1. Introduction

Prologue

Nunca vi cartão postal que se destaque uma favela, só vejo paisagem muito linda e muito bela. Quem vai pro exterior da favela sente saudade, o gringo vem aqui e não conhece a realidade. Vai pra zona sul, pra conhecer água de côco, e o pobre na favela, vive passando sufoco (...) Eu só quero é ser feliz, andar tranqüilamente na favela onde eu nasci, é. E poder me orgulhar, e ter a consciência que o pobre tem seu lugar, eu. Eu, só quero é ser feliz, feliz, feliz, feliz, feliz, onde eu nasci, han. E poder me orgulhar, é, o pobre tem o seu lugar.
(FUNK CARIOCA: "EU SÓ QUERO É SER FELIZ"—CIDINHO E DOCA)

When I visited Rio de Janeiro for the first time, walking on the beaches of Ipanema and Copacabana or climbing up the Sugar Loaf and the Cristo Redentor, I was deeply impressed by its beauty and truly felt that it was a marvelous city. Even the *favelas*, which huddled against the hills of the city, seemed to be a part of the beauty of it, especially at night and from distance, when thousands of lights glimmered.

But, as I began my research, this view changed drastically. I wanted to learn more about the lives of the people living in the squats in Rio de Janeiro's city center, and therefore began going to places that were much less marvelous than the *Zona Sul*—the upper- and middle-class residential area and main tourist destination. The city then confronted me with another face, namely that of exclusion and social inequality, which I knew from theory but which was now being given flesh by my interview partners, who opened up to me and talked about their everyday lives and the personal challenges they faced in the city.

Hence, when I went back at night to the *Zona Sul*, after spending the day in the squats with my interview partners, I often felt as if I was entering another world, and I began to perceive many things around me differently. Talking with people in the *Zona Sul* about my experiences, I was often met with surprise, skepticism, or even warnings. I started to understand that many people living in the prosperous parts of the city ignored or did not really know about realities other than theirs, and they were mainly reflecting perceptions based on media reporting of crime and violence. Thus, the stories told to me by the people living in the squats turned out to be important testimonies, and it is necessary to listen to them if we want to overcome common stereotypes and segregation, as they allow a more realistic, human, and sympathetic view of the city.

1.1 SCOPE AND AIMS

> As important, if not more so, has been the impact of ordinary women and men – their consciousness, intentionality, everyday practices, and collective action – on the social construction of urban life.[1]

In their struggle for decent housing and living conditions and after months of careful and clandestine preparations by urban housing movements, in 2004 and 2007 more than 100 families entered two high-rise buildings in the city center of Rio de Janeiro. The occupation of these empty and abandoned buildings in central locations of the city formed part of a new and more radical protest strategy of urban housing movements, one that had been increasingly applied in Brazil since the end of the 1990s[2] alongside the practice of occupying empty

---

1 Smith, Michael P. 2001, Transnational urbanism: locating globalization, Malden: Blackwell Publishers, p.6.

2 Squatting has been a global phenomenon and was also very popular, especially in the 1970s and 1980s. But, as it is a heterogeneous phenomenon, its respective national and historical contexts and specificities must be taken into account. While the reasons behind squatting in Europe have been significantly motivated by the need to criticize and protest against neoliberal politics, in Brazil squatting has also been a way of satisfying basic needs in a context of a historical exclusion of the low-income population from exisiting constitutional rights that are to date still not being applied in practice (see chapter 2.1.2.2). For further reading on squatting worldwide see for

(urban) land, mainly in the peripheries, which has continued to be employed since.[3] By occupying places, these movements claimed their right to the city[4] and aimed to draw attention to the poor living conditions of so many city-dwellers in the growing peripheries and *favelas*[5], struggling on a daily basis with the lack of equal access to affordable and decent housing, public goods and services. Thus, the continuously growing and heterogeneous urban space increasingly constitutes the arena in which inclusion and exclusion are negotiated, opening up new opportunities and spaces for social movements and other actors to provoke and shape participation, protest, and change. Through their actions, the occupiers of the two buildings opposed global dynamics of neoliberal urban policies, such

---

example Martínez, Miguel A. and Claudio Cattaneo, editors. 2014, *The Squatters' Movement in Europe: Commons and Autonomy as Alternatives to Capitalism,* London: Pluto Press; Corr, Anders. 1999, *No trespassing! Squatting, rent strikes, and land struggles worldwide*, Cambridge: South End Press; Vasudevan, Alexander. 2015, *Metropolitan Preoccupations: The Spatial Politics of Squatting in Berlin*, Chichester: Wiley; Manjikan, Mary. 2013, *Securitization of Property Squatting in Europe*, New York: Routledge.

3 Levy, Charmain. 2005. "The Housing Movement in the City of São Paulo: Crisis and Revival" in *Collective Action and Radicalism in Brazil: Women, Urban Housing, and Rural Movements*, edited by Duquette, Michel, Galdino, Maurilio, Levy, Charmain, Marques-Pereira, Bérengère, and Florence Raes. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, pp. 119, 121.

4 For more details see chapter 2.1.3.

5 Following Licia Valladares, I understand the term *favela* as a type of urban structure that is heterogeneous and transformable, and not as a "permanent social identity," as it often appears in social science (Valladares, Licia. 2006. "Social Science Perspective of Favelas in Rio de Janeiro. A Historical Perspective", *Lanic Etext Collection:* 1–31). There is a whole literature on *favelas* and their inhabitants. For an overview see for example Perlman, Janice E. 1976, *The Myth of Marginality. Urban Poverty and Politics in Rio de Janeiro,* Berkeley: University of California Press; Campos, Andrelino. 2007, *Do Quilombo à Favela. A Produção do "Espaço Criminalizado" no Rio de Janeiro,* Rio de Janeiro: Bertrand Brasil; Valladares 2006, Social Science Perspective of Favelas; Pereira Leite, Márcia. 2008. "Pobreza y Exclusión en las Favelas de Río de Janeiro" in *Procesos de Urbanización de la Pobreza y Nuevas Formas de Exclusión Social. Los Retos de las Políticas Sociales de las Ciudades Latinoamericanas del Siglo XXI,* edited by A. Ziccardi. Bogotá et al.: Siglo del Hombre Editores/ CLACSO, pp. 213–247; Zaluar, Alba, and Marcos Alvito, editors. 1998, *Um Século de Favela,* Rio de Janeiro Brasil: Fundação Getulio Vargas Editora.

as the increasing trend of central-city renovation, initiated during the 1980s,[6] which had led property prices rise significantly and had reinforced gentrification, thereby fostering the displacement of the low-income population from central and prosperous city areas.[7]

In Rio de Janeiro this development had lately been particularly noticeable in the context of the forthcoming major sporting events, such as the FIFA World Cup and the Olympic Games, and their related urban renewal projects[8], which were trying to attract (foreign) investment and led to the production of new real estate markets, further accelerating the already ongoing gentrification and displacement.[9] Thus, when in 2009 the city of Rio de Janeiro was announced as one of the 12 venues for the 2014 FIFA World Cup many people living in the poor peripheries or *favelas* of the city felt trepidation about the event because they knew it would not bring much joy or profit to them. In fact, while billions were spent on the main venues for the events and on improving their accessibility, local people who urgently needed investment in infrastructure and

6   Hiernaux, Daniel. 2013. „Die historischen Stadtzentren Lateinamerikas", in *Urban Studies, Stadtforschung aus Lateinamerika. Neue urbane Szenarien, Öffentlichkeit, Territorialität, Imaginarios,* edited by A. Huffschmid and K. Wildner. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, pp. 387-389; Rojas, Eduardo. 2004, *Volver al centro: la recuperación de áreas urbanas centrales*, New York: Banco Interamericano de Desarollo, pp. XIXf.

7   Janoschka, Michael, Sequera, Jorge, and Luis Salinas, 2013. "Gentrification in Spain and Latin America–a Critical Dialogue", *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 38 (4): 4–5, 14–26; Janoschka, Michael and Jorge Sequera. 2016. "Gentrification in Latin America: addressing the politics and geographies of displacement", *Urban Geography*: 1–18; Lees, Loretta. 2014. "Gentrification in the Global South?" in *The Routledge Handbook on Cities of the Global South,* edited by S. Parnell and S. Oldfield. New York: Routledge, pp. 516-518.

8   One example of an urban renovation project initiated in the context of urban renewal policies is the reconceptualization of the old harbor area in Rio de Janeiro, the so called *Porto Maravilha* (Marvelous Port) Project. For more information on it see for example Monié, Fréderic and Vivian Santos da Silva. 2015. "O projeto Porto Maravilha de revitalização da área portuária do Rio de Janeiro entre inovações e retrocessos na produção do espaço urbano'", *Revista Transporte y Territorio* (12): 110-126 or Rodrigues da Silva, Caroline. 2012. "A Dimensão política da revitalização do Porto do Rio de Janeiro: Um Estudo do Projeto 'Porto Maravilha'", *Revista Continentes (UFRRJ)*(1): 56-71.

9   Janoschka et al. 2013, Gentrification in Spain and Latin America, p. 17; Janoschka et al. 2016, Gentrification in Latin America, p. 10-12.

improvements in housing were left empty-handed. In some instances, people were even forced to leave their homes and whole neighborhoods were destroyed to make place for new transportation infrastructure, stadium extensions, and tourist destinations. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and social movements estimate that in the lead-up to the World Cup and during the event itself, 250,000 people in Brazil were affected by forced evictions and displacements; of these, 38,297 were people living in Rio de Janeiro.[10] The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing, Raquel Rolnik, also expressed her concern regarding the situation and reported on concomitant violations of human rights, as *inter alia* people were evicted—sometimes violently—without adequate warning or consultation, assistance with relocation, or compensation. She emphasized that the government was thus running the risk of producing new informal settlements and homelessness, and exacerbating the existing housing problem in Brazil, especially for the low-income population.[11]

Hence, the preparations for the World Cup demonstrated to a broader public that the urban space was not equally accessible to everyone, but clearly characterized by segregation and social inequality. The urban development measures undertaken for the World Cup in Brazil resulted in a further exclusion of the low-income population from the benefits of the city, and reminded many people of old patterns of urban planning. From the very beginning of urbanization in the nineteenth century, the city of Rio de Janeiro had been marked by social segregation and inequality. In contrast to the prosperous parts of the city, the low-income population had been affected by insufficient access to affordable housing and unequal access to public goods and services, thus being forced to organize their lives without any state support in the peripheries and *favelas* of the city.

As events like the World Cup have demonstrated, this practice persists today, and the low-income population is still spatially displaced and effectively excluded from constitutional rights, such as the social right to housing.[12] In 2012

---

10 Augustin, Andre, Alessandro Biazzi, Miguel de Borba Sá, Sandra Quintela, and Rosilene Wansetto. 2014, *Copa para Que(m)? Quem vai Pagar a Conta.* http://www.movimientos.org/sites/default/files/files/CartilhaGastosCopa.pdf (05 Oct 2015), p.25.

11 United Nations News Centre. 2011, *Right to Housing at Risk as Brazil Prepares for World Cup and Olympics – UN Expert.* http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=38189#.VhKJoUYqY-O (05 Oct 2015).

12 The urban development of Rio de Janeiro will be the topic covered in section 2.1.3.1.

the country's housing deficit was estimated to be about 5,792 million units,[13] mostly concentrated among families with a household income between zero and three minimum wages.[14] It is noteworthy and alarming that the number of vacant properties in 2010 in Brazil has been estimated as 6,052 million units, and thus more or less corresponds to the deficit.[15]

But, through the effective exclusion of certain parts of the population from their formal rights, the urban space also becomes the context and framework in which citizenship takes place and is negotiated and shaped on a daily basis. From early on, the affected population has organized, for example in the form of urban social movements, to contest their exclusion and differentiated access to the city. One of these is the aforementioned housing movement, which in the central areas of the cities now organizes the occupation of empty buildings in order to claim the right to housing and decent living conditions for the low-income population.

Hence, in the struggle for decent housing, several squats have emerged in Rio de Janeiro as part of this movement. Reliable and up-to-date data on the exact number of these occupations are hard to find, as only very few studies have tried to count them due to their inherently fluid nature. In 2010, according to a small local study, there were allegedly 48 occupations of land and buildings organized by social movements in the State of Rio de Janeiro―seven of them having emerged between 2004 and 2009 in the city center of Rio de Janeiro.[16] While some of them were unable to sustain resistance to eviction over time, others remained, and their inhabitants fought for their permanent right to stay and for the buildings to be transformed into regular housing. Researching two of these squats in 2011—named *Chiquinha Gonzaga,* and *Manoel Congo*—I was

---

13 Fundação João Pinheiro. 2014, *Nota Técnica 1 Déficit Habitacional no Brasil 2011-2012. Resultados Preliminares,* Belo Horizonte: Fundação João Pinheiro-Centro de Estatística e Informações, p. 9.

14 The João Pinheiro Foundation, for example, estimates that 62.7% of the housing deficit corresponds to families with zero to three minimum wages (Fundação João Pinheiro. 2013, Déficit Habitacional Municipal no Brasil 2010, Belo Horizonte: Fundação João Pinheiro-Centro de Estatística e Informações, p. 41).

15 Fundação João Pinheiro 2013, Déficit Habitacional Municipal no Brasil 2010, p. 73.

16 Rodrigues da Silva. 2010. "Ocupação Manuel Congo. Uma Experiência na Luta Urbana do Rio de Janeiro", *Anais do IV Simpósio Lutas Sociais na América Latina Imperialismo, nacionalismo e militarismo no Século XXI):* 145; other, but less accurate estimations were made for example by Mamari, Fernando G. C. de. 2008, *Se Morar é um Direito, Ocupar é um Dever! As Ocupações de Sem-Teto na Metrópole do Rio de Janeiro,* Rio de Janeiro: UFRJ, p. 73.

able to learn more about the inhabitants and their backgrounds, motivations, and personal opinions. Something that especially drew my attention and became impossible to ignore was the strong presence and activism of women inside the squats. I soon understood that it was they who mainly drove the citizenship activities forward.

Against this background, the main goal of this study is to explore from a micro perspective how participation in an active claiming of rights by occupying empty buildings shapes the actors' understandings of citizenship and gender. To achieve this goal, this study will focus on the oral histories, and thus on the individual perspectives and conceptualizations, of the inhabitants of the *Chiquinha Gonzaga* and *Manoel Congo* squats in Rio de Janeiro's city center, which constitute the two case studies of this research. I consider the everyday practices and the lived experience of the inhabitants, and include their own perspectives on their daily struggles—seeking to go beyond the dominant state or leadership discourses.[17] I want to highlight their agency and their capacity to develop a citizenship "from below" within dominant and excluding conceptions of politics.

To achieve this, this study addresses several topics and questions. They all relate to the theoretical discussions of citizenship and gender which are formulated against the background of the relevant research literature in chapter 2. Regarding citizenship, the study will demonstrate how local membership can be experienced, understood and negotiated in the urban context, and that dominant and historically rooted excluding practices also produce counter-imaginaries of, and acts within, the city. More precisely, I will explore the inhabitants' motivations for participating in the occupation of empty buildings, and reveal their own understandings and articulations of citizenship. While the concept of citizenship in academic and political contexts 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.[18] There are few studies that focus on the understanding of citizenship

---

17 These perspectives will be expressed *inter alia* in the form of original quotes from the inhabitants, especially in chapters 3 and 4. The fact that these are maintained in their original form—that is, in Portuguese—by no means implies that non-Portuguese speakers will not be able to read and understand the study.

18 Gaventa, John. 2002. "Introduction. Exploring Citizenship, Participation and Accountability", *IDS Bulletin*, 33 (2): 1–17; Kabeer, Naila. 2005. "Introduction. The Search for Inclusive Citizenship: Meanings and Expressions in an Inter-connected

from the point of view of the participants in housing movements, and even those studies 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.[19] This study will reveal that the inhabitants in fact use their own language to frame their struggles, without necessarily adopting dominant discourses.

Furthermore, I will highlight the gendered nature of mobilization around housing. Even though the large numbers of women engaged in housing movements—as well as the need for further specific research on it—has been noted by several scholars,[20] to date only a few case studies have focused on the topic.[21] Thus, taking gender into account when doing research on the squats also helps to address the invisibility of women in the urban space—something often criticized by feminist studies[22]—enabling us to focus on their agency and thereby helping to disclose prevailing power relations in society. Therefore, in this study I will explore the reasons behind women's participation, and the impacts of their agency on the understanding and articulation of gender within


World" in *Inclusive Citizenship. Meanings and Expressions,* edited by N. Kabeer. London: Zed Books Ltd., pp. 1–27.

19 None of the few studies, which also focus on the understanding of citizenship of the participants of housing movements (for example Earle, Lucy. 2009. "Occupying the Illegal City. Urban Social Movements and Transgressive Citizenship in São Paulo" PhD Thesis, London School of Economics and Political Science, London; Macedo Filho, Renato. 2010. "Onde Mora a Cidadania? Visibilizando a Participação das Mulheres no Movimento Sem Teto – Salvador / BA" Tese de Doutorado, Universidade Federal da Bahia, Salvador; Carle-Marsan, Marianne. 2013. "Luttes de Brésiliennes pour le Droit à la ville. L'Expéérience des Femme de l'Occupation Manoel Congo à Rio de Janeiro au Brésil" Mémoire de Maîtrise (Master's Thesis), Université du Québec à Montréal, Montréal) really question the meaning and importance of the concept of citizenship for the participants.

20 For example Earle 2009, Occupying the Illegal City, p. 48; Gohn, Maria d. G. M. 2010, *Movimentos Sociais e Redes de Mobilizações Civis no Brasil Contemporâneo,* Petrópolis: Editora Vozes, p. 51; Holston, James. 2009. "Insurgent Citizenship in an Era of Global Urban Peripheries", *Civil & Society*, 21 (2): 257.

21 For example Macedo Filho 2010, Onde Mora a Cidadania?. More details will be discussed in section 4.3.

22 See Soto Villagrán, Paula. 2013. „Zum Geschlecht (in) der Stadtforschung. Theoretische und empirische Überlegungen aus Lateinamerika" in *Stadtforschung aus Lateinamerika. Neue urbane Szenarien, Öffentlichkeit, Territorialität, Imaginarios,* edited by A. Huffschmid and K. Wildner. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, p. 187.

the squats, by elaborating on the prevailing gender roles, norms, and relations. The study will demonstrate how gender relations influence and shape women's engagement in citizenship activities and *vice versa*. In this sense, it also contributes to the main question raised in the academic literature on women's engagement in citizenship activities (see section 2.3.2)—that is, whether through their engagement one can observe a lasting impact on their lives with regard to the gendered division of labor, and gender equality, within their homes.

Although it focuses on aspects of citizenship and gender, this study is also intended to be open to other social categorizations becoming evident in the field, as these can provide useful insights for a better understanding on the inhabitants' construction of citizenship and gender. Thus, if other social categoraizations were introduced by the actors themselves and turned out to be important to them during the research process, they will—to the extent possible within the scope of this study—be briefly addressed.

Map 1: Location of the squats in Rio de Janeiro[23]

23 Cartography: Monika Feinen, Hürth.
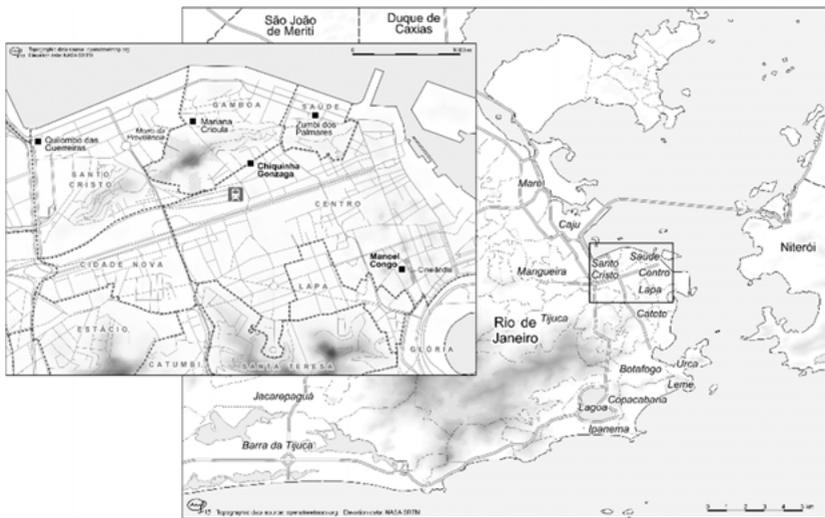
1.2 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

In the following section, I will comment on the data collection method applied during my research and sketch out the main phases of the research process, which took place in the squats *Chiquinha Gonzaga* and *Manoel Congo* in Rio de Janeiro during the years 2010 and 2011. Moreover, I will reflect on my personal role in the field and on the challenges encountered during the research process.

1.2.1 Data Collection and Evaluation

> A characteristic of qualitative interviewing is that it provides us with a means of understanding the social world from the distinct points of view of the research subjects, highlighting the meanings individuals attribute to their experiences.[24]

To obtain useful data for my study, I applied several methods during my research, such as problem-centered semi-structured interviews, expert interviews, and participant observation. There were no written sources of information provided by the informants. In order to incorporate the different experiences and perspectives of social actors who were not representing themselves in text form into my research, I had to collect the necessary information mainly through their narratives and my own observations. Thus, in order to collect the oral histories of the inhabitants of the two squats *Chiquinha Gonzaga* and *Manoel Congo*, problem-centered semi-structured interviews were essential. I usually started each interview with a question about the interviewee's reasons for becoming involved in squatting. Then I continued with questions about their life, daily routines, and the organization within the squats, maintaining a focus on issues of citizenship and gender. The interviews were combined with a short standardized questionnaire to collect additional basic quantitative data from each household interviewed.[25] With the explicit consent of

---

24 Miller, Jody. 1997. "Researching Violence against Street Prostitutes. Issues of Epistemology, Methodology, and Ethics" in *Researching Sexual Violence against Women. Methodological and Personal Perspectives,* edited by M. D. Schwartz. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, p. 145.

25 Bernard, H. R. and Gery W. Ryan. 2010, *Analyzing Qualitative Data. Systematic Approaches,* Los Angeles: SAGE, p. 29; Lamnek, Siegfried. 1993, *Qualitative*

the research participants, the interviews were generally recorded and transcribed later, back in Germany. Due to the difficulty in accessing potential interviewees in the field, due to the fact that—especially in the beginning—my contact with the inhabitants was mainly based on trust and recommendations, participants for the interviews had to be mainly selected through network sampling—that is, through so-called snowball sampling.[26]

Thus, I asked participants to put me in contact with other possible informants. In addition, whenever possible, I selected participants during occasions such as meetings or demonstrations to achieve a more "exhaustive sampling frame."[27] In total, 50 people living in the squats *Chiquinha Gonzaga* and *Manoel Congo* were interviewed between February and June 2011. In *Chiquinha Gonzaga* I was able to conduct a total of 26 interviews, of which nine were with men and 17 with women. In *Manoel Congo* I conducted a total of 24 interviews, of which six were with men, and 19 with women. The inhabitants I interviewed ranged in age from 19 to 69 years.

To collect more information on the broader context of the squats, to obtain background knowledge, and to clarify some points mentioned by the inhabitants during the interviews, I also decided to conduct expert interviews.[28] In total, I interviewed five experts, among them leaders of the main housing movements

---

Sozialforschung. Band 2 Methoden und Techniken, Weinheim: Beltz, pp. 74-78; Flick, Uwe. 2007, *Qualitative Sozialforschung. Eine Einführung,* Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verl., pp. 203-214; Mayring, Philipp. 2002, *Einführung in die qualitative Sozialforschung. Eine Anleitung zu qualitativem Denken,* Weinheim et al.: Beltz, pp. 67-72.

26 Bernard et al. 2010, Analyzing Qualitative Data, pp. 367f; Schnell, Rainer, Paul Hill, and Elke Esser. 1999, *Methoden der empirischen Sozialforschung,* München et al.: Oldenbourg, p. 280.

27 Bernard et al. 2010, Analyzing Qualitative Data, pp. 359-361, 368.

28 See Bogner, Alexander and Wolfgang Menz. 2005. „Das theoretische Experten–interview. Erkenntnissinteresse, Wissensformen, Interaktion" in *Das Experten–interview. Theorie, Methode, Anwendung,* edited by A. Bogner, B. Littig, and W. Menz. Wiesbaden: VS Verl. für Sozialwiss., pp. 33–70; Meuser, Michael and Ulrike Nagel. 2005. „Vom Nutzen der Expertise. ExpertInneninterviews in der Sozialberichterstattung" in *Das Experteninterview. Theorie, Methode, Anwendung,* edited by A. Bogner, B. Littig, and W. Menz. Wiesbaden: VS Verl. für Sozialwiss., pp. 257–272; Meuser, Michael and Ulrike Nagel. 2005. „ExpertInneninterviews – vielfach erprobt, wenig bedacht. Ein Beitrag zur qualitativen Methodendiskussion" in *Das Experteninterview. Theorie, Methode, Anwendung,* edited by A. Bogner, B. Littig, and W. Menz. Wiesbaden: VS Verl. für Sozialwiss., pp. 71–94.

and squats in Rio de Janeiro,[29] representatives of NGOs involved in the field of housing,[30] and a member of the Municipal Housing Secretariat (*Secretaria Municipal de Habitação*, SEHAB) of Rio de Janeiro. I also attended neighborhood meetings in the *Zona Portuária* (the harbour area behind the squat *Chiquinha Gonzaga*) and activists meetings which took place to prevent eviction in the context of the FIFA World Cup and the Olympic Games, in order to gain a broader understanding of the urban context of my research.[31]

Apart from conducting interviews related to my specific research topic, I tried to spend as much time as possible with the people living in both squats. Participant observation was therefore another essential method I applied during my research process.[32] Similarly to the expert interviews, participant observation allowed me to build a frame of reference that made it possible to draw a larger and more detailed picture of the situation inside the squats. I frequently visited households to participate in the daily life of the inhabitants, attended their meetings, assemblies, and demonstrations,[33] went to feasts, spent nights in the squats, joined the inhabitants on weekends during their free time, and was present when women worked and cooked at home. Afterwards, as soon as I was able to, I wrote up my observations and recorded the content of informal conversations in observation protocols. To manage and organize the quantity of

---

29 Leading members of the Centre of People's Movements (*Central de Movimentos Populares*, CMP), the Union of Housing Movements (*União dos Movimentos de Moradia*, UMM), and leaders of the squat *Quilombo das Guerreiras*.

30 Fundação Bento Rubião and FASE.

31 Additional interviews with female leaders and members of the biggest housing movements were conducted also in São Paulo in 2011. As their inclusion and analysis would go beyond the scope of this study, they served mainly as a tool to gain an impression of the wider context and activities of the housing movements and to identify central and common issues.

32 Diekmann, Andreas. 2007, *Empirische Sozialforschung. Grundlagen, Methoden, Anwendungen,* Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch-Verl., pp. 563-569; Flick 2007, Qualitative Sozialforschung, pp. 282–296; Mayring 2002, Einführung in die qualitative Sozialforschung, pp. 80–85; Lamnek 1993, Qualitative Sozialforschung, pp. 239–317; Schnell et al. 1999, Methoden der empirischen Sozialforschung, pp. 358–373.

33 For example, inhabitants of the squat *Manoel Congo* took part in the demonstration against forced eviction on 1 May 2011, and the demonstration in front of the Ombudsman of Public Rights in Rio de Janeiro (*Defensoria Pública do Rio de Janeiro*) on 11-12 May 2011, as well as in several demonstrations against forced evictions.

the collected material, the data obtained were analyzed back in Germany with the qualitative data analysis software MAXQDA.[34] During the evaluation process, the interviews and observation protocols were continuously coded and revised.

1.2.2 Reflections on the Research Process

> As engaged social subjects rather than neutral observers, social researchers are also participants in the research process (…). Engaging with the personal, and sometimes distressing, details of other people's lives places researchers in an ambiguous relationship with their participant subjects of research.[35]

Engaging in the research process in the field, I had to deal with a number of complexities and challenges. The first was that of gaining access to both squats and establishing rapport with their inhabitants. The research process was therefore divided in two phases: During an initial month of exploration in Rio de Janeiro in July 2010 I did research on existing literature on the squats and related topics in archives and at university libraries, established initial contacts, and talked to members of NGOs, activists, and other researchers relevant to my research. One of them helped me to contact the squat *Chiquinha Gonzaga*, by arranging a meeting with a friend of his who lived there. During the meeting I explained my research project to the inhabitant and I learned that access to the squat would be possible through frequent visits in order to gain the trust of each of the inhabitants. During my second research stay from February 2011 to June 2011, I was also able to establish contact with the leaders of *Manoel Congo*, with help of the NGO FASE. In contrast to *Chiquinha Gonzaga*, where access to the squat depended on the individual decision of each household, in *Manoel Congo* the approval of my research had to go through the leaders of the squat. This was highly important and facilitated my access to the inhabitants. In one of the official meetings in *Manoel Congo* I was invited to introduce myself and explain my intentions. It was made clear in front of everyone that the leaders would

---

34 See Kuckartz, Udo. 2010, *Einführung in die computergestützte Analyse qualitativer Daten,* Wiesbaden: VS Verl. für Sozialwissenschaften.

35 Warr, Deborah J. 2004. "Stories in the Flesh and Voices in the Head. Reflections on the Context and Impact of Research with Disadvantaged Populations", *Qualitative Health Research*, 14 (4): 583.

support me and my research, and that it expected the inhabitants to cooperate with me—specifically, that they would participate in my interviews. Thus, the hierarchy in *Manoel Congo* was extremely helpful in facilitating my being accepted by and establishing rapport with the inhabitants. At the same time, however, there was an element of pressure and obedience from the beginning of our relationship, and it took me some time to gain the inhabitants' genuine trust and to access information beyond the official discourse of the leading social movement.

Thus, the selection of my case studies depended on their accessibility for me as a researcher, but were also chosen regarding their comparability. At the time of the interviews both squats had already reached a status of consolidation and were going through similar political processes, but on the other hand had developed very different forms of internal organization.[36] A comparative research design thus offered the possibility of revealing and verifying commonalities, but also helped to elaborate on the specificities of each particular case in detail, and thus to depict their complexity.[37]

During my second research stay I spent as much time as possible with the inhabitants of both squats in order to establish rapport, conducted interviews, and participated in meetings, demonstrations, and other events related to the research topic, while at the same time I deepened and broadened my contacts with other researchers and activists. In both squats it was much easier to obtain interviews and develop relationships with women than with men. At a certain point I asked one of my male interviewees in *Manoel Congo* why this happened. To my surprise he said, not without shyness, that most of the men in the squat were married. His brief explanation reminded me that the research process itself is always gendered. Furthermore, people wondered about the way I dressed. I tried not to dress in a too feminine way during my visits. I usually wore what I thought to be rather "neutral" outfits—long pants and t-shirts. This provoked questions—solely among the women—such as: "Don't you like dresses or shorts?" Since I was a woman, I was apparently expected to dress differently, in a more "feminine" manner, more like they did.

This kind of situation demonstrates again that in the interactions with our research partners, in interviews or participant observations, we cannot avoid the production and performance of gender during our research—we cannot avoid

---

36 More details on the differences in organization will be presented in chapter 3.

37 Lamnek, Siegfried. 1995, *Qualitative Sozialforschung. Band 1 Methodologie,* Weinheim: Beltz, pp. 114f, 118.

"doing gender."[38] As will be described in section 2.2.1.1 there is an interactional, performative, and situationally changing character and praxis of gender constructions and identities in everyday life situations.[39] Beate Littig, who analyzes from a gender perspective how expert interviews are carried out, emphasizes that we are always "doing gender while doing interviews" and that we should be aware of this not only during the interview process, but also when analyzing our data: "The gendering of the contents of discussion and the (re)production of gender stereotypes will also—according to this theory—translate into the contents of discussion, i.e. the obtained data will reflect gender-typical interpretations and action patterns."[40]

Selecting and then frequenting my field sites also had a strong impact on my personal feelings and emotions. As "qualitative research is an emotional activity,"[41] other researchers also account for their experiences regarding the emotional impact of their research as well as on the personal challenges and

---

38 Of course, other social categorizations, such as class, ethnicity, religion, and age, also potentially influence the research process!

39 Gildemeister, Regine and Angelika Wetterer. 1995. „Wie Geschlechter gemacht werden. Die soziale Konstruktion der Zweigeschlechtlichkeit und ihre Reifizierung in der Frauenforschung" in Traditionen Brüche. Entwicklungen feministischer Theorie, edited by G.-A. Knapp and A. Wetterer. Freiburg im Breisgau: Kore, p. 212; Degele, Nina. 2008, Gender/Queer Studies. Eine Einführung, Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, pp. 80f; Opitz-Belakhal, Claudia. 2010, Geschlechtergeschichte, Frankfurt am Main: Campus-Verl., p. 27; Kotthoff, Helga. 2002. „Was heißt eigentlich „doing gender"? Zu Interaktion und Geschlecht" in Wiener Slawistischer Almanach, edited by J. van Leeuwen-Turnovcová, U. Doleschal, and F. Schindler. München: Verlag Otto Sagner, p. 2.

40 Own translation from: „*Die Vergeschlechtlichung der Gesprächsinhalte und die (Re-) Produktion von Geschlechterstereotypen wird sich – so die These – auch in den Gesprächsinhalten niederschlagen, die gewonnenen Daten also geschlechtertypische Deutungs- und Handlungsmuster wiedergeben*" (Littig, Beate. 2005. „Interviews mit Experten und Expertinnen. Überlegungen aus geschlechtertheoretischer Sicht" in Das Experteninterview. Theorie, Methode, Anwendung, edited by A. Bogner, B. Littig, and W. Menz. Wiesbaden: VS Verl. für Sozialwiss., p. 203).

41 Dickson-Swift, Virginia, Erica L. James, and Pranee Liamputtong. 2008, *Undertaking Sensitive Research in the Health and Social Sciences. Managing Boundaries, Emotions and Risks,* Cambridge et al.: Cambridge University Press, p. 77; see also Miller 1997, Researching Violence against Street Prostitutes, p. 147.

difficulties they experienced when dealing with these aspects.[42] To admit these feelings and make them part of the research process is very important not only for understanding and knowledge, but also for becoming aware of the responsibility and human aspect of carrying out research: "Just as we cannot ignore participants' feelings and expect to understand the group, we cannot omit our feelings as field researchers. Attending to *our* feelings in the field helps us understand how group members construct meaning and understandings."[43]

I had to learn to deal with personal feelings of insecurity and sometimes even fear.[44] Often my visits to *Chiquinha Gonzaga* were specially challenging due to its location behind the Central Station (*Estação Central do Brasil*) of the city, at the feet of the *Favela Morro da Providência*.[45] The area surrounding the squat was at the time characterized by poverty, prostitution, drug trafficking, and a visible lack of urban development measures, and was therefore considered, especially by the middle and upper class, as one of the "dangerous" areas of Rio de Janeiro. I was repeatedly confronted with the stigmatization of people living and working in that area. For example, I was constantly warned by my middle-class friends not to go there alone or not to eat there for hygiene reasons. I did so nevertheless, and even though I never felt insecure in the squat itself, my journey to or from the building was often accompanied by a certain tension, especially at night. The meetings in the squat took place around 10:00 pm so sometimes I had to leave the area at midnight and had to find a safe way to go home, or sometimes even spend the night at the squat. I felt like an outsider in that area. Walking every day to the squat I was confronted with my own prejudices and my position as a white middle-class woman, and reminded that my life and experiences so far were very different from those of the people living in the area.

---

42 Miller 1997, Researching Violence against Street Prostitutes, p. 147; Stanko, Elizabeth A. 1997. "'I Second That Emotion'. Reflections on Feminism, Emotionality, and Research on Sexual Violence" in *Researching Sexual Violence against Women. Methodological and Personal Perspectives,* edited by M. D. Schwartz. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, pp. 75, 101; Mattley, Christine. 1997. "Field Research with Phone Sex Workers. Managing the Researcher's Emotions" in *Researching Sexual Violence against Women. Methodological and Personal Perspectives,* edited by M. D. Schwartz. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, p. 103; Armstrong, Lynzi. 2012. "Reflections on a Research Process. Exploring Violence against Sex Workers from a Feminist Perspective", *Women's Studies Journal*, 26 (1): 7.

43 Mattley 1997, Field Research with Phone Sex Workers, p. 102.

44 On risk in research see for example Dickson-Swift et al. 2008, Undertaking Sensitive Research in the Health and Social Science, pp. 100ff.

45 See Map 1 or 3.

These feelings became more intense during the interviews and personal contact with my research partners. The fact that through the interviews and visits to the squats "people's stories are given flesh"[46] meant I had to struggle with my own emotions, and confronted me with my position as a researcher during the field work, especially during the interview process. I interviewed people whose experiences and circumstances differed so much from my own, but at the same time I developed close relationships with them. All of them struggled through difficult and poor living conditions. In many cases, they had gone through traumatic situations, and they had often been victims of violence. They talked to me about their experiences and they frequently expressed their feelings of sadness, despair, and anger. Faced with their stories, I had to learn to accept the limits of my own research in terms of its capacity to bring about immediate, real, and profound change in the personal lives of my research participants.[47] This often led to feelings of frustration, anger, and sadness, and even to periods of doubt regarding the deeper meaning and legitimacy of my research. As Deborah J. Warr summarizes adequately: "Confronted with personal suffering and the overwhelming inequity that characterizes many societies, it is easy to doubt the capacity of research to make any real difference in improving the circumstances of research participants, or the social groups they represent."[48]

While most of my interview partners emphasized and confirmed the importance of my research to them, in that it would make people acquainted with their reality and situation, one inhabitant openly challenged my position as a researcher. For him I was only part of a privileged group who visited the squat solely for personal gain, like a doctoral degree, without real interest or afford to change his situation. He was, in fact, addressing a sore point, as he was referring to the unequal power relationship between us. Even though I was convinced of the broader utility of my research and its ability to change reality through knowledge, I sometimes felt as many other researchers do in similar situations: guilty and exploitative.[49] Jody Miller for example, when studying violence against street prostitutes, reports her wish to believe that she was part of the fight for prostitutes' rights, but at the same time says she felt like a voyeur while doing her research. She admits that "[a]lthough we are not dispassionate researchers who distance ourselves from our values and emotions, we continue

---

46 Warr 2004, Stories in the Flesh, p. 581.

47 For similar experiences see for example Armstrong 2012, Reflections on a Research Process, p. 8.

48 Warr 2004, Stories in the Flesh, p. 579.

49 Dickson-Swift et al. 2008, Undertaking Sensitive Research in the Health and Social Science, p. 50.

to objectify our research subjects through the very power we employ as researchers."[50] However, as the open criticism of one of my research participants showed, the inhabitants also tried to alter our unequal power relationship. I was often expected to share personal feelings and thoughts and to take a stance in interviews and discussions.[51] In order to balance carefully the existing power relation, I tried to "give back" if possible. Researcher self-disclosure and reciprocity are strategies many researchers apply in order to ensure that existing hierarchic differences are reduced as much as possible during the research process.[52] Part of this "giving back" also involves give the interviewees, through quotes from our discussions, enough space in this study to speak and introduce their views, feelings, and understandings.

It also sometimes became difficult for me to deal with "boundaries between friendship and research."[53] Doing qualitative research means entering into the private lives of others, often on a daily basis, and involves building trust and developing attachments to research participants.[54] Making friends during the research process is therefore quite likely. This may give rise to a number of challenges for a researcher, such as attempting to remain uninvolved in internal conflicts, and maintaining a certain distance and an assumed and often expected "objectivity" during the research process. This can be extremely difficult to manage:

The researcher's own cultural and social embeddedness can be traced in the ways in which issues are framed, pursued, and interpreted. In other words, it is, arguably, impossible to engage with the lives of others from a position of assumed neutrality and objectivity (O' Neill, 1995). Less attention, however, is given to the implications of this for qualitative researchers engaging on an interpersonal level with research participants. This can be an incredibly intense and, occasionally, emotionally wrenching experience.[55]

Even though they bring a lot of additional responsibility for the researcher, friendships during the research process also offer new possibilities and perspectives for both the researcher and the research participant. They may help

---

50 Miller 1997, Researching Violence against Street Prostitutes, p. 149.

51 See for a similar experience Armstrong 2012, Reflections on a Research Process, p. 6.

52 Dickson-Swift et al. 2008, Undertaking Sensitive Research in the Health and Social Science, pp. 38–42.

53 Ibid., p. 58.

54 Cf. also Dickson-Swift et al. 2008, Undertaking Sensitive Research in the Health and Social Science, p. 58.

55 Warr 2004, Stories in the Flesh, p. 579.

to overcome hierarchies and unequal power relations in the research process, or, as Tillmann-Healy, who promotes the use of friendship as a research method of qualitative inquiry,[56] puts it: "Friendship as method demands radical reciprocity, a move from studying 'them' to studying *us*."[57] In my case friendship offered me the possibility to learn from the other person, to be accepted, and to feel more comfortable, as well as to meet my interlocutors as equals even though our lives and experiences were so different. Of course that meant that the stories and problems I heard became even more emotionally intense and personally challenging. Sometimes I felt even more responsibility towards them:

Friendship as method, although potentially rewarding, comes with a new set of obligations that do not pave a smooth, comfortable road. When we engage others' humanity, struggles, and oppression, we cannot simply shut off the recorder, turn our backs, and exit the field. Anyone who takes on this sort of project must be emotionally strong and willing to face pressure, resistance, backlash, and perhaps even violence.[58]

The emotional attachment and the friendships I developed with my research partners also made it difficult for me to leave the field.[59] I had mixed feelings when I left Brazil. On the one hand, I felt relieved to be able to leave. As has been described by other researchers in similar situations,[60] sometimes I felt so emotionally overwhelmed and exhausted by the stories and living conditions of my research partners that I needed a break. This was also one of the reasons why I did not decide to move into the squat *Chiquinha Gonzaga*, even though the possibility was offered to me by a woman whom I had befriended. On the other

---

56 For Friendship as a research method see for example Pinto Passos, Malisa C. and Rita M. Ribes Pereira. 2012. „Rassismus und Identität in Brasilien. Über Begegnungen mit Freundschaften in der Forschung mit afro-brasilianischen Jugendlichen" in *Methoden dekolonialisieren. Eine Werkzeugkiste zur Demokratisierung der Sozial- und Kultur–wissenschaften,* edited by O. Kaltmeier and S. C. Berkin. Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot, p. 111; Tillmann-Healy, Lisa M. 2003. "Friendship as Method", *Qualitative Inquiry*, 9 (5): 729–749; Mackinlay, Elizabeth and Brydie-Leigh Bartleet. 2012. "Friendship as Research. Exploring the Potential of Sisterhood and Personal Relationships as the Foundations of Musicological and Ethnographic Fieldwork", *Qualitative Research Journal*, 12 (1): 75–87.

57 Tillmann-Healy 2003, Friendship as Method, p. 735.

58 Ibid., p. 743.

59 See description of Dickson-Swift et al. 2008, Undertaking Sensitive Research in the Health and Social Science, p. 61.

60 Miller 1997, Researching Violence against Street Prostitutes, p. 149.

hand, I felt terribly sad and very guilty for enjoying the privilege of being able to leave and continuing with my comfortable life, while others were struggling and suffering. I felt as if I were leaving them behind.

1.3 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

Against this background, this study will be structured as follows. In the next section (chapter 2), I will elaborate on the theoretical and historical framework of the study. In section 2.1, I will introduce and discuss the concept of citizenship and give an overview of its specific historical development in Brazil. This provides a framework for understanding why in Brazil those who possess formal state membership can nevertheless be excluded from social, civil, and political rights. I will then demonstrate how this exclusion from rights in practice is also contested from below. To approach these struggles and their concrete location in the urban space, I will sketch out urban development in Rio de Janeiro and show the perpetuation of historically rooted differentiated access for the inhabitants. Moreover, in section 2.2, I will introduce and discuss the concept of gender, emphasizing especially its performative dimension. I will also sketch out the current gender relations and household structures in Brazil, in order to be able to situate the daily routines and gender relations within the squats in a broader context. In section 2.3, I will demonstrate how closely linked the concepts of citizenship and gender are in theory and practice. Therefore, the chapter will highlight the criticisms and concerns raised by feminist thinking in relation to citizenship theory, as well as the former's attempts to broaden and reconstruct its traditional gender-blind conception. Finally, I will elaborate on the specific interdependence of citizenship and gender in the case of Latin America, and focus on women's engagement in popular urban movements, highlighting the reasons behind their involvement in citizenship activities, as well as the impact of their agency.

After having situated the topic of this study in a broader theoretical and historical context, chapter 3 will then be devoted to an introduction and detailed ethnographic description of the two case studies, the squats *Chiquinha Gonzaga* and *Manoel Congo* in Rio de Janeiro's city center. Based on informal observations and oral histories, I will approach the reality of the lives of their inhabitants, providing the background necessary for the analysis of the inhabitants' understanding of citizenship and gender that follows. Besides describing the first developments inside the squats, the chapter will also be concerned with the question of what changed over time and what problems and

personal challenges the inhabitants had to face on a daily basis. In so doing, not only commonalities, but also important differences between the two squats will be revealed.

Chapter 4 will be dedicated to the question of how the inhabitants of *Chiquinha Gonzaga* and *Manoel Congo* understand and articulate citizenship and gender. In order to learn more about the actors involved and about possible reasons for engaging in citizenship activities, section 4.1 deals with the inhabitants' life stories and personal backgrounds, as well as their personal motivations for participating in the squats. Initial insights gained in this chapter will then be deepened in section 4.2, when exploring the understanding and articulation of citizenship on the part of the inhabitants of both squats. I will not only shed light on the language used by the inhabitants to legitimize their participation, but also illustrate how the inhabitants, through their engagement in citizenship activities, participate in the urban imaginary.

As the strong presence and activism of women inside the squats can hardly be ignored, section 4.3 is dedicated to the gendered nature of mobilization around housing, and explores women's engagement in the squats. After examining the reasons for their participation, I will look at the broader impacts of their mobilization, and illustrate the prevailing gender roles, norms, and relations within the squats.

In the last chapter of the dissertation I will discuss the conclusions that can be drawn, and will provide an overview of potential further research on the topic.