responsibility for domestic tasks on their daughters—was transmitted and reproduced by the parents in the squats.

Eu gosto de limpar. Então eu faço isso no trabalho e faço em casa. E não me sinto cansada. Eu vejo o meu marido chegando do trabalho, tá morrendo de cansado. Eu acho que é coisa de homem! Não tem aquela coisa de chegar em casa, e por exemplo: se ele chegar em casa, primeiro do que eu, ele vai olhar. Se não tiver nada pronto na geladeira,

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

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

220 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with a 55-year-old woman, 27.04.2011.

221 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with a 66-year-old woman, 29.04.2011.

nem no fogão, ele faz a comida. A comida ele faz, tranquilo. Então ele já me dá uma força, uma mãozinha em relação à alimentação. Mas para arrumar a casa ... eu chego. Agora que a minha filha também faz, né. Arruma, arruma as camas. Varre a casa. Mas se tiver que fazer lá e aqui eu faço. (...) O meu filho ele vê mais o escorão. Mas ele tem a tarefa dele.²²²

Geralmente, quem cozinha era a minha filha. Mas o meu filho também às vezes fazia alguma coisa para ajudar ela. Ele fazia uma outra atividade para que ela cozinhasse. (...) Ah, eu acho que numa família todo mundo tem que ajudar um pouquinho. Não dá pra ficar uma pessoa só fazendo tudo. Então assim: eu acho que até era mal dividido (Rir) porque o meu filho ele não gosta muito de fazer as coisas. Então ele fazia uma coisinha assim e aí saía, demorava a voltar ... então acabava alguma outra pessoa fazendo a outra parte que tinha que fazer. (...) Ela fazia mais coisa do que ele. Entendeu?²²³

Second, that the interviews revealed a persistence of a gendered division of domestic labor within the households in the squats did not mean that the male inhabitants never spent time during the day doing housework or childcare. According to the interviews, men did also pick their children up from school, prepare meals, and wash dishes. But in comparison to their female partners, they spent much less time on domestic tasks during the day, and very rarely contributed substantially to housework. Often when asked about the participation of their male partners in domestic tasks the women interviewed assured me that their partners were “helping” them at home. But, “to help someone” with certain tasks also implies not being mainly responsible for those tasks. And conversely, none of the men used the word “helping” when talking about women’s engagement in their homes.

Hence, it became clear that it was the women in the squats who were continuing to assume the main responsibility for childcare and domestic labor.²²⁴ An example of the daily routine of one of the female inhabitants in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* also illustrates this nicely:

Levantamos às cinco e meia, arrumamos as crianças para ir para a escola, para a creche, os pequenos. A [Tatiana] vai trabalhar, (...) aí ela chega mais ou menos às duas horas, três, nem descansa nem nada, toma um banho e vai para a explicadora, que ela agora tá fazendo explicadora de duas às seis, e de lá mesmo ela vai para a escola à noite. Aí o [Anderson] pega às sete horas, no trabalho dele, e sai às cinco. Durante esse dia, se eu vou pegar o

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

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

224 My observations thus matched the evidence outlined in section 2.2.2 that women in Brazil still cover most domestic work.

[Cauê], eu largo onze e meia e vou buscar, volto para casa, faço as coisas que tenho que fazer, ou então se tenho que fazer alguma coisa na rua já faço. Às vezes eu descanso, arrumo um pouco, mas tá difícil porque tem muita coisa para fazer: lavar, passar. Aí quando são às quatro e meia eu vou buscar as crianças de novo na escola, aí volto e vou adiantando a janta. (Rir) Isso o dia vai correndo. Aí quando eles chegam tem que ficar naquela correria, né? Fazendo a janta ou alguma coisa para eles comerem. Que eles chegam com fome. Às vezes eu fico esperando o [Anderson] para me ajudar a fazer alguma coisa, uma carne quando estou com as crianças. Aí quando são oito, nove horas eu estou dormindo. Porque no outro dia é a mesma coisa. (...) Ah, eu também tenho o [João], que está doente (...). Que ele usou, aí ele ficou muito ruim, muito doente mesmo. (...) E eu tenho que ficar ali, no controle dele tomar o remédio de manhã e de noite. Porque senão ele não toma.²²⁵

Interestingly, women inside the squat did not complain much about the gendered division of labor within their homes, and the great majority told me they were satisfied with it. There was only one woman among the interviewees who—when asked about the daily division of tasks—explicitly mentioned feeling discontent that she had to do all the housework by herself. In some cases, the women interviewed even used the word “normal” to describe their everyday lives, and thereby also showed how accustomed they were to a traditional distribution of responsibilities:

*E aqui dentro da sua casa mesmo, você também tem tarefas? Uma vida normal. E você está satisfeita com isso? Tô. Feliz. De poder alcançar o meu objetivo. De ter a minha casa. De ter o meu cantinho. Eu sei que não preciso me preocupar em pagar o aluguel.*²²⁶

Vivo uma vida normal. De rotina mesmo. Eu cuido dos meus filhos e da casa, só. E o meu marido trabalha de camelô. Ele é ambulante. Trabalha na rua.²²⁷

Assim. Sou dona de casa. Não trabalho fora. Eu dependo da renda do meu marido. Então é assim: tem que ficar em casa. Fazer as coisas do dia a dia: lavar a roupa, varrer a casa, passar pano ... normal.²²⁸

Research has shown that women are more likely to be satisfied with a domestic division of labor if their partners also participate to some extent in traditional

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

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

227 Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 35-year-old woman, 11.03.2011.

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

female tasks, such as cooking regular meals, doing grocery shopping, picking up children from school.²²⁹ Therefore, “the key issue is having ‘help’ with some specific activities rather than an equal division of time on housework.”²³⁰ Women’s expressed satisfaction with the division of labor in the squats can thus be explained by the fact that—as described above—most men in the squats were “helping” them at home. But it is also important to emphasize that these women’s willingness to accommodate such an inequitable division shows how far away an equal division of labor seemed to them.²³¹ This is also why it is not contradictory that during our conversation about their daily routines the women in the squats did not really question the gendered division of labor in their homes, but in other situations showed awareness of and dissatisfaction with their situation. Their dissatisfaction came to light especially when speaking with them explicitly about their self-perception—as section 4.3.3 will demonstrate.

In summary, the interviews revealed that a gendered division of domestic labor persisted inside both squats. It was still women who assumed the main responsibility for childcare and domestic labor, such as cleaning, cooking and laundry. Many women were or had been single mothers, as they were often left alone with their children and all the attendant responsibility after separations. Very often, they were also working in remunerated jobs and thus performing triple shifts—taking care of their children, the household, and also being chiefly responsible for the economic maintenance of their family. They had jobs mainly in the informal sector, the lowest-paying sectors of employment. Hence, the squats are also an example of what has been confirmed by most studies on female-headed households: women’s participation in the labor market has not led to significant changes in the domestic division of labor, or to an alleviation of their domestic responsibilities, but on the contrary, has led to an intensification of women’s general workload (as described in section 2.2.2).

Having learned more about the gender relations within the family, in the following subsection, we will take a closer look at tasks and responsibilities of the inhabitants with respect to the internal organization of the squats.

229 Benin Holland, Mary and Joan Agostinelli. 1988. “Husbands’ and Wives’ Satisfaction with the Division of Labor”, *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 50 (2): 349–361; Baxter, Janeen and Mark Western. 1977. “Women’s Satisfaction with the Domestic Division of Labour”, *Family Matters* (47): 16–20.

230 Baxter et al. 1977, Women’s Satisfaction with the Domestic, p. 20.

231 Ibid.

4.3.2.2 Tasks and Responsibilities inside the Squats

Tem a diferença sim. Por exemplo: quando é serviço de homem fazer, os homens fazem. Quando é serviço de mulher fazer, elas que fazem.²³²

The detailed description of the *Chiquinha Gonzaga* and *Manoel Congo* squats in chapter 3 has revealed important information about their internal processes and organization, their development over time, and the everyday lives of the inhabitants. While in *Manoel Congo* certain tasks—such as for example cleaning the building and performing the *portaria*—were still maintained, and one of the basic conditions for being able to live in the squat was that one invested a certain number of hours per week in tasks dedicated to the collective, in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* such obligatory rules no longer existed. Thus, chapter 3 has illustrated that even though both squats formed part of the same citizenship process and therefore shared common characteristics, they nevertheless differed considerably from each other internally, for example in the intensity of the inhabitants' participation in and fulfillment of tasks dedicated to the collective of the squats. In order to learn more about the gender relations beyond the individual households of *Chiquinha Gonzaga* and *Manoel Congo*, it is important to examine these collective daily routines from a gender perspective as well. To find out if there existed a gendered division of labor in the collective daily routines of the inhabitants, we have to take a look at how men and women participated in the squats, and whether they performed the same or different tasks and activities.

Talking with the inhabitants in both squats about their regular involvement and participation, it turned out that certain tasks were performed mainly by women, and others mainly by men.

Women's Tasks and Responsibilities

One of the tasks mainly performed by women was the cleaning of the buildings. As described in section 3.2, at the time of the interviews in 2011, cleaning was an official and obligatory task only in *Manoel Congo* and was regulated through a cleaning plan, which allocated a day of responsibility for every family during the week. As the inhabitants of each floor shared one bathroom and one sink between them, the necessity of keeping these facilities clean in order to avoid conflict was much higher than in *Chiquinha Gonzaga*, where every room had its

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

own sink and bathroom. Due to an absence of organization and the lack of enforcement of the requirement to clean the building in *Chiquinha Gonzaga*, the inhabitants referred to this task much less than in *Manoel Congo*, where every family still had to do the cleaning of the floor they lived on once a week.

Nonetheless, in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* too, many of the female interviewees complained about the dirtiness and lack sense of responsibility of their neighbors regarding the cleanliness of the squat. Even though only a few inhabitants mentioned it as a regular task they undertook in *Chiquinha Gonzaga*, all those who mentioned doing it were women. Hence, in *Manoel Congo*, one of the most common answers given by women to the question regarding their responsibilities in the squat was the responsibility of cleaning. Although every apartment unit had to perform this obligatory task once a week, in almost all of the cases it was the women of the family who took care of it. As the interview with Elena and the other women (in both squats) demonstrated, to perform and be responsible for this task was not something they questioned or felt uncomfortable with. On the contrary, women felt much more qualified for it than their male partners:

Por exemplo, o meu dia de limpar o corredor. E o banheiro. São as quartas-feiras. Então de manhã eu levanto, levo o meu filho na escola, volto, vou limpar o corredor, a obrigação da gente de limpar esse corredor todinho, e o banheiro e a escada. Esse é o meu dever, nas quartas-feiras. (...) *E o seu marido também tem tarefa especial?* Tem a portaria. Na limpeza eles botaram mais as mulheres. Tipo: casal, a mulher faz o seu dia. O homem só a portaria. (...) Todos nós temos os nossos compromissos, as nossas responsabilidades, do mesmo jeito. A única coisa que tem menos homem, é na limpeza do corredor. Até por conta dos dias que tá todo mundo trabalhando. Então eles botaram mais assim: a não ser que seja solteiro. Por exemplo o [David] o [Paulo]. Que são solteiros, então eles têm que fazer. Não tem quem faça por eles. São eles mesmos. O [Paulo] eu acho que nem faz. Eu falo para ele que ele não faz porque ele é coordenador nacional (Rir), mas o [David] faz. *E porque será que tem mais mulheres na limpeza?* Porque tem mais casal. Aí preenche a semana. Entendeu? Quer dizer: eu respondo por mim. O meu marido: eu estou aqui. Ele vai trabalhar. Aí não era justo a coordenação botar ele para fazer uma coisa que eu posso fazer, que estou em casa. Entendeu? Eu acho que seja isso. (...) Então. Eu acho que é mais por ... em tudo que eles [homens] podem participar, eles participam sim. Tem algumas coisas, por exemplo na limpeza, os homens não fazem aquela limpeza que nós mulheres fazemos. É lógico. (...) Porque homem não tem aquele jeito que nós mulheres temos. É difícil. Tem homem que tem sim. Teve outro que morava aqui, ele morava sozinho, o espaço dele brilhava. Mas nem todo homem tem esse jogo de cintura para a limpeza como nós mulheres temos. Eu acho que já ficou isso de geração... já é de nós mulheres. Mas

tudo o que eles podem fazer, eles fazem, sim. *E o que você acha disso?* (...) Tá bom! Normal. O que os homens não fazem, nós vamos lá e fazemos.²³³

In this conversation with Elena about the cleaning task, she offered an interesting insight into her understanding of gender roles. She identified cleaning as a typically female task, as something that women do better (*"Mas nem todo homem tem esse jogo de cintura para a limpeza como nós mulheres temos"*) and which therefore "logically" had to be performed mainly by them. The fact that men were often working outside the squat and thus less present during the day also, from her point of view, made women much more suited for the task of cleaning the building. To Elena it even seemed not to be "fair" to put her husband in charge of cleaning, as she was more present at home during the day and he was not (*"Aí não era justo a coordenação botar ele para fazer uma coisa que eu posso fazer"*). With this kind of argument she clearly separated remunerated work outside the squat from non-remunerated work inside the household, giving both of them different values. She thereby shared and reproduced the—criticized by the feminist movement—characterization of women's work and activities in the private sphere, such as childcare, as less valuable than activities and work in the public sphere (as discussed in sections 2.3.1 and 4.3.1). Interestingly, Elena was also working outside the squat twice a week as a maid, and thus performing a double shift. But still, in our conversation she was reproducing a traditional understanding of gender roles, indirectly ascribing more value to her husband's work than to her own.

Hence, in her discussion the existence of a gendered division of labor became apparent. Some responsibilities, such as cleaning, she clearly assigned to women in such a way that these tasks almost seemed to form part of their—assumed by her to be unchanging—"female nature" (*"já é de nós mulheres"*). However, in explaining such fixed gendered roles, Elena interestingly referred to them indirectly as something that was socially constructed in the past, a result of "doing gender"—of education and socialization performed for generations—and thus manifested in everyday life (*"Eu acho que já ficou isso de geração ... já é de nós mulheres"*). Even though she did not reflect on this at a theoretical level, and was unable to elaborate further on it explicitly, she spoke from her daily experience and expressed her understanding and awareness of the fact that gender relations had been influenced and developed over time.

Other tasks that in *Manoel Congo* were clearly performed mostly by women included their involvement in the child-care center *Espaço Criarte Mariana*

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

Crioula (see section 3.2.1). There were no men from the squat involved,²³⁴ and childcare—at the community level as well—was apparently a female responsibility. Because such a collective organization of childcare did not exist in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* (it was planned but never realized), childcare only became a relevant topic within the family and not at a collective level.

In *Manoel Congo*, furthermore, more women than men seemed to be concerned with collective income generation. While in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* this topic was not touched upon at all, the idea of working as a cooperative to generate income and labor for the inhabitants in order to be able to pay for the maintenance and fixed costs of the building over the long-term had resulted in a weekly cooperative course sponsored by *Petrobras* (see section 3.2.1) being run in *Manoel Congo*. There the inhabitants learned how to work as part of a cooperative. Even though I was not able to participate in these meetings, many more women than men mentioned their involvement in this project when talking about their responsibilities in the squat. They seemed to be more concerned with the future of the building, and therefore were trying to generate the necessary conditions to be able to stay.

Está vendo esse curso aí: esse curso é para preparação para o grupo de geração de renda. Porque? Nós ganhamos o concurso da Petrobras, a Petrobras achou que esse projeto é bom, e o que acontece? Agora quem é que está nesse grupo, quem está fomentando isso? A mulher. O grande projeto de geração de renda será o restaurante e a casa de samba que é um espaço cultural. Quer dizer: a proposta é o que? Que esse espaço funcione de dia e de noite. É a mulher que está fomentando isso. (...) Eu acho bom. Eu acho que ainda tem que ... com esse passo que nós estamos dando, com a questão da geração de renda, que vai se efetivar porque nós vamos ter que trabalhar mesmo para poder pagar isso aqui, a mulher ainda vai ter que ter mais força ainda, concepção disso aí. Porque dos compromissos que se está assumindo.²³⁵

The greater engagement of women in the income generation project can also be interpreted as a strategy to achieve a greater compatibility of paid and domestic work. The organization of a cooperative and the potential to do home-based work facilitated the organization and coordination of domestic issues and remunerated labor. This was also emphasized and acknowledged by one of the women in *Manoel Congo* when discussing the cooperative:

234 Only the group of students who supported the child-care center, but whose middle-class members were not living in the squat, was composed of both male and female members.

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

Essa força de trabalho, cooperativismo, com o cooperativismo veio essa ideia das mulheres se organizarem para fazerem grupos de trabalho. Não agora, então a mulher não pode trabalhar fora ou não tem emprego, então ela tem renda, ela se junta com outras mulheres, faz uma costura, faz um bordado, faz um chinelo. Então isso é um segmento de mulheres.²³⁶

Men's Tasks and Responsibilities

While women were mainly responsible for the cleaning of the buildings, and the organization of childcare and collective income generation, men were mainly responsible for the general maintenance of the building, taking care of the electricity, the hydraulic system (water pump) and other necessary construction work. In *Chiquinha Gonzaga*, for example, the few inhabitants who possessed a key to access the water pump—and were therefore able to turn it on again in case of its failure—were exclusively male.

Mas o serviço é mais homem que faz. Concerta bomba. Mas são os homens. É um serviço que é feito mais é pelos homens. Eles concertarem uma luz, concertar uma ... (...). Porque os homens que entendem dessas coisas de bomba, principalmente os homens entendem. De bomba de água, de luz. A única coisa que eu faço às vezes é limpar o corredor que eu moro. Isso leva uns 20 minutos (Rir).²³⁷

Claro que não vou trocar bomba porque não sei aquele, não vou mexer na eletricidade quando tem um fio. Aí já são tarefas de homem que sabem, que entendem disso.²³⁸

Few women had been involved in these kinds of tasks in either squat. In *Manoel Congo* only one woman reported her involvement in the *brigada*, the group formerly responsible for the internal and external security of the building, as well as its maintenance at the beginning of the occupation.

Fui da brigada, porque eles me acham assim muito avoadá, aí me botaram na brigada. Brigada é coisa para homem (Rir), mas eu tava na brigada. Porque na brigada é para carregar a madeira, para fazer conserto, pega martelo, pega serrote. Então eu era da brigada. Depois saí da brigada, e houve várias comissões para trabalhar.²³⁹

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

237 Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 35-year-old woman, 11.03.2011.

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

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

As the inhabitants did not question why some tasks had to be performed by the female members of the squat, they also did not question why other tasks, such as construction work, had to be performed by the male members of the squat; one reason given for this was because they (men) “know about these things” (*“Porque os homens que entendem dessas coisas de bomba, principalmente os homens entendem”*). Thus, when Teresa talked about her participation in the brigade, it made her laugh. She emphasized that “the brigade is something for men” (*“Brigada é coisa para homem”*) and therefore felt the need to justify her involvement as a woman in what was in her understanding usually a male task. She then justified this by referring to herself as imprudent and scatterbrained (*avoada*), traits which she seemed to associate clearly with men. Possessing such a trait, from her point of view, had apparently then qualified her to perform a “male” task. Teresa, as with many others in the squats, thus identified clear traits and behaviors she associated with men and women.

In summary, one can say that the tasks and responsibilities dedicated to the collectives in both squats were similar to the responsibilities within the family—clearly gendered. While cleaning, childcare, and income generation were mostly undertaken by women, maintenance work was performed mainly by men. The division of tasks also demonstrated that in comparison to women, men had altogether fewer responsibilities within the squats. Interestingly, the existence and classification of some responsibilities and tasks as “men’s” and others as “women’s” was not questioned or criticized by the inhabitants during the interviews. Quite the contrary: this distribution of tasks was often taken as “normal,” and how it was supposed to be:

Tem a diferença sim. Por exemplo: quando é serviço de homem fazer, os homens fazem. Quando é serviço de mulher fazer, elas que fazem. (...) Serviço bruto, subir numa marquise para tirar o lixo, isso uma mulher não pode fazer. Serviço mais bruto. Como limpar calha que tem que limpar lá em baixo. Serviço já diferente. Agora varrer, passar um pano, fazer uma limpeza, isso já é mais parte da mulher fazer. Essas coisas assim. (...) É assim.²⁴⁰

Thus, a gendered division of labor had not only been the reason for women’s stronger engagement, but also persisted in both squats, in the private households as well as on a collective level. As many of the interview excerpts have shown, to explain their tasks and responsibilities, the inhabitants frequently referred to “typical” male and “typical” female traits. Therefore, in the following chapter,

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

we will take a closer look at the underlying assumptions that acted as a basis upon which the traditional gender roles were acted out in the squats.

4.3.3 “Men are parasites”:²⁴¹ Self-Perception and Gender Stereotyping

Ser mãe (...) é sofrer no paraíso.²⁴²

It turned out that in both squats women were mainly responsible for the private sphere. They assumed responsibility for most of the domestic work, played the roles of mothers and caregivers, were often *chefes de família*, and many cases performed double or even triple shifts. Thus, neither their participation in the paid labor market nor their engagement in citizenship activities had so far led to significant changes in the domestic division of labor. The differential participation of the sexes in the everyday life of the squats had revealed a persistence of traditional gender roles. As such roles, “the activities or behaviours typically associated with women and men” furnish the basis for gender stereotypes, “the beliefs associated with characteristics and personalities appropriate to men and women,”²⁴³ it is important to also examine the images of masculinity and femininity the inhabitants reproduced during the interviews. During our talks, women and men in the squats alluded frequently to traits and behaviors they associated with men and women, and employed dominant gender norms, for instance, of women as mothers and caregivers. In order to learn more about the inhabitants’ beliefs about gender differences—about the dominant female and male gender stereotypes inside the squats—I also talked with them individually about their self-perceptions as “women” and as “men.”

Negative Stereotyping of Men

During the interviews the inhabitants of both squats described what it meant to them to be a “man” or a “woman” in Brazilian society. They expressed their views and beliefs by applying different traits they associated with being male and female. Table 3 shows the established gender stereotypes of the inhabitants,

241 Own translation from: “*O homem é um parasito*” (Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 52-year-old woman, 14.03.2011).

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

243 Brannon, Linda. 2002, *Gender. Psychological Perspectives*, Boston: Allyn and Bacon, p. 183.

which normally included “not only personality traits but also physical traits, abilities, roles, occupation, or general orientations.”²⁴⁴

The conceptualizations of femininity and masculinity by the inhabitants of both squats in the interviews and during my visits did not differ significantly. Very often they named masculine traits in contrast to female traits, portraying women, for instance, as “sensitive,” “responsible,” “caring,” and “physically weak,” while men were portrayed as “hard,” “irresponsible,” “violent,” and “physically strong.” The inhabitants of both squats especially emphasized women’s social and emotional skills as well as their domestic character, while men were described as more rational, unemotional, and work-oriented.

Porque eu acho que a mulher, ela ... não estou discriminando o homem, não. Mas eu acho que a mulher é mais amável, mais compreensiva, ela entende melhor as coisas. Ela pensa mais antes de fazer, sabe? A mulher não é aquela coisa assim ... o homem que é assim: Vamos fazer ... a mulher já pensa mais, sabe? Já pensa mais, medita mais para poder fazer a coisa certa.²⁴⁵

Aqui também tem muito isso: as mulheres são mais ... quando botam o pensamento conseguem ir à frente. Agora homem. Homem quer saber de trabalhar, de ganhar dinheiro, de dar sustentação à sua família. Para eles já está sendo um papel importante.²⁴⁶

Para mim o homem tem que ser responsável, ele tem que saber o certo e errado, ele tem que ter a cabeça. Porque eu penso assim: se ele não for a base da sua casa, não for a pilaste, o seu lar se destrói todo. Porque não pode ficar só... tem coisas que a mulher não resolve. Tem coisas que o homem resolve. (...) Assim por exemplo: uma violência: se um vizinho estiver com um problema, aí o homem vai lá conversar, dizer: não faz isso, não é certo. Já a mulher não vai poder fazer isso. *Porque?* Porque a mulher já é mais fraca.²⁴⁷

As Table 3, row A illustrates, there was also negative stereotyping, regarding both sexes, but particularly of men. It was especially women who showed negative stereotyping of men, describing them for instance as “egotistic,” “irresponsible,” “violent,” “lazy,” “clumsy,” “false,” “coward[ly],” “corrupt,” and so on.

244 Guimond, Serge, Delphine Martinot, and Armand Chatard. 2006. “Social Comparison, Self-Stereotyping, and Gender Differences in Self-Construals”, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 90 (2): 221.

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

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

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

Table 3: Traits stereotypically associated with women and men in both squats²⁴⁸

		(Be a) Woman	(Be a) Man
Gender Stereotypes	A	sensitive* / delicate / more feeling/ affective / comprehensive / friendly / caring / educating / dedicated/ intuition/ solution-oriented / less aggressive/ weaker (physically)* / organized / neat / responsible* / ethical* / less corrupt / think first before they act/ think much more than men / understand things better / more interested / more compromised / participatory / communicative* / know how to talk* / sense for details / collective / communal / gullible* / gossip* / silly / unconscious / <i>machista</i> * / disunited	cold / hard / egotistic / resolve conflicts with violence / violent / kill / beat / criminal / exposed to risk of violence* / protect / rational / blind in decisions / physically strong* / strength* / radical / easier / corrupt / act without thinking / act / more engaged* / irresponsible* / want to decide / lazy / clumsy / coward / false / only cause trouble / weak (character) / depend on women / parasitic / <i>machista</i>
	B	be a mother* / having children* / have to care for the children* / earn less / companion/ family / domestic / <i>chefe de familia</i> means suffering/ is a challenge / is hard / is complicated / is difficult / is bad / be underestimated / be overloaded* / be devaluated / be exploited / be victim of <i>machismo</i> */	sustain their family (provide financially)* / the “pillar of the household”*/ educate / want to work and earn money / work* / earn more / have manual / technical skills / leave home / concerned about his own necessities means to have character* / be responsible / he has to know what is right and wrong* / have privileges* / respect*
	C	warrior / fighter / strong / courageous / able / advancing / active	

* Traits (also) mentioned by men.

248 Own data.

While men often seemed self-critical, by admitting for example their privileges in a *machist* society,²⁴⁹ women had more negative and skeptical attitudes towards men, sometimes even talking disparagingly, and frequently attributing negative characteristics to them. The reasons for this are manifold. One factor contributing to the different intensity of negative stereotyping between the sexes could be that women—due to an assumed commonality and complicity based on gender—opened up much more to me during the interviews than men did. It is likely that when men were talking with a woman (me) face-to-face about their beliefs and views about women in general, they were not completely honest and were trying to conceal or to improve some of their opinions in order to avoid offending me. This kind of interview situation is then a good example of how—in the interactions with our research partners—we cannot avoid “doing gender,” and of how it possibly influences our data during the interview process (see section 1.2.2).

Another factor contributing to the different intensity of negative stereotyping between the sexes was that most of my interview partners were female and had had negative experiences with men in the past, with men who had turned out not to be reliable, or to be violent. These experiences of course also fostered a negative stereotyping of men. Other research on gender stereotyping has also shown that women were typically rated more positively than men by both sexes.²⁵⁰ Glick et al., for example, summarizing their findings regarding gender stereotyping, state: “*Men are bad but bold and women are wonderful but weaker*. Men and women are conceived as mirror images, with complementary strengths and weaknesses.”²⁵¹ These findings also match with and confirm the observations I made in the squats. Ironically, as Glick et al. also show, the positive evaluation of women does not lead to greater gender equality, and may even serve to perpetuate their lower status:

Although men may be evaluated less positively than women (by men and women alike), these attitudes hold little promise for greater equality so long as the basis for hostility toward men is the belief that they will inevitably and naturally retain greater status and

249 This can of course also be interpreted as benevolent sexism.

250 Brannon 2002, Gender, p. 167; Glick, Peter, Susan T. Fiske, Robin Wells, Thomas Eckes, Maria Lameiras, and Barbara Masser. 2004. “Bad but Bold. Ambivalent Attitudes toward Men Predict Gender”, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 86 (5): 713–728; Eagly, Alice H. 1989. “Gender Stereotypes and Attitudes Toward Women and Men”, *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 15 (4): 543–558.

251 Glick et al. 2004, Bad but Bold, p. 714.

power and the basis for benevolence toward women is paternalistic solicitude toward the supposedly weaker sex.²⁵²

Hence, even though women were rated more positively than men in the squats, they were still—as the previous findings have shown—performing traditional gender roles. Apparently their positive (self-)perception had also not led to significant changes regarding gender equality. The characterizations and (self-)perceptions of women and men used by the inhabitants—as illustrated in rows A and B of Table 3—rather revealed the existence of traditional stereotypical beliefs in both squats. These beliefs corresponded to the gendered division of labor described earlier, in which women were mainly responsible for the private sphere.

Though women's awareness of their multiple roles and responsibilities often led them to negative stereotyping of men, they did not produce negative or pessimistic self-perceptions. On the contrary, as already briefly mentioned in section 4.3.1, these women portrayed themselves mainly as “warriors,” “strong,” “active,” “courageous,” and “able” (see Table 3, row C). While many studies on gender stereotyping revealed that women were often (*inter alia*) labeled “submissive” and “passive,” this labeling or self-perception could not be observed in the case of the women inside the squats.²⁵³ Women there were far from submissive in their conversation (as also described in section 4.3.1). They were self-confident, and both perceived and presented themselves as active agents who were able to make a change for themselves and their families.

In order to explain the gender inequality the inhabitants perceived in their everyday lives, they also fell back on a negative stereotyping of men, labeling them as *machista*. The inhabitants thus recognized the patriarchal structures in which they were embedded in their everyday lives, and also their negative effects, especially on women. But, as already indicated in section 4.3.2.1, women also reproduced these structures, for example, by placing more responsibility for domestic tasks on their daughters. Gender-stereotypic beliefs play an important role in this process, as research on gender stereotypes assumes a “biasing effect of mothers’ gender role stereotypic beliefs on their perceptions of their own children’s abilities.”²⁵⁴

252 Glick et al. 2004, Bad but Bold, p. 727.

253 Brannon 2002, Gender; Eagly 1989, Gender Stereotypes and Attitudes Toward Women.

254 Jacobs, Janice E. and Jacquelynne S. Eccles. 1992. “The Impact of Mothers’ Gender-Role Stereotypic Beliefs on Mothers’ and Children’s Ability Perceptions”, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 63 (6): 940.

As Table 3, row A shows, there were also a few men and women in the squat who labeled women as *machista*, pointing thereby to the reproduction of prevailing traditional gender roles by women:

A questão é que eu avalio que a mulher é até um pouco mais machista do que o homem! É. (...) Porque todo garoto que é machista é formado pela mãe dele que é uma mulher. Ela que ficou muito mais tempo com ele do que o pai. Não está correto?²⁵⁵

Aí a gente se enfrenta com essa realidade que a cabeça da mulher é tão machista como a do homem, (...) Aí tem que ter mais cintura e tem que ter mais paciência para acomodar politicamente a mulher. Porque a mulher aqui também tem isso. Muitas delas não têm estudo. São analfabetas, então já vinham reproduzindo esse modelo machista.²⁵⁶

Ou nós mulheres temos que ficar caladas ... porque não basta ser mulher! As mulheres reproduzem as relações machistas muitas vezes quando estão no poder.²⁵⁷

That women in the squats reproduced traditional gender roles, I argue, is less evidence of their responsibility for the persistence of women-oppressing structures than it is an illustration of how deeply rooted these structures are in society, and thus how difficult they are to overcome.

Another aspect, that had—at least in *Manoel Congo*—the potential to additionally reinforce traditional gender roles, and which should therefore be mentioned here at least briefly, was the presence of many *evangélicos* there (see also section 3.2.2). Several authors have pointed to the promotion of traditional gender roles inside the patriarchal Pentecostal church, in which women's role and responsibility as mothers is stressed, and in which they are perceived as naturally inferior to and subject to men.²⁵⁸ Women's position in the Pentecostal church was also brought up during one of my interviews. Lia, not herself a

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

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

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

258 See for example Adams, Anna. 2002. "Perception Matters. Pentecostal Latinas in Allentown, Pennsylvania" in *A Reader in Latina Feminist Theology. Religion and Justice*, edited by M. P. Aquino, D. L. Machado, and J. Rodriguez. Austin: University of Texas Press, p. 99; Drogus 1994, *Religious Change and Women's Status*, p. 2; Flora, Cornelia B. 1976, *Pentecostalism in Colombia. Baptism by Fire and Spirit*, Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, pp. 191, 198.

Pentecostal, but a social activist for a long time, harshly denounced the control the Pentecostal church exercised over women. In her opinion they encouraged women to concentrate mainly on the domestic sphere and the activities related to their church, instead of concentrating on the movement's activities and aims:

E outras pessoas hoje no Brasil, esse movimento carismático pentecostal numa hora ele traz as pessoas dos vícios, dessas coisas, mas também controla a vida das pessoas. E infelizmente a religião é para oprimir as mulheres. Ah, aqui tem muitas pastoras, aqui tem muitas mas ... sabe, está muito longe dessa coisa de ... elas falam para os outros, mas elas têm a sua pressão no cotidiano. Elas não falam, mas a gente vê, né? Eu acompanho e eu vejo. (...) Ah, eles vão na igreja toda semana (...). Então isso dificulta. (...) Controlador. Lá na igreja ela segue mais o pastor do que o movimento. Mas elas querem a casa. Querem orar, querem viver. Então a gente tem problemas aqui muito sérios. Quando eu cheguei aqui, capoeira era do demônio, do diabo. Tudo o que é da sua cultura, colocavam como um demônio. Mas a gente que vem de outro entendimento, nós nunca aceitamos uma leitura fundamentalista, sabe?²⁵⁹

Despite the emphasis on traditional gender roles, some authors have also pointed to certain advantages and opportunities for the improvement of women's status through Pentecostal rules, because "while they [women] do not attempt to expand their roles, Pentecostal women seek to improve their position within the domestic sphere."²⁶⁰ These Pentecostal rules include, for example, the prohibition of alcohol, drugs, gambling, and adultery,²⁶¹ and thereby provide for women especially the possibility of regaining their own space within their conjugal relationships, or of escaping domestic violence—as for example the statement of Zilda, a Pentecostal woman, shows:

Porque eu não podia falar muito assim com ele que ele era agressivo. Aqui ele tá melhor. Aqui ele já ... dá os gritos dele, eu também dou os meus. E um baixa a voz ... um tem que ceder, né? (Rir) Mudou, a minha vida mudou. E hoje também, graças a Deus, ele não está

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

260 Drogus 1994, *Religious Change and Women's Status*, p. 7; see also Brusco, Elizabeth E. 1995, *The Reformation of Machismo. Evangelical Conversion and Gender in Colombia*, Austin: University of Texas Press, p. 136.

261 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.

mais bebendo da forma em que ele bebia. (...) E eu não podia falar nada, né? Quando ia falar era motivo de agressão. E aqui não. Aqui já falo, falei: tá, vou dormir. Pronto. Agora que ele está indo para a igreja, é muito difícil, porque ele ainda está bebendo. Difícil porque ele não está nem bebendo mais. Mas já está me acompanhando para ir para a igreja, que isso aí para mim é muito importante. Porque eu vim a ter uma vida mesmo para mim é assim: eu tive vida até a hora que a minha mãe morreu. Para mim a minha vida acabou ali.²⁶²

Scholars even argue that women use conversion to Pentecostalism as a strategy. They apparently convert deliberately with the clear hope and intention to convert their husbands, too, in order to regain more control over the latter's addictions, and thereby also the domestic sphere—in order to “turn them into more reliable spouses.”²⁶³ Apart from serious psychological and physical consequences, especially for women with low incomes, a drug-addicted husband very often also means a substantial financial loss, as their husbands are not able to work, and/or spend their money on alcohol or drugs.²⁶⁴ Hence, for some scholars, a conversion to Pentecostalism is also a possible means by which to achieve a “male domestication,”²⁶⁵ because thanks to its rules and its focus on the family, Pentecostal husbands are more likely to provide emotional and material stability for their families.²⁶⁶ Lois Ann Lorentzen demonstrates, for the case of Pentecostalism among new migrants in the San Francisco Bay Area, that even though the Pentecostal church does not dismantle gender roles, it “provides opportunities for them to be rearranged” and that “[m]embers seem more willing

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

263 Burdick, John. 1992. “Rethinking the Study of Social Movements. The Case of Christian Base Communities in Urban Brazil” in *The Making of Social Movements in Latin America. Identity, Strategy, and Democracy*, edited by A. Escobar and S. E. Alvarez. Boulder: Westview Press, p. 178; see also Drogus 1994, Religious Change and Women's Status, p. 8; Lorentzen, Lois A. and Rosalina Mira. 2005. “El Milagro está en Casa. Gender and Private/Public Empowerment in a Migrant Pentecostal Church”, *Latin American Perspectives*, 32 (1): 64; Motley Hallum 2003, Taking Stock and Building Bridges, pp. 178f.

264 Drogus 1994, Religious Change and Women's Status, p. 10; Burdick 1992, Rethinking the Study of Social Movements, p. 178; Chesnut 1997, Born again in Brazil, p. 16.

265 Lorentzen et al. 2005, El Milagro está en Casa, p. 64.

266 Brusco, Elizabeth E. 1986. “The Household Basis of Evangelical Religion and the Reformation of Machismo in Colombia” Dissertation, City University of New York, New York cited in: Drogus 1994, Religious Change and Women's Status, p. 8.

to cross gender lines, at least in terms of task assignment.²⁶⁷ Drogus therefore assumes that even though in Pentecostalism women's traditional roles remain strongly represented and hardly change, women do manage to change men's roles, and thereby regain more space and power in their own homes:

Pentecostalism promotes little expansion of women's traditional roles. What is more interesting, however, is that pentecostal women do reconceptualize men's roles. Pentecostalism expands men's roles to include more substantial participation and responsibility in the private sphere (Mariz 1989: 196). The practical impact of harmonizing men's and women's expectations and objectives within the family may be greater consultation and equality between husband and wife (Brusco 1986: 198). Thus, although apparently the conceptualization of appropriate women's roles is not expanded, pentecostal women may gain greater power and stature in the home and in the religious community.²⁶⁸

But, as this section has shown, no significant reconceptualizing of men's roles could be observed inside the squats, and women often felt overloaded with responsibilities, and criticized the lack of support they received from the men in their everyday lives. Instead the analysis has revealed the persistence of a gendered division of labor within the squat—a division of labor also promoted by the Pentecostal church. To what extent this fact had influenced gender roles cannot be ultimately determined here, but would be an interesting research topic for the future. However, we can assume that Pentecostalism has certainly not fostered the breaking up of traditional gender roles.

Self-Confident Motherhood

Talking about being a woman in most cases also implied talking about being a mother, and sometimes went even so far as to equate womanhood with motherhood.

Ser mulher no Brasil ... ah, não sei responder direito ... só sei que ... para mim é um papel importante que eu me sinto muito feliz é de ser mãe.²⁶⁹

Então a mulher, olha. Ela é nota 10. Ela é mãe, ela é dona de casa, ela é mulher.²⁷⁰

267 Lorentzen et al. 2005, *El Milagro está en Casa*, pp. 64f.

268 Drogus 1994, *Religious Change and Women's Status*, p. 9.

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

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

A mãe brasileira somos nós, brasileiras. Mãe, mulher.²⁷¹

As outlined in section 2.3.2, women claiming their rights as mothers and wives was a crucial characteristic of the women's movement in Latin America. While in Western Europe and the United States women rejected differences between men and women and sought a more gender-neutral participation of women in the public sphere, in Latin America, in contrast, women deployed a language of difference, emphasizing gender differences and especially their traditional role as mothers.²⁷² This can also be observed for the women in the squats. They emphasized their identity as mothers, for instance, when explaining the reasons for women's participation in the squats (as demonstrated in section 4.3.1).

Even though women in both squats identified and described themselves as mothers, the interviews revealed at the same time their very ambivalent feelings about the subject. On the one hand, they referred to motherhood as a positive identity, and they did not seem to question their responsibility for childcare and the domestic sphere. This was also indicated in section 4.3.2.1 by the fact that women did not complain much about the gendered division of labor in their homes, and that the great majority had claimed to be satisfied with this situation. Women described their feelings towards motherhood as a central and also indispensable part of their lives, as many of the interviews demonstrated:

Poxa, ser mãe. Eu acho que é uma coisa extraordinária. Muito importante, sabe. (...) Eu, po, ser mãe é tão gostoso, é tão bom você saber que tem uma pessoa para ficar contigo para sempre. Que você nunca deixa de ser mãe. Você é mãe para sempre. Eu acho que o filho para a mãe nunca cresce.²⁷³

Ah, pra mim é tudo (Rir)! (...) acho que ser mãe também é muito bom pra mulher também. Eu acho que pra mim isso é muito importante, ser mulher, ser mãe, ne. Então pra mim é isso, é tudo.²⁷⁴

Ser mãe para mim ... nem consigo ter pensamento ruim. Ser mãe para mim é tudo. (Rir) O meu maior orgulho de tudo que eu tenho assim na minha vida são os meus filhos. (...) Eu acho que ser mãe para mim é tudo. (Rir) Eu não conseguiria mais viver sem eles (Rir). Acho que preferia morrer. Acho não, tenho certeza! Preferia morrer do que saber que não

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

272 Safa 1990, *Women's Social Movements*, p. 355; Miller 1991, *Latin American Women*, p. 74.

273 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with a 55-year-old woman, 27.04.2011.

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

vou poder mais ficar com eles. A minha vida é isso. Tudo o que eu faço, tudo o que eu desejo fazer, é para melhorar a vida deles.²⁷⁵

On the other hand, almost all the women clearly named disadvantages they confronted in being women and mothers. They expressed these negative feelings through their descriptions of what it meant to them to be a woman, using words such as “suffering,” “challenging,” “difficult,” “exploited,” “overloaded,” and others (see Table 3, row B). In this manner these women expressed their negative feelings about the multiple roles and responsibilities they had to negotiate in order to guarantee the survival of their families. They were conscious that their entry into the labor market, or participation in other areas of the public sphere—such as for example in the squats—did not imply a relief of their domestic obligations, or break traditional patriarchal gender relations, but rather intensified (doubled or even tripled) their responsibilities. Thus, even though these women did not question their responsibility for the private sphere and especially for childcare in general, they did criticize the lack of engagement and support on the part of the men:

É uma luta né. Eu acho que a mulher na sociedade brasileira é uma situação de muita vulnerabilidade. De exposição. Eu acho que a gente acaba tendo aos poucos, na marra, ganhando outros espaços. E isso, claro, tem consequências, em relação à questão da família, todo esse papel que a gente sempre teve em relação à família, né? Essa divisão aí entre esses espaços entre o privado e o público, eu acho que a mulher quando caminha para esse espaço público, pro mercado de trabalho, essa coisa toda, ela não desgarra das tarefas dela, domésticas, tudo mais. Então ela acaba acumulando tarefas, sabe? Ela meio que caminhou para o mercado de trabalho, para ações políticas e coisas externas, mas ela continua acumulando tarefas do lar e tudo mais. Então eu acho que é meio isso que acontece.²⁷⁶

Ser mulher no Brasil é uma tarefa complicada né! (...) Uma pessoa tem que meio que se multiplicar: tem que dar conta de casa, de fora, às vezes, quando tem filho, tem que dar conta de filho. Então tem que se triplicar nesse caso. É bem complicado. Eu acho que ser homem é mais fácil. Não só no Brasil.²⁷⁷

Um desafio. A mulher no Brasil é super sobrecarregada. A mulher é mãe, é tia, é avó, é professora, é dona de casa ... é empregada, é esposa. É um desafio. Por isso que as

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

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

277 Interview in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* with a 19-year-old woman, 30.03.2011.

mulheres estão todas morrendo de coração. Enfarte, rápido. Morrendo mais. Porque a mulher é muito sobrecarregada no Brasil. Todo mundo fica em cima da mulher. Os homens perderam a função, o papel deles. *E qual é o papel deles?* O papel que a sociedade impõe, é um papel de provedor. Só que os homens hoje não provêm! Quem provê são as mulheres. A maioria das mulheres. Aí eles ficam perdendo o papel porque? Porque a maioria das mulheres sabe hoje viver sem homem. Não precisam tanto de homem. Homem é só pra reproduzir ou para transar. É o que tem sido reduzido o papel do homem, entendeu? De um símbolo de macho só para satisfazer os desejos sexuais da mulher! Não tem uma função.²⁷⁸

Women also complained about other disadvantages they suffered because of their gender, for instance earning less money than men, or being exposed to male violence. During our conversations it became clear that many of them were painfully aware of existing hierarchies and gradations of discrimination in society. Many of the male and female inhabitants in the squats felt discriminated against by society for being “*pobre*” (poor) and therefore limited in what they could achieve in life. Their difficult economic situation, as described in section 4.1, had also prompted most of them to become engaged in the squats. Some of the inhabitants, especially those who had already been politically active for a long time, pointed explicitly to how limited economic circumstances further increased discrimination against women in society. For them to be both a woman and poor clearly entailed a different experience from that which a woman who was not poor would have. To them, a woman with a middle-class background, for instance, would have completely different needs, struggles, and priorities in everyday life.

Thus, drawing from their everyday experiences, the inhabitants referred to the interdependencies of social categorizations such as class and gender that shape women’s position in society (see section 2.3.2). Their making of such statements also demonstrated the need to consider the diversity and heterogeneity of women—as already emphasized in section 2.2.1—because being of the same sex as others is not enough to assume common interests or a common identity.²⁷⁹

Mas num país subdesenvolvido, a condição da mulher ainda é complicada. A mulher feminista no Brasil de classe média, ela realmente chega até você. Mas a mulher da classe

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

279 See Butler and her critique of the use of the category “women” as a common identity in section 2.2.1.

desfavorecida, ela é escrava mesmo, sabe? Mais escrava que o homem de classe desfavorecida.²⁸⁰

As mulheres de classe média e as mulheres pobres passam a ser iguais. Formalmente. Só que na realidade são completamente diferentes. Elas têm uma vagina igual, tem útero igual, mas até o cuidado médico com as suas vaginas e seus úteros já demonstra a diferenciação. E quando se junta como mulher, se junta como gênero, acaba misturando isso. Fica mais difícil. (...) Porque as mulheres pobres, elas lutam é pela sobrevivência, e da família. Não tem muita discussão, muito seminário para descobrir prioridade de luta. A prioridade de luta dela é do dia-a-dia. É de continuar viva. Ela e seus filhos.²⁸¹

A mulher é mais forte do que o homem. A mulher suporta mais vezes da vida. A mulher ... sem se desesperar! A mulher é capaz de se organizar. Em meio ao caos ela tem uma força que ela é capaz ... se ela for estimulada, ela vai longe! Se a mulher for estimulada a desenvolver esse potencial que ela tem, principalmente essa mulher! Que está aqui na base da pirâmide, que é a mulher pobre, a negra, as mulheres que já são idosas.²⁸²

To summarize, one can observe that the inhabitants of the squats alluded frequently during our conversations to traits and behaviors they typically associated with men and women, and employed traditional stereotypical gender beliefs. While they especially emphasized women's social and emotional skills, as well as their domestic character, men were described as more rational, unemotional, and work-oriented. Research has pointed out that gender roles form the basis of gender stereotypes, as the latter are beliefs which stem from the observation of men and women in different social roles.²⁸³ Thus, a gendered division of labor in the squats, as revealed in the previous chapters, went hand in hand with traditional stereotypical beliefs held by the female and male inhabitants.

Consistent with this is the observation that the most dominant description and reference to female identity in both squats was that of motherhood. To portray women as mothers, and to make motherhood central to womanhood, also implies assigning women explicitly to the private sphere. However, even though the women did not question their role as mothers in general, and referred to it as

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

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

282 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with a 66-year-old woman, 29.04.2011.

283 Brannon 2002, Gender, p. 167; Guimond et al. 2006, Social Comparison, Self-Stereotyping, and Gender Differences, p. 221.

a positive identity, they were aware of the existing patriarchal structures in which they were living and their negative effects on women. They expressed this awareness frequently through, for example, a negative stereotyping of men, and pointed to the disadvantages they faced in society for being woman.

The women in the squats often felt overloaded with responsibilities, and criticized the lack of support from men in their everyday lives. Nonetheless, their self-perception was mostly positive, and women expressed self-confidence and a belief that they would be able to handle whatever situation they faced in life nearly as often as they expressed an identification with motherhood. It was in my opinion ultimately this combination of responsibility for the private sphere and a strong self-confidence—a “self-confident motherhood” as I will call it—which created the precondition for these women’s engagement in citizenship activities. The women’s conviction that they were able to make a change had certainly promoted their engagement, and the squats’ success had strengthened their positive self-perception even further. Thus, even though there had not been significant changes regarding gender equality within the squats, there was still significant potential for promoting further personal development and change, as the following section will show.

4.3.4 “I am an activist, I am a mother”:²⁸⁴ Female Leadership

Então eu tinha que tomar conta dos meus filhos
e tomar conta do mundo.²⁸⁵

The interviews and observations have revealed the different intensities of women’s and men’s participation in the squats. Women basically “kept the squats running.” They were important actors, and much more present and involved in the squats’ needs, interests and activities. As traditional patterns of gender relations prevailed, they were also mainly responsible for the private sphere, stressing their role as mothers, and often performing double or even triple shifts. In order to capture the dynamics and complexities of the gender relations inside the squats, it is then also important to look at the prevailing power relations among both the women and the men. These found their most

284 Own translation from: “*Eu sou militante, eu sou mãe*” (Interview in *Manoel Congo* with the national coordinator of the MNLM, a 51-year-old woman, 06.04.2011).

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

explicit and visible expression in the distribution of leadership positions²⁸⁶ in the squats.

As described earlier, the internal organization of the two squats differed considerably. While in *Manoel Congo* the responsible movement still had a strong influence and control over the squat, in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* this was no longer the case at the time of the interviews.²⁸⁷ These differences also found their expression in the form of the internal leadership organization. While in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* the topic of leadership hardly emerged during our conversations, in *Manoel Congo*, women's leadership in particular could not be ignored.²⁸⁸ Therefore, after a short overview of leadership in *Chiquinha Gonzaga*, this section will focus mainly on (female) leadership in the squat *Manoel Congo*.

(Female) Leadership in *Chiquinha Gonzaga*

In *Chiquinha Gonzaga*—as we have learned in section 3.1.1—there had been struggles for leadership and control over the squat, especially at its inception, and mainly between the members of the two leading social movements initially involved: CMP and FLP. But over the long term, neither of the movements was able to continue to exert a decisive influence on the internal agenda and organization of the squat. As a consequence, over time the internal organization in the form of the coletivo had nearly ceased to exist, and the political activities of the squat had almost come to a standstill. Thus, when the topic of actual internal leadership came up during the interviews, it was not an important issue for most of the inhabitants. When asked about it, they usually proudly stressed their collective organization—even though it was no longer really evident—and the fact of not having a leadership inside the squat. This perception not only confirmed the absence of a leading and agenda-defining movement, but also reflected the initial idea (especially of the FLP) to establish a new form of organization, which had the coletivo as its center of reference, rather than the banner of a certain social movement. This form and idea of organization of

286 Leadership positions in this instance are defined as positions within the squat's hierarchy that imply decision-making power as well as the power to represent the squat at different levels of the movement's organization.

287 For a detailed description of the organization and internal processes of *Chiquinha Gonzaga* and *Manoel Congo*, see chapter 3.

288 So far there exists no detailed analysis of women's leadership in *Manoel Congo* or *Chiquinha Gonzaga*. The study by Carle-Marsanne, for example, only dedicates one page to the topic. See Carle-Marsan 2013, *Luttes de Brésiliennes pour le Droit à la ville*, pp. 127f.

course also had an influence on the question of leadership within the squat, as it was supposed to exist only in a collective form, not in a hierarchical and overtly power-concentrating manner. What was left of the initial leadership and organizational struggles in *Chiquinha Gonzaga* had, by the time of the interviews, mostly been reduced to personal disputes, mistrust, and complaints, which were far from relevant or influential, and were an expression of the internal defragmentation of the squat. The inhabitants (both male and female) who had been part of the squat from the very beginning and also been engaged in citizenship activities prior to the occupation, were trying—at least rhetorically—to influence the concerns of the squat, but without any great impact other than precipitating more internal mistrust and rumors.

The only place where leadership was supposed to play a role—at least formally—was the association AHPOCG. As described earlier in section 3.1.1, in *Chiquinha Gonzaga*, for formal reasons of negotiation with the political authorities, it became necessary to set up an official association. This consisted of various coordinators, among them a president, a representative, and a treasurer, who were (re-)elected every two years by the inhabitants. According to the interviewees, this association was in fact not working very well at the time of the interviews. As formal leadership was not really an issue in the squat, the positions within the association did not imply much decision-making power. This was further confirmed through the fact that some of the interviewees could not even name the actual persons formally in charge, or they said that they themselves had not participated in the association's elections. One of the women who had held the position of the president of the association—at a time when the *coletivo* was still working much better—told me that even she sometimes did not participate in the assemblies because they were more a collective process, and she did not want to interfere in the collective decisions of the inhabitants:

Então assim: quando eu fui presidente da associação, foi a época em que a associação foi mais democrática. Porque tudo eu levava para o coletivo, e não queria me meter, porque se você é presidente, porque tem que ter uma entidade. Mas quem manda ali é o coletivo. Então tudo e quanto é discussão é coletiva. Tinha aqui uma comissão que chamava o coletivo. Tinha vez que eu nem ia! Eu como presidenta (...) Eu nem ia! (...) Bom, quem responde aqui é o coletivo, eu não vou à tutelar. É o coletivo, a gente vai tirar uma reunião do coletivo e tirar uma comissão para vir aqui. Se eu tiver na comissão eu vou vir enquanto comissão da ocupação. Se não tiver, eu não venho aqui como presidente. Porque lá dentro quem manda é o coletivo, não é presidente, não é porcaria nenhuma. É o coletivo da ocupação.²⁸⁹

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

The interviews revealed that since its inception, the positions within the association had been occupied by both women and men. Thus, women were not only much more engaged and present during the (few) assemblies—where they were not too shy to speak or defend their opinion and interests—but had also occupied positions (at least formally), such as that of the president of the association, or the treasurer in *Chiquinha Gonzaga*. Thus, in terms of leadership positions within the association, gender (conflict) did not seem to be an issue or topic of discussion in the squat. However, I argue that this was less due to prevailing gender equality inside the squat—which, as the previous chapters have shown, did not exist—than due to the fact that the formal internal organization of the squat did not assign real decision-making power to individuals which could then spill over or influence gender roles and relations.

(Female) Leadership in *Manoel Congo*

In *Manoel Congo* the situation was completely different. The internal organization of the squat was characterized by a strong hierarchical order covering different levels of responsibility (local, squat, municipal, state, and national level) and implemented in *Manoel Congo* by the MNLM as in every other of its established squats throughout the country. Thus, in contrast to *Chiquinha Gonzaga*, in *Manoel Congo* there was a strict hierarchical order in which its inhabitants assumed different levels of responsibility and power. As explained in section 3.2.2, the influence and guidance of the MNLM was strong and binding from the very beginning of the squat's existence, and the inhabitants were constantly reminded that they were part of an organized movement, and prompted to play their part in it. Leadership thus formed an important and overall present part of the squats' organization.

During the interviews and periods of observation inside the squat it became clear that particularly female leadership in *Manoel Congo* could hardly be ignored. It turned out that women were not only involved in background tasks, such as preparing food for demonstrations or participating in greater numbers at the regular meetings, but also constituted the most visible public reference for the squat. Women in *Manoel Congo* were coordinators not only of the local, but of all levels of organization of the movement's hierarchy. Most notably, the person who decided and controlled all affairs both inside and outside the squat was female. Hence, it was also she, who had made my research in *Manoel Congo* possible in the first place. After an initial meeting at her apartment, where I presented myself, she introduced me to the inhabitants of the squat at the following assembly and made it quite clear that she expected people to collaborate with me and to be available for interviews. For me, this

announcement was like a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it facilitated my access to the squat (in contrast to *Chiquinha Gonzaga*, where I had to gain access in a much more time-consuming and individual way), but on the other hand, it took me more time to get to the critical statements and to be able to “look behind the scenes.” It turned out that some inhabitants were even afraid that I would share transcripts and recordings of the interviews with this person (due to rumors that this had happened before), potentially revealing any criticisms they may have and thereby exposing them to serious consequences (as outlined in section 3.2.2).

Through informal discussions, I then gradually became aware not only of the internal conflicts in the squat, but also of the power and influence of this female leader. Due to her strict regime and tireless engagement, people mainly adhered to the rules inside the squat, and they were also able to achieve success at a political level—such as for instance in securing the permanence and consolidation of the squat. Being the MNLM representative at the national level, she was also highly involved in political and decision-making processes, a member of several committees, and she often spoke at public demonstrations or events to promote the interest of the squat and the movement in general. As her role in the squat was so important, it is worth taking a closer look at her biography and using it as a reference for learning more about female leadership in *Manoel Congo* in general.

At the time of our interview, Glória was in her early 50s and already had a lengthy personal history and experience in political activism. As a child she had grown up in humble circumstances in the interior of Minas Gerais and, as she stated, was a “person who already was born landless.”²⁹⁰ After her family were evicted from land they had occupied, they moved from the countryside in search of work to Volta Redonda (in the State of Rio de Janeiro) where the National Steel Company (*Companhia Siderúrgica Nacional*) still has its main plant today. But even there the family had to face serious challenges, and struggled for survival. In order to explain her later activism, Glória described her early experiences with exclusion and injustice, as well as her political education through her father and the church—especially through liberation theology:

Aí o meu pai não tinha recursos, não tinha posses, não tinha terra, então o único jeito é vir para o trabalho precarizado, onde estava crescendo a indústria, que era em Volta Redonda.

290 Own translation from: “*Eu sou uma pessoa que já nasceu sem terra, né*” (Interview in *Manoel Congo* with the national coordinator of the MNLM, a 51-year-old woman, 06.04.2011).

Aí em Volta Redonda a gente também não tinha terra para morar. (...) Então a minha vida toda foi de contato com essa exclusão. Porque: filha de trabalhador rural, depois filha de trabalhador operário precarizado na cidade, meu pai era operário na construção civil, então com isso eu sempre tive que tentar entender. Sempre fui muito curiosa, sempre quis tentar entender porque o sofrimento era tão grande, né. (...) Na medida que eu fui entendendo, eu fui entendendo dentro da igreja católica, que a igreja católica ela estava numa época em que se tentava implementar o que a gente chama de Teologia da Libertação. Então a Teologia das Libertação, ela discutia muito a fé e a vida. (...) E aí eu consegui entender dentro da Teologia da Libertação, que o mundo era tão melhor quanto mais a gente se organizasse e lutasse para fazer dele melhor. E aí comecei muito cedo! Com 13, 14 anos no grupo de adolescentes cristãos eu já comecei a lutar. E via o meu pai também, a luta que meu pai tinha, por onde ele passava, ele tentava se juntar com outros iguais a ele. Negou o chamado do Sindicato, que quando o Sindicato chamava o meu pai estava, então eu acabei tendo esse desenvolvimento na minha vida de querer sempre participar de luta para alterar a realidade que eu vivi. Entendeu? Não descobri a luta por acaso, ou porque eu li alguma coisa. Eu descobri a luta para a sobrevivência minha, da minha família e das pessoas que viviam iguais a mim no meu entorno.²⁹¹

Thus, from early on she had undergone a process of shaping of her political ideas and consciousness by being in contact with and being influenced by institutions and people who were promoting social change. Apart from that, she—like the other inhabitants—also emphasized her own personal privation as an important factor contributing to her later involvement in activism. Since then, her activism had continued in different movements, parties and initiatives:

Eu participei da construção do Movimento Nacional de Luta pela Moradia em 1990, mas antes de 1990 a gente já tinha feito uma luta pelas emendas constitucionais. Da Constituição de 1988. Já tinha feito uma luta por eleições diretas, a gente já tinha feito uma luta para fazer organizações nacionais de articulação nacional de reforma urbana. Tipo a central de movimentos populares, tipo a central de união de trabalhadores, a organização política partidária dos trabalhadores, tipo o PT que eu tinha participado da fundação.²⁹²

Even though not all of the women in leadership positions in *Manoel Congo* shared such a special and a lengthy history of activism, they had all already gained significant experience in political militancy before becoming engaged in

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

292 Ibid.

the squat. Just as former political experience and engagement in citizenship activities had influenced the understanding and adaptation of a citizenship vocabulary (see section 4.2.1) it also seemed to make the assumption of leadership positions, at least in the squat *Manoel Congo*, more likely.

The women I interviewed in coordinator positions at the level of squat, municipality, state, and nation had already been politically active before their participation in *Manoel Congo*, for example in land occupations or in their former communities. Interestingly, as the interviews revealed, most of these women had by some means or other already known each other for years through their activism. One example was Leila, a 66-year-old woman, who had been very committed to community work in a land occupation before living in the squat. There she had met and worked with other women who later also became involved in the organization of *Manoel Congo*.

Então passou, morava em ocupação. Eu e a [Regina], [Renata], a gente se conhece, porque a [Renata] também sempre fez parte do movimento. Aí foi quando ... fiquei 19 anos. Essa ocupação tem 19 anos. Agora que está entrando asfalto. Não tem água, a água é clandestina, não tinha asfalto, a luz é precária, não tem área de lazer. As escolas são poucas as escolas. Porque são quatro comunidades, quatro ocupações, uma de frente para a outra. Tem problema de territorialidade. Estão reivindicando uma creche agora porque? A pessoa tem uma creche da prefeitura, está numa das quatro comunidades. Só que quem está aqui, não pode ir para lá. Aquela coisa toda. Então eu e [Renata], que me ajudou. A [Regina] também, começamos um trabalho lá com as mulheres. Um trabalho com as mulheres e as crianças. E eu fui organizando uma creche, trabalhando com adolescente, idoso, fazendo trabalho social. Quando eu fui, na época que a [Glória] organizou a ocupação, a [Renata] falou para mim: olha, quero que você conheça uma pessoa que eu falei de você, e vamos fazer uma ocupação no Centro. E a gente está chamando umas pessoas que já tiveram essa experiência. Aí eu falei: tá bem.²⁹³

Apparently there existed a kind of network among female activists to which these women ultimately returned when necessary. In her study of grassroots leadership in Rio de Janeiro, Cecilia de Mello e Souza describes how female leaders, in contrast to male leaders, drew at an organizational level on their domestic resources, such as formal and informal networks.²⁹⁴ Thus, regarding the large number of women in leadership positions in *Manoel Congo*, and

293 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with a 66-year-old woman, 29.04.2011.

294 Mello e Souza, Cecilia. 2008. "Grassroots Leadership in the Network of Healthy Communities in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. A Gender Perspective", *Gender and Development*, 16 (3): 492.

considering the fact that many had known one another from former activism, it seems that these women likewise used informal networks in order to organize their activism.²⁹⁵

Another network that existed at least in the squat *Manoel Congo*, and which apparently had the potential to foster some of the women's political participation, was that defined by membership in the Pentecostal church. I came across the narratives of some Pentecostal women who not only talked about challenges they faced inside the squat (see section 3.2.2), but also about difficulties they had to face in their Pentecostal community when explaining and justifying their participation in the occupation of an empty building. Their statements—such as for example that of Teresa—also reflect another characteristic of Pentecostalism, namely the importance of and respect for law-based authorities.²⁹⁶

Aí meu Deus. Eles não entendiam nada! Aí: invasora, você invadiu! Você entrou no prédio dos outros sem morar! Passei decepção, luta até na minha igreja. Que eu sou evangélica, né? Aí passei luta lá na minha igreja, fui disciplinada, porque não poderia ter feito isso. Quer dizer que eles não entendem que quando você compra você já está pagando imposto, através de tudo o que você compra. E esse dinheiro vai para o governo! Então esse dinheiro dá direito à moradia. Mas as pessoas não entendem isso. E aí acabam achando que eu estava errada. Aí todo mundo falava, todo mundo falava. Aí depois que eles foram vendo que estava certo, eu levando reportagem de jornal para eles lerem. Eu levava os papeis, eles viam batido assim, falando a respeito de ocupação, a respeito de direitos, de que você tem direito a isso, tem direito a aquilo. Aí levamos, falando na igreja, explicando. Aí eles começaram a entender.²⁹⁷

Even though Pentecostal ideology does not directly promote political participation,²⁹⁸ Pentecostal women like Teresa become, involved in citizenship activities and enter into the public realm. According to most scholars, women's activities in the Pentecostal church provide them with skills and opportunities, such as public speaking, organizing, budgeting, and mobilizing, which may

295 Queiroz e Mello 2014, *Trajetórias, Cotidianos e Utopias*, pp. 83f and Fornazin 2014, *Luta pela Moradia*, pp. 41f, have likewise observed a strong influence of personal social networks at the beginning of the squats in order to recruit participants.

296 Mariz 1992, *Religion and Poverty in Brazil*, p. 68.

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

298 Mariz 1992, *Religion and Poverty in Brazil*, p. 68.

facilitate their engagement in extra-domestic activities.²⁹⁹ Cecilia Mariz suggests, in her study on CBEs and Pentecostal communities, that:

Both movements foster a sense of self-esteem and superiority to others, provide support networks that are national in scope, develop leadership skills, promote literacy, and encourage a sober and ascetic style of life. In combination, these experiences, dispositions, and abilities can facilitate social mobility and can enable the members to promote or defend their interests in the political arena.³⁰⁰

Taking an active part in the Pentecostal church may therefore also have a certain potential to facilitate women's participation and engagement in citizenship activities, like the occupation of an empty building, as they could draw upon practices already known from their previous religious engagement.

As a national coordinator of the MNLM, Glória's everyday life differed from that of the other inhabitants and also held additional challenges. Her life was dominated by her activism, which included often time-consuming obligations, such as meetings, calls, and demonstrations. Her engagement was in the truest sense of the word a full-time job, with the difference that it was not remunerated: "[E] nós, militantes do movimento popular, não somos remunerados! Por isso nós somos poucos. Para dar conta de um monte de coisa. A gente tem que sobreviver, trabalhar para sobreviver e ainda militar."³⁰¹ Even though she was one of the national coordinators of the MNLM and in this regard already involved in numerous tasks, she was also highly engaged in the squat's organization, and almost always available to everyone at any time of the day. When I asked her about the time she spent on activism, her answer was as follows: "É sempre. (Rir) É sempre. O tempo todo eu to pensando nas coisas que não foram feitas, as coisas que já foram feitas. No que foi mal feito, o que tem que corrigir, com quem eu posso contar, quem vai fazer isso, aquilo."³⁰² In fact, she was completely devoted to activism. People often also met at her apartment in order to ask for her advice or to organize political activism. She

299 Drogus 1994, Religious Change and Women's Status, p. 6; Motley Hallum 2003, Taking Stock and Building Bridges, p. 184; Chesnut 1997, Born again in Brazil, pp. 137, 140; Flora 1976, Pentecostalism in Colombia, p. 202.

300 Mariz 1992, Religion and Poverty in Brazil, p. 69.

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

302 Ibid.

was conscious that activism permeated her private life, and reflected on her intense engagement, also taking aspects of gender into account in doing so:

A minha casa é uma casa coletiva desse prédio. A minha comida é coletiva a minha casa é coletiva, o meu café é coletivo. É tudo coletivo (...). Então ficou assim meio como uma coisa matriarcal muito esquisita, sabe? Era tudo lá em casa, até as reuniões às vezes. Reuniões extraordinárias aconteciam quando tinha um tema urgente, ia tudo lá para minha casa. Assim: vamos, vamos, vamos decidir isso! E iam comigo e iam me levando.³⁰³

Glória expressed feeling “*matriarchal*” (matriarchal) when she referred to her central and full-time role in the squat. She thereby brought the notion of motherhood to her political activism, adding a “caring” and thus domestic character to her engagement. In fact, some scholars have emphasized that female leaders’ approaches to activism reflect their roles and responsibilities for the private sphere (see also below). Their activism in this perspective is then an extension of the domestic sphere and a combination of both spheres (public and private) and their permeability—as shown for the case of Glória—therefore nothing unusual. Similar devotion and time-consuming activism could be observed in the other women who held coordinator positions.

In contrast, according to the scholars, male leaders were clearer in defining their limits and separating spheres.³⁰⁴ Indeed, the interview with Gerardo, the other national coordinator living inside the squat, showed a different way of dealing with activism and the associated responsibilities. Although he held the same position as Glória, he strictly separated his commitment as a national coordinator of the MNLM from his participation and presence in the squat:

É porque eu tenho mais a postura de dirigente. Eu não cuido muito das relações domésticas da ocupação. Quem cuida mais é a [Glória]. Então as pessoas me vêem como morador, mas aquele morador assim ... que é o coordenador do movimento ... e eu não tenho muita convivência com as pessoas. Eu converso com eles, me vêem, tanto é que eu nem sempre estou aqui. Mas vou para Caxias e volto.³⁰⁵

Besides her activism, Glória also had to organize her private life. She had raised her children mainly on her own, as *chefe de família*, and had also taken care of

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

304 Mello e Souza 2008, Grassroots Leadership in the Network, pp. 489f.

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

her grandson. In this regard, she was just one of many women in the squats who had to take over the main responsibility for childcare and financial provision for the family (see section 4.3.2.1):

A minha vida não é normal. Eu sou militante, eu sou mãe, eu sou avó, eu sou separada do meu marido desde ... meu neto tem 11 anos e o meu neto é o mais velho, eu me separei quando a minha filha estava grávida, deve ter uns 12 anos. Criei os meus filhos sozinha, criei os meus dois netos mais velhos sozinha. Tenho um filho com dependência química. Meus filhos não estudaram o que deveriam estudar porque eu não tinha na minha cabeça claro o valor da educação, como todo o povo. (...) Então o resultado: hoje eu tenho dois filhos cuja escolaridade é baixa, nenhum dos dois terminou o segundo grau, a minha filha com 30 anos tem quatro crianças, quatro filhos. Ela começou a engravidar a primeira vez com 16 anos. O meu filho é dependente químico. E eu lido sozinha. Eu sou uma mulher chefe de família. Além da militância da vida inteira eu tenho que dar conta, eu tenho que ser pai, ser mãe, ser avó... Ser conselheira, ser psicóloga. Lavar louça, fazer almoço. Tem que fazer tudo isso. Então o meu dia, eu to fazendo comida, eu to tentando organizar na minha cabeça a minha agenda militante do movimento social. (...) É tudo junto! Ao mesmo tempo o meu filho está lá na clínica, será que ele conseguiu arrumar um psiquiatra para ele, será que ... tem que fazer tudo junto. Ai isso é o meu dia a dia.³⁰⁶

According to her, her *militância* (militancy) had often caused problems and conflict in her private life. She reported having faced serious conflict in dealing with both adequately—her activism and her responsibilities as mother and wife. On the one hand, Glória described the struggles she had faced with her husband, who had not been able to understand or support her activism and had expected her to fulfill a traditional gender role as housewife and mother. In doing so, she reflected critically on the gendered division of labor inside the private sphere and its negative effects on women:

Porque esposo e esposa, não entende que a pessoa tem uma prioridade de militância social ao invés dos afazeres domésticos. E os esposos latino-americanos ainda acham que o lugar da mulher ainda é atrás do fogão, é lavando roupa, é fazendo comida. (...) Eu era super oprimida. Muito oprimida. O romper assim: de chegar um dia eu ter coragem de marcar uma reunião, não fazer a janta e deixar a janta sem fazer e ir na reunião. Mas isso foi... foram poucas vezes. A maioria das vezes eu tinha que fazer tudo correndo ou ter uma

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

peessoa, uma vizinha para vir ajudar. Para eu poder ir para a reunião para chegar e ter pronto.³⁰⁷

While over time her activism had played a part in her distancing herself from her husband and his expectations, motherhood on the other hand had caused her much more inner conflict, and was a responsibility she could not escape from. As the interview showed, she identified as both activist and mother (“*Eu sou militante, eu sou mãe*”) and was torn between traditional gender role expectations, and her pursuit of self-fulfillment through activism in the public sphere. She admitted openly during the interviews that motherhood had been a challenge and had also influenced her personal development in a negative way:

Ai, eu não sei Bea, o que significa ser mãe. Eu não sei. Eu sei até o que deveria ser. Eu acho que ser mãe é ... não sei não. Porque na minha vida ser mãe foi deixar de ser eu. Então a minha vida acabou se dividindo entre o ser social que luta para transformar o mundo, e ser mãe. (...) Então eu tinha que tomar conta dos meus filhos e tomar conta do mundo. Mas nunca teve assim: A [Glória], mulher. A [Glória] esposa. Às vezes até cedia, um dia esposa, às vezes ... não tinha muita preocupação de fazer comida para o marido, lavar a roupa do marido, entendeu? Eu rompi com isso depois de uns oito anos de casada. Mas com os meus filhos eu não conseguia. Romper, assim, de dizer: ah, não fiz. Não é romper de deixar de fazer. Ah, hoje não deu para fazer e pronto. Eu vou para a minha reunião e não vou fazer a janta. Cheguei a ter coragem de fazer isso de vez em quando, mas os filhos sempre foi uma preocupação. Então se eu arrumasse um trabalho militando, e arrumando um trabalho ... eu passei cinco, quase seis anos recebendo um auxílio, uma ajuda de custo de Volta Redonda. Essa ajuda de custo era um salário mínimo e meio. Entendeu? Então nesses seis anos, eu militava 24 horas. Muitas vezes eu levava os meus filhos comigo, quando era uma coisa numa sexta- feira por exemplo, um seminário, eu levava os meus filhos comigo. Retornava com eles no domingo à noite, ou eles matavam aula na segunda-feira e eu voltava na segunda de manhã, entendeu? Que eu tinha muitos seminários, muitos encontros nacionais, regionais, estaduais.³⁰⁸

Even though their biographies differed from that of Glória, other female coordinators had shared similar experiences. From a certain level of engagement,³⁰⁹ their daily lives was dominated by a time-consuming activism which sometimes did not end with the MNLM’s activities. Some of these women

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

308 Ibid.

309 Normally above the level of task coordination (as *portaria*, etc.) inside the squat.

were additionally engaged in activities in their former communities or active in other groups and organizations. For them, conflict over the accomplishment of traditional gender roles with their partners—as also described by Glória—were a particular issue.³¹⁰ It seemed as if partnership and activism only worked together if the male partners accepted their wives' engagement, or if they were activists themselves. For instance, one of the state coordinators of the squat described her prior domestic conflict, but also explained how these problems were later resolved through the involvement of her husband in activism: “[U]ma das coisas que ele briga às vezes até comigo por conta do movimento porque eu me dedico muito ao movimento. E deixo às vezes ele, a família...(…) Tinha [problemas], mas ele também era militante. Eu acabei por conta da minha militância, envolvendo a família na militância.”³¹¹ In her case, it could even be interpreted as a strategy to involve her husband in activism in order to obtain his support and to avoid larger conflict. In other cases, where men generally refused to offer their acceptance, support, or participation—as described for the case of Glória—marriages did not last in the long term.³¹²

Just as with the other inhabitants, women in leadership positions reproduced dominant gender norms of women as mothers and caregivers, and linked women's struggle for housing to practical gender needs. They also shared with the other inhabitants the same traditional stereotypical beliefs about women and men as described in section 4.3.3, such as women being more sensitive and responsible, and men being *machista* and cowardly. These assumed-inherent qualities of women were even perceived by some of the inhabitants as qualities

310 As described in section 4.3.1, many of the women in the squat had experienced problems with their partners in relation to their participation in the squats.

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

312 Men in leadership positions also seemed to face problems with their partners. As the national coordinator of the MNLM told me: “Porque nem toda mulher aceita o meu comportamento do meu tipo assim. Um cara ocupado com a luta. Teve por exemplo uma questão mais pessoal, teve uma que falou assim para mim: vai cuidar do seu movimento e me deixa! Tchau. É, eu respeito. Agora essa não. Ela já foi dirigente sindical. Foi dirigente sindical dos professores. Então a única angústia dela é que ela me vê assim: poxa, você está duro, tá sem dinheiro e tal. Eu falo: um dia vai melhorar (Rir)” (Interview in *Manoel Congo* with the national coordinator of the MNLM, a 51-year-old man, 03.05.2011). These problems were mainly related to the (lack of) time they could dedicate to their partners due to their time-consuming activism, and in contrast to women in leadership positions, they did not face conflict with their partners regarding the accomplishment of traditional gender roles.

which made women better prepared for leadership positions, as the following quote from one of the male inhabitants illustrated:

Estava vendo a coordenação municipal, são só mulheres! É muita mulher! Então isso é importante. E elas têm mais sensibilidade, parece que estão muito mais ... não é sensibilidade besta, é sensibilidade de ser sensata, saber agir, não tem dessa de apenas você estar errado e ela vai ficar ali ... elas sabem agir, eu acho que a gente é mais cego nas decisões, pelo que vêm dizendo à gente. Que tem que ser durão, tem que ser isso, tem que ser aquilo. Elas não. Elas têm uma outra forma de percepção e atuação.³¹³

This perspective suggests the existence of a difference between female and male leadership styles, which is based on a traditional stereotyping of women and men. Such assumptions constitute an additional challenge to women, as they further deepen dominant gender norms and thereby reinforce the tendency for leadership—especially at higher levels—to remain in male hands, as women were supposed to be too sensitive and weak for decision-making.

Like most of the inhabitants, Glória reproduced traditional gender stereotypes. Talking with her about the participation of women in the squat, she offered an explanation which summarized and reflected precisely the dominant logics on gender in the squat as developed and described in the previous sections:

Então eu sinto que a mulher ela se sente muito responsável pela criação. Quando ela sente que a cria dela, a família dela vai sofrer uma consequência maior e ela percebe, consegue vislumbrar um caminho, uma solução, ela é até mais. Ela pega e vai até o fim. O homem é muito temporal. Ele vai, você chama ele para ir ali ocupar um prédio, ele pode até ir, mas ele não gosta nem do antes nem do depois. Ele vai e pronto. Vai, abre o cadeado e acabou. A mulher não. A mulher quer garantir que aquilo seja bom, que seja bem feito, que a família dela realmente tenha uma alteração naquilo que ela vê. Sabe? Eu acho que para mim é essa coisa. É o carinho, e é querer um mundo melhor para aquilo que eu pari. E eu pari o mundo. Não vou aceitar que eles acabem com esse mundo, que eles destruam esse mundo e não vou aceitar que os meus filhos e filhos das gerações todas que estão vindo, recebam um mundo merda com a minha cumplicidade. Isso elaborado. Mas no dia a dia é sentido, sabe? É como um gavião que está em cima do ninho, dos filhotes, e percebe que alguém vem pegar. Eu acho que mulher tem essa coisa. Isso é meu, saiu daqui, é parte de mim, então eu vou cuidar. Então eu vou cuidar protegendo do mundo, ou eu vou cuidar modificando o mundo. Quando eu percebo, quando eu começo a desenvolver um senso crítico, e me aponta um caminho coletivo, eu vou para aquilo. Para resolver o problema do

313 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with a 23-year-old man, 21.05.2011.

meu filho, da minha família, sabe? Garantir o bem estar da minha família, do qual eu acho que eu que sou responsável. Os maridos somem, vão embora. E as mulheres dão conta dos filhos. Os maridos são presos, os maridos ficam na rua alcoolizados. Os maridos gastam dinheiro na boca de fumo com droga. As mulheres não compram disso. Às vezes a mulher também é dependente química, às vezes ela também é alcoólatra, às vezes ela também é desempregada, mas ela admite fazer uma faxina, ela admite catar uma latinha, catar um papelão, mas ela assume como parte integrante dela a resguardar o filho, a família, o espaço. Para mim é isso. Essa coisa que faz a gente ser melhores lutadoras do que os homens. Quando a gente é instigado, a gente vai e não gostamos de parar antes de conquistar, não. A gente quer chegar até o fim. (...) Porque com as mulheres nós podemos contar para a construção do processo. E com os homens, só para aparecer no processo. Só para ter uma visibilidade de autoridade, de segurança, sabe? Mas quem constrói o dia a dia são as mulheres. Quem guarda na cabeça se a obra vai começar, se não vai começar, porque e se teve a reunião do corretor, se não teve. Que a assembléia estava ruim porque não tinha assunto. Quem guarda isso são as mulheres. Os homens você chama lá: fulano, fala ali para representar o movimento em tal lugar, elas vão ter que ir quando a reunião acabar tomar uma cerveja. Essa alegria de ver uma criança que chegou aqui, sem estudar, sabe? Uma criança de onze anos que chegou aqui sem pisar numa escola, e que a partir daqui foi para a escola, sabe? E que agora sai feliz da vida todo dia de uniforme ... é das melhores. Quem contabiliza o desenvolvimento da vida são as mulheres. *E por que será, né?* Não sei. Acho que os homens foram criados culturalmente para não fazer isso. Não sei.³¹⁴

Just like the other inhabitants, Glória portrayed women as mothers and emphasized motherhood as the central reason for their engagement, and also engaged in negative stereotyping of men. Interestingly, she referred to women's responsibility as mothers by linking woman to nature, using metaphors and references such as "*cria*," "*eu pari o mundo*," "*[é] como um gavião que está em cima do ninho, dos filhotes, e percebe que alguém vem pegar. Eu acho que mulher tem essa coisa*." In her account motherhood then became a central and biologically determined part and responsibility of womanhood. Alluding to biological differences between the two sexes in order to explain women's engagement, Glória followed a line of reasoning greatly criticized by feminists, since existing gender hierarchies, when assumed to be naturally given, can hardly be criticized and changed (as outlined in section 2.2.1). In contrast, at the end of her statement, she introduced a completely different reasoning, which was that gender is socially constructed. While she talked about motherhood in terms

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

of it being a biologically determined role, for her, fatherhood, or “the lack of it,” was culturally influenced: “*Acho que os homens foram criados culturalmente para não fazer isso.*” Glória thus introduced the notion of a cultural construction of gender in an explicit way. This level of reflection differentiated her from the other inhabitants, and ultimately represented her long preoccupation with the topic of exclusion and her contact with people and institutions of a different educational level. Education played an important role in all of these women’s lives. They were all attending or had attended university, or were trying to continue their education by other means.³¹⁵

Thus, women in *Manoel Congo* played an important role, including in leadership positions. But, as some of these female leaders stressed, especially in the upper levels of the movement hierarchy this was still an exception, and women often had to face sexist barriers. The majority of the movement’s representatives were still men, as Inês, one of the municipal coordinators told me, not without bitterness.³¹⁶

Mas eu acho que a gente meio que passa ... se envolve mais porque ... aquilo parece que nos toca mais. Sabe? Eu não sei. Mas é uma diferença também porque às vezes também a gente ta mais na base. Eu acho que a gente também tem a diferença da participação da mulher nesses espaços que a gente ta muito na base da organização das coisas. A gente ta em ato, a gente ta organizando as famílias, a gente ta reforçando aquela necessidade de que tem que ter onde os meus filhos morarem e tudo mais ... mas ao mesmo tempo a estrutura maior que é de coordenação e tudo mais sempre fica na mão de homens. Tem muito mais homem! Na coordenação nacional, é ... praticamente quase tudo homem. São poucas mulheres que se tem. Então como é que pode, né? A questão da liderança, de mostrar o poder, é o homem, né? E nessa coisa mais ... é como se fosse uma coisa mais doméstica né? É como se a mulher ficasse nessa coisa mais próxima, nesse cotidiano, essa coisa mais assim. E a coisa do público, fosse mais para o homem mesmo. É a diferença né? Dos papéis entre o público e o privado. Acho que pode ser um pouquinho isso também. (...). Nossa, tem estados em que praticamente toda a coordenação é de homens e a mulher que fala, os caras meio que ficam ... é uma coisa bem machista. Umas coisas

315 As we have learned in section 3.2.1 promoting education among the inhabitants was also an important topic on the movement’s agenda inside *Manoel Congo*.

316 This fact has also been confirmed by Fornazin 2014, *Luta pela Moradia*, p. 106 and also for Salvador da Bahia by Macedo Filho 2010, *Onde Mora a Cidadania?*, pp. 81f, 95; only three states are represented by women in the MNLM: Rio de Janeiro, Mato Grosso do Sul e Pará (Levy et al. 2013, *Movimento Popular Urbano e Mulheres*, p. 316).

bem machistas assim. Mesmo que a pessoa não fale, não seja declarado, mas os vínculos são meio ... de quem cabe o poder, entendeu?³¹⁷

While the basic and daily organization of the squat was guaranteed mainly through women's engagement, dominant gender structures and male dominance in more public positions—which tend to go along with greater decision-making power—seemed to prevail, and still constituted a challenge for female activists.³¹⁸

In her analysis, Inês interpreted women's significant engagement at the lower levels of the movement's hierarchy as part of their domestic responsibility. Such an interpretation of women's engagement in activism as an extension of women's domestic roles as mothers and caregivers in the private sphere is also what Sonia Alvarez had summarized under the term *politicization of motherhood* (as outlined in section 2.3.2).³¹⁹ Even though the interviews had shown that women's decisions to participate in the squat were mainly motivated by practical gender needs based on a gendered division of labor in society, which allocated the responsibility for provision for the family and the defense and organization of living conditions to women (see section 4.3.1), it could only partially explain women's further engagement in leadership positions in the squat. In order to secure housing and to ensure its permanence, women became engaged and also took over leadership positions. But, from a certain level of engagement, as we have learned, this was also associated with great personal costs and resulted in difficulties in fulfilling domestic roles and responsibilities that were expected of them. Thus, if research suggests that women mobilize because they lack the resources necessary to fulfill their role as mothers,³²⁰ then their further engagement in roles such as that of municipal, state, or even national coordinator, which must automatically come at the expense of their maternal role, requires other, additional, explanations.

In research on women's participation in citizenship activities, their individual biographies should therefore not be overlooked, and neither should their need and urge to develop on a personal level. For them, engagement in leadership

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

318 Renato Macedo Filho, for example, also reports for his case study, that in decisive moments of negotiation with the government, men used to take over, even if there were women in the same position (Macedo Filho 2010, *Onde Mora a Cidadania?*, p. 137).

319 Alvarez 1990, *Engendering Democracy in Brazil*, p. 51.

320 Neuhaus 1998, "If I Had Abandoned my Child", p. 333.

positions can in particular be an opportunity to achieve personal gains and self-fulfillment beyond motherhood—as the interviews demonstrated:

Tudo partiu da questão de estar envolvida no movimento social, porque senão eu seria uma dona de casa comum nessa cidade. Como qualquer uma outra. Eu sempre falo isso nas minhas palestras: eu sou igual a qualquer uma. Eu seria uma dona de casa, mãe de três filhos que lavava, passava e cozinhava. Um dia eu tava trabalhando, eu sou costureira de profissão.³²¹

Indeed, an important factor which could promote women's further engagement and could encourage them to take on more responsibilities in the public sphere (even though this would eventually challenge traditional gender roles in the private sphere), is apparently their becoming embedded in “engagement-promoting structures,” such as social movements. These structures—as the case of *Manoel Congo* has shown, especially in contrast to *Chiquinha Gonzaga*—often provide orientation, networks, and role models, which can foster women's development on a personal level.

As demonstrated in sections 4.1.2 and 4.2.1, being confronted every day with the strong presence and educational efforts of a social movement, and being obliged to take part in it, had the potential to be a transformative force and made at least a difference in terms of the development of a political awareness and ability of the inhabitants to talk in a language of citizenship. In some cases their way of thinking had started to change over time, and many had, because of the movement, returned to school and education. The movement structure in *Manoel Congo* thus also helped to slowly introduce women to leadership positions. In a first step women were encouraged to get involved at the lower levels of the squat's organization, for example in the coordination of the *portaria*, and could then broaden their experience over time, ultimately also taking over leadership positions at a squat, municipal, state, or even national level. Some of the women thus stressed the importance of gaining an orientation through the movement for their personal development and engagement:

São mulheres que não tem instrução, muitas são analfabetas, conviveram a vida toda em baixo do machismo, onde o homem diz e desdiz tudo. Seja o pai, seja o irmão mais velho, depois o namorado, o marido, o companheiro, seja lá o que for. Sempre aquela coisa toda. Esse movimento, a mulher que se envolve nisso, ela se descobre. Ela descobre nela ... foi o que eu descobri. Eu descobri a força e do que era capaz. Quando eu me vi liderando

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

ocupações, liderando ocupações e levando grupos para ocupar terras, e depois se preparar para enfrentar a polícia e aquilo, eu descobri.³²²

Agora para que serviria a organização, uma organização que conduzisse à emancipação delas, ao crescimento delas. Então para isso tem que ter um planejamento, tem que ter uma política de informação, continuada. Tem que ter pessoas que já tenham tido contato com esse nível de informação para poder partilhar, que tenham metodologia para poder provocar.³²³

But this section has also demonstrated that even though engagement-promoting structures might encourage them to take on more responsibilities in the public sphere, the large number of women in leadership positions in *Manoel Congo* was still an exception, and women faced sexist barriers in the public as well as the private sphere. The exceptional case of *Manoel Congo* was ultimately due to Glória, who as a charismatic female leader had become a role model for many women, and had actively supported and promoted women's participation as coordinators at different levels in the movement's hierarchy.

In summary, this section has highlighted once again the importance of taking gender into account when analyzing daily life in the squats. Women were not only fundamental for the daily organization of the squats, but in *Manoel Congo* particularly they had also ascended in the movement hierarchy and had gained access to decision-making power in leadership positions. All of the women in leadership positions had originally become engaged out of personal necessity, and had normally gained experience in movements or other organizations—in citizenship activities—before their participation in *Manoel Congo*.

The interviews revealed that women's engagement in leadership positions did not necessarily imply an overall challenge of their gender subordination or lead to reconfigurations of images and narratives of womanhood. They established the same gender stereotypes as the other inhabitants, and also stressed motherhood especially as an important part of womanhood. Their engagement in leadership positions had often come along with conflicts in their private lives. They had almost always confronted gender-related conflicts at home with their male partners, since from a certain level of engagement onwards, these women had to face the challenge of balancing their activism with traditional gender-role expectations as mothers and wives. Hence, women's

322 Interview in *Manoel Congo* with a 66-year-old woman, 29.04.2011.

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

citizenship always co-habited with traditional ideals of gender in a relationship of tension, from which problems and conflict often stemmed in both spheres. Furthermore, even though women were highly represented in *Manoel Congo*, there was still a prevailing male dominance in leadership positions within the movement itself, which also often constituted a challenge for the female activists.

Hence, to explain why women took up leadership positions and were willing to face these challenges in the long run, it is not enough to argue that their engagement was just an extension of their traditional responsibility for the private sphere. Above a certain level of engagement, as we have learned, this was also associated with great personal costs, and resulted in difficulties in fulfilling expected domestic roles and responsibilities. Therefore, when talking about women in leadership positions we must also consider additional aspects, such as their individual biographies, and their need and desire to develop on a personal level and to find opportunities to achieve personal gains and self-fulfillment beyond motherhood. Thus, the engagement of women in needs-based struggles initially motivated by their responsibility for the private sphere can also lead—especially when framed in an engagement-promoting structure such as a social movement—to personal growth and further engagement in the public sphere.

4.3.5 Preliminary Summary

The interviews with the inhabitants and the observations made inside the squats have confirmed the prevailing assumption within the research literature that women's engagement in citizenship activities is mainly motivated by practical gender interests based on a gendered division of labor within their homes, which allocated the responsibility for providing for the family and for the defense and organization of living conditions to women.³²⁴ A closer look at the inhabitants' daily lives and routines, then, has in fact revealed the existence, and enduring nature, of traditional gender roles, norms and relations within the squats. In particular, motherhood turned out to be central to women's gender identities, and was also frequently used to legitimate their participation in citizenship activities. This is what Sonia Alvarez ultimately called the *politicization of motherhood*.³²⁵

324 See for example Potthast 2012, *Frauen und soziale Bewegungen*; Jelin 1990, *Citizenship and Identity*; Alvarez 1990, *Engendering Democracy in Brazil*; Molyneux 2001, *Women's Movements in International Perspective*; Machado Vieira 1993, "We Learned to Think Politically".

325 Alvarez 1990, *Engendering Democracy in Brazil*, p. 51.

Some scholars have interpreted this accentuation of women's traditionally ascribed roles as mothers and wives as a strategy these women use to facilitate and justify their entrance into the public sphere and to bring their concerns from the private to the public sphere. Those scholars further argue that avoiding overtly challenging the nature of women's gender subordination, and organizing around issues related to the private sphere, are ways of avoiding larger conflicts and resistance with men in both the private and public spheres due to their activism (see section 2.3.2).³²⁶ But, I argue, this argumentation is only partly applicable as an explanation of women's citizenship in the squats, as it tends to oversimplify social relations within the private sphere. In a society in which women are still assuming most domestic responsibilities (see section 2.2.2), an accentuation of their traditionally ascribed role as mothers and wives can of course be useful for facilitating and justifying their entrance into the public sphere. However, it does not automatically imply that organizing around issues related to the private sphere also avoids larger conflict with men. The interviews have revealed that in order to participate in the squats, rather than avoiding conflicts with men, the women had consciously faced them.

They had, for example, risked their marriages at the beginning of the squats, and had also taken up leadership positions that openly challenged their traditional domestic responsibilities. They had often decided to do so with great self-confidence and a conviction that they were able to make a change for their families. Their (former) living conditions have revealed (see section 4.1) that fighting the nature of gender subordination was not a priority in their everyday lives, as these women were concerned with the basic needs of their families, and were struggling to survive. Thus, even though they were aware of the existence of gender inequalities and experienced them on a daily basis, they still had other priorities to fight for, for instance trying to improve their economic situation. But, as the example of *Manoel Congo* has illustrated in particular, the engagement of women in needs-based struggles initially motivated by their responsibility for the private sphere can also lead to personal growth and further engagement in the public sphere, when framed in an engagement-promoting structure, such as a social movement. The importance of such structures has also already been detected and emphasized for the adaptation of a citizenship language in section 4.2.1. This corresponds to the findings of other scholars who also highlight the potential for change regarding gender subordination, under the condition that "practical gender interests are collectivized and politicized."³²⁷ Maxine Molyneux even argues: "One conclusion that could be drawn was that

326 Moser 1993, *Gender Planning and Development*, p. 36.

327 Safa 1990, *Women's Social Movements*, p. 363.

activism alone, in the absence of a transformative politics and supportive material circumstances, did not lead to ‘empowerment’.”³²⁸

Thus, the squats are a good example of how mobilization around motherhood and needs-based issues provides a potential for change and emancipation, but does not automatically lead to a rupture of the—hitherto prevailing—traditional patterns of gender roles; that is, to women’s greater gender equality or an awareness of gender subordination. As particularly the analysis of their daily routines and the prevailing gender stereotypes has revealed, women’s citizenship in the squats has until now not led to significant changes regarding the domestic division of labor, nor to an alleviation of these women’s domestic responsibilities. I therefore cannot agree with studies that postulate a break with the traditional gender identities through participation in the squats.³²⁹ I argue rather that their engagement in citizenship activities can facilitate their entry into structures that promote further engagement and personal development (as demonstrated in section 4.2), but are not enough on their own to precipitate profound changes in the gender identities of individuals who are struggling to survive on a daily basis.

328 Molyneux 2001, Women’s Movements in International Perspective, p. 177.

329 Thus, my overall results differ from those of Marianne Carle-Marsanne regarding the impact of women’s citizenship in *Manoel Congo*, which seem too general and optimistic to me, and in this sense do not capture the heterogeneity of the women in the squats. She indicates a break with the traditional identities through participation in the squats: “*Cette recherche montre aussi une éventuelle transformation des rapports sociaux de sexe, car au-delà de leur quête du Droit à la ville, au sein du foyer, on assiste à la conquête de leurs droits comme femme*” (Carle-Marsan 2013, Luites de Brésiliennes pour le Droit à la ville, p. 135), or: “*Nous observons ici l’amorce d’une déconstruction progressive des identités de genre rendue possible grâce à une démarche d’empowerment*” (Carle-Marsan 2013, Luites de Brésiliennes pour le Droit à la ville, p. 123), or: “*C’est dans ce sens que les pratiques collectives nous parlent d’un empowerment individuel et collectif dans l’esprit où ces femmes se sont transformées et ont aussi transformée, par conséquent, leur société*” (Carle-Marsan 2011, En Mouvement pour le Droit au Logement, p. 4). That this study cannot confirm such a drastic transformation could be due to the fact that in Carle-Marsanne’s study she abstains from making a comparison with a less politicized squat, and also makes no detailed analysis of the daily routines and gender stereotypes within the squat, both of which clearly demonstrate the persistence of traditional gender roles, even in the case of most female leaders.