In fear of abandonment

Slum life, community leaders and politics in Recife, Brazil

Promotor:	Prof. Dr. Th. Blom Hansen Hoogleraar Godsdienstwetenschappen Sociologie en Antropologie Universiteit van Amsterdam
Co-promotoren:	Dr. ir. M.C.M. Nuijten Universitair hoofddocent Rurale Ontwikkelingssociologie Wageningen Universiteit
	Dr. ir. P.A. de Vries Universitair docent Rurale Ontwikkelingssociologie Wageningen Universiteit
Promotiecommissie:	Prof. Dr. G.A. Banck CEDLA, Amsterdam
	Prof. Dr. D.M. Goldstein University of Colorado, Boulder, USA
	Prof. Dr. E. Torres Aguiar Gomes Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, Recife, Brazil
	Prof. Dr. ir. H. van Dijk Wageningen Universiteit

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Slum life, community leaders and politics in Recife, Brazil

Martijn Koster

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In loving memory of my father, Kees Koster

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1

Introduction: life in the margins and slum politics

The city is, finally, the natural habitat of civilised man
- Robert Park, 1925

Much of the twenty-first century urban world squats in squalor, surrounded by pollution, excrement, and decay
- Mike Davis, 2006

Recife slums: margins in the urban core

Taxi to the margins

Late in the night my wife and I arrived at Recife airport from a visit to Rio de Janeiro. In front of the bright and shiny arrival hall are two taxi-companies. Both have luxury air-conditioned cabs. Their cabs have large stickers alongside saying *aeroporto* (airport). In the hall both companies are indicated on charts and just outside the doors neatly dressed young women address potential customers. A hundred meters away, at a dark parking lot, are regular taxis. Some drivers have just dropped off somebody, while others wait for a reservation by phone. They may hope to pick up somebody at the airport, but this hardly ever occurs, as the cabs in front of the arrival hall have the same price, are more luxurious and closer to the exit. Drivers from regular taxis are not allowed to enter the hall to look for customers.

My wife and I needed a taxi to drive us to Chão de Estrelas, the slum where we lived and where I conducted fieldwork. We decided to take a regular cab from the parking lot, one without the *aeroporto*-stickers. We had opted for an airport-cab before, but the drivers usually do not know the way in the slums, since they never come there. Moreover, they are afraid to enter.

Upon leaving the hall we were addressed by the women from an airport-cab company. We said we were heading to Chão de Estrelas, but preferred a regular cab. One of them followed us, explaining that their company was not more expensive and that they, in contrast to the cabs on the parking lot, were officially registered. In the end she let us go. In the meantime a taxi-driver from one of the regular cabs had joined us and helped with the luggage.

Meanwhile a police officer, charged with airport security, had watched the scene.

After shortly talking to the woman from the taxi-company, he caught up with us and argued that he did not understand why we were not taking an airport-taxi as the price was the same. When he noticed that we did not change our minds, he angrily added: 'Do you know that you are going to a dangerous area? You are going now, in the middle of the night, to a very dangerous area! You do not know what you are doing. You can get robbed!' I replied: 'Listen, we live there. We have friends there. It is not dangerous.' The officer let us go and we drove to Chão de Estrelas.

Recife, its economy and its slums

Chão de Estrelas is one of the many slums of Recife, the capital of the state of Pernambuco, located in the impoverished Northeast region of Brazil. Since the mid-sixteenth century, the economic engine of Recife has been the sugar cane industry. Nowadays, although sugar cane still forms the region's most important crop, its economic importance has declined (Hecht 1998). The removal of Recife's seaport – which had become too shallow for ships and hard to access over land as it was in the city centre – to a place south of the city, saw a decline in commerce related to the transport industry. Currently, though there are large industrial plants in the outskirts of the city, the city's economy is dependent on a large service sector. This is partly public, as the city is a hub for the administrative structures of the Northeast region of Brazil, and houses several universities and hospitals. Another part is private, related to commerce. The city of Recife has 1,533,580 inhabitants (IBGE 2007). In 2000, its average income per capita is R$392.50 (PNUD et al 2003). Inequality is high, as the GINI index is 0.68, and the income of the upper 20% of the city's population is 50.9 times higher than that of the lowest 20% (PNUD et al 2003, de Araújo 2006). The average income per capita of the Metropolitan Area of Recife, counting 3,658,348 inhabitants (IBGE 2007), is R$281.10 (PNUD et al 2003). Here, almost 20% of the registered employed population works in the public sector and 18% in industry and construction. The remaining 60% works in the private service sector (IBGE 2007).

Recife is 'the Brazilian champion in the number of *favelas* (slums)' (Correia 1999:322, cf JC Online 14/01/2001). Slums sprawl over the city, housing approximately 60% (Maia 1995) of its population. This percentage has slowly increased in the 20th century. In 1938, 47% of the 350,000 residents of Recife lived in slums. Today this number has increased to 60% (cf Assies 1992). Currently, slums occupy 14% of the city's total area (de Souza 2001). In contrast to other large cities, where slums are often found in the geographical periphery of the city, slums are scattered over the whole of Recife. Slums have emerged on riversides, mangrove areas, swamps and hills through the whole city, resulting in an urban landscape that intersperses rich middleclass neighbourhoods with poor slums, with luxurious apartment buildings bordering wooden shacks (Hecht 1998, Nielsen 2002).

Outline of the chapter

This chapter introduces the larger book through presenting slums as sites of marginalisation. Firstly, I provide a picture of Chão de Estrelas, the slum where I conducted my research. The neighbourhood, although largely excluded from the rest of the city, displays many connections to the world outside the slum. Secondly, I frame the focus of the book on life in the slums. The book intends to demystify the slum and its residents. I show how slum dwellers are considered different from middle- and upper-class people in physical, social, and political-economic aspects and how they are being stigmatised. I turn to the concept of "slum politics" to come to grips with life in the slum. By "slum politics" I mean the particular ways of doing and experiencing politics in the slum. Thirdly, I critically review several approaches to study life in the slum and explain how these relate to my focus on slum politics. Fourthly, I document how slums in Brazil have been conceptualised and subjected to a long history of external marginalisation. I argue that the current emphasis on democracy and participatory policies has not changed much about marginalisation. Fifth, I present my methodology, followed by the organisation of the book.

Chão de Estrelas: disconnected and connected

Chão de Estrelas is the slum where I conducted my research. The area of the community is divided between the administrative areas of Campina do Barreto and Peixinhos. Chão de Estrelas originated in 1981 as a resettlement scheme, providing dwellings for people from several riverside slums that were removed. Estimations of the current amount of inhabitants vary between 4.000 and 6.000. An exact number is hard to pin point, as the area does not coincide with census districts. Moreover, the dynamics and density of the area, with for example dwellings which provide a home to many families, makes it hard to quantify the number of residents. Overtime the neighbourhood has been through many changes, from improved infrastructure to ever increasing levels of violence.

Although positioned in the middle of the urban landscape of the Metropolitan Area of Recife, Chão de Estrelas simultaneously lies isolated from it. Its surface roughly forms a triangle of which two of the three sides are cut off from the adjacent neighbourhoods by the Beberibe River and a canal. The third side of the triangle opens up for the only paved and partly asphalted entrance to the neighbourhood, which has to contend with permanent flooding in the rain season. The neighbourhood directly borders on other slums, some worse and some better-off in terms of economic and infrastructural aspects.

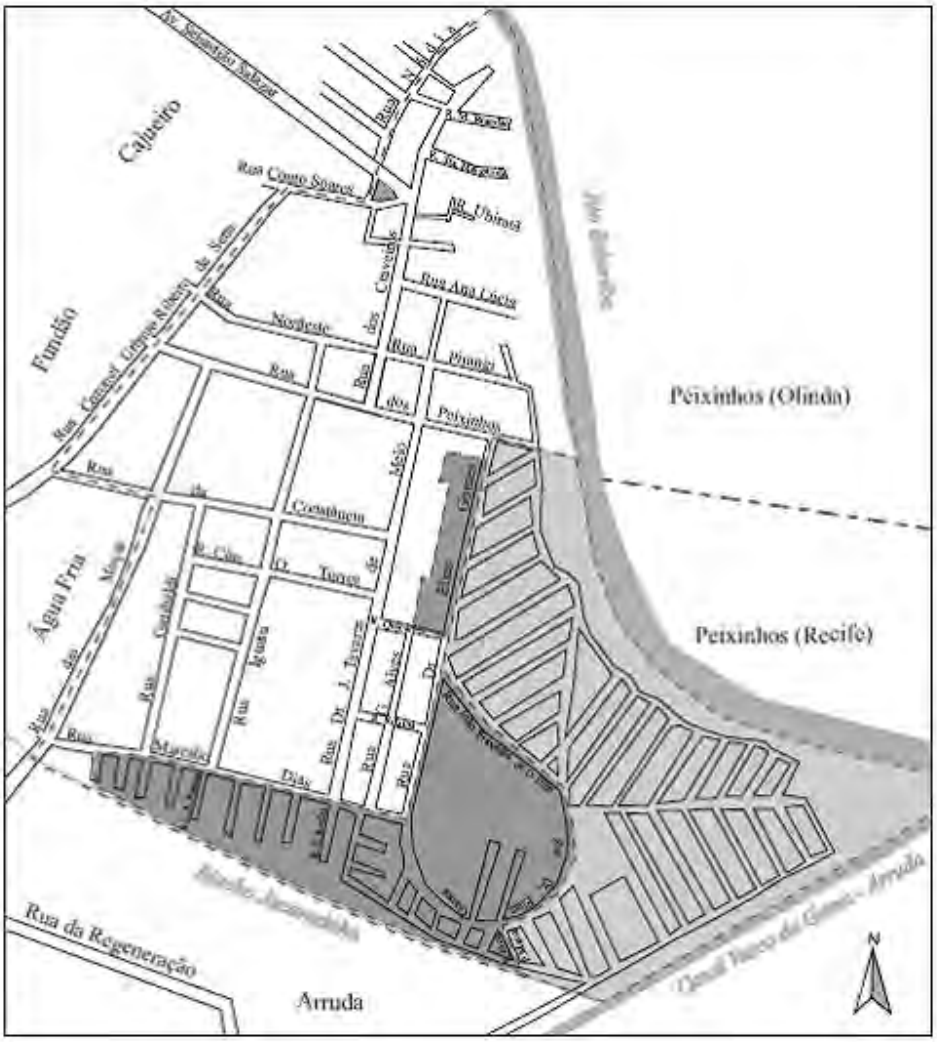
Chão de Estrelas lies disconnected from the wider city, not only in space but also in time. The bus trip to the centre of Recife, five kilometres in a straight line, takes forty five minutes outside of the rush hour, without counting the time needed to wait for the

bus. To reach Olinda by car – located just across the river – involves a detour of twenty minutes. With public transport to the centre of Olinda, less than four kilometres as the crow flies, implies taking two buses and over an hour travelling without mentioning the initial waiting time for the bus which may add another half hour. The slum is, to a large extent, cut off from the rest of the city (Santos 1987, Gomes 2008).

Map of Recife and Olinda with the position of Chão de Estrelas (maps.google.com)

As one gets closer to Chão de Estrelas, the porous and permeable nature of these boundaries in space and time become revealed. The third side of its triangle, the paved road, shows the passing of cars, vans, and motorcycles. Cyclists and pedestrians, some carrying enormous amounts of goods, belong to the normal street view just like many

hand carts and occasional horse carriages. Trucks enter, most of them providing local shops and warehouses. When this road is flooded, still many people pass here, from car drivers trying to avoid invisible potholes to pedestrians equipped with umbrellas, muddling through the knee-deep sludge. Others take detours along the unpaved streets and alleys, jumping pools and overflowing open sewers.



Map of the community of Chão de Estrelas.
The coloured parts are the community of Chão de Estrelas, with in the south the Jacarezinho and in the east the Beberibe River. The darker coloured part formally belongs to the neighbourhood of Campina do Barreto and the lighter part to the neighbourhood of Peixinhos (FIDEM 2000 in Cabral 2004). [1]

Even the apparently cut off other two sides of the triangle, show movement in and out of the neighbourhood. At the second side, a dilapidated concrete bridge passes over the river where pedestrians, some with bikes and motorcycles at hand, can cross.

Further on, another passage exists, a narrow trail adjunct to a huge sewage pipe, where pedestrians and cyclists can also pass. The pipe comes from a nearby middle class neighbourhood, passes over Chão de Estrelas and heads for the purification plant at the other side, carrying middleclass faeces through an area unconnected to the sewage system. The third side, along the canal has a few small bridges allowing many pedestrians, cyclists and motorcycles to pass in and out of the slum.

At all three sides, people establish connections to the world outside Chão de Estrelas. However, most of this movement is into other slums. They visit family or friends at their homes or go to buy things. They shop at a local marketplace or other nearby places of commerce. They return with bags and boxes, sometimes held in their hands, sometimes packed on a bike or motorcycle and sometimes carried by a worker with a handcart delivering the goods at home for a small fee. Children pass by, on foot or in a van – the latter being children of relatively well-to-do slum dwellers who can afford to send them to further away schools with higher standards.

Other slum dwellers go and return from the city centre. They go by bus, by bike or on foot. They visit the central market for specific bargains to make special foods, like ingredients for *feijoada*[2], or special tools. Others go to shop for clothes in one of the many downmarket shopping streets in the city centre. Occasionally some return with plastic bags from the closest – and relatively expensive – supermarket, filled mostly with that week's special offers in the cheapest category of food, often dried meat (*charque*), and other things, like towels. Better-off slum dwellers visit the closest shopping mall, to buy "quality" clothing. They also go here for the occasional purchase of a television or a music system. Still others visit relatives in hospital who are ill or giving birth. Slum dwellers connect to the world outside the slum, not only to consume, but also to work, for example as domestic workers, waiters, factory labourers, security guards, cleaners, salespersons and bus drivers. Cultural and music groups maintain connections outside the slum too, performing in the city centre. People from outside also connect to the slum, like police officers, officials in the field of health and infrastructure, NGO coordinators who visit or work in the slum or politicians who try to gain support of slum dwellers at election time.

It becomes clear that some of these connections are of a tenuous and ephemeral character, while others are more stable and permanent. Some are of an exploitative nature while others are more cordial. Specific persons stand out when examining these connections. These persons, the community leaders, play a key role in establishing and maintaining connections. They form an important focus of this book, which attempts to explain who they are and what they do.

Focus of the book: slum dwellers and their politics

The margins

This book sets out to understand life in the slum and represent slum dwellers as 'full human beings' (Boff & Boff 1987:8) with their own needs and aspirations and a complex personhood which extends beyond categories of simplistic stigmatisation. It argues against views that mystify slum dwellers, depicting them as nonpersons or the ultimate "other". This book instead approaches life in the slum is through "slum politics" which comprises of particular ways of experiencing and doing politics in the slum.

The book is an account of life in the margins. These margins, exploited and discriminated, form the current Third World, following Hardt and Negri who argue that the Third World can be found in the First World and vice versa (2000). Myriad practices take place in these margins that are constantly being obscured, degraded, distorted, silenced, hidden, or neglected (cf Gibson-Graham 2005). People who live here 'are marginalised as their perspectives are cast to the side or excluded' (Tsing 1993:5). In this book, I seek to illuminate the needs and aspirations of those who live in the margins in an attempt 'to contribute to a different politics of representation' (Escobar 2001:158), to find opportunities to make thinkable what was formerly unthinkable, muted, and disavowed.

Life in the slum

It is my contention that the slum is an eminently knowable world. Crossing the boundaries between the rest of the city and the slum, I studied how slum dwellers organize their family life, eke out a living, engage in politics, maintain social relations, cope with violence and other predicaments and dream about the future.

I draw upon the work of Oscar Lewis, who provided anthropology with perhaps its most intimate and most detailed ethnography on slum dwellers in Mexico City and in San Juan in Puerto Rico and New York, in "Five families" (1959) and "La Vida" (1965) respectively. I follow Lewis in arguing that life in the slum can only be understood from its own parameters. Lewis shows that life in a slum tends to have a form and logics of its own, presenting particularities which are fundamentally different from middle- and upper-class life. Yet, slums do not form a different locality in and of themselves, as some kind of autonomous realm, but are made different through processes of severe stigmatisation and a long history of marginalisation. Like the Mexicans and Puerto Ricans studied by Lewis, the residents of Chão de Estrelas adapt to an economically marginal position in a highly class-stratified setting in which they are being repressed in institutionalised ways. As such, I contend that slums are the by-product of a form of savage capitalism that has rendered its inhabitants, to a great extent, redundant for global processes of capitalist accumulation (Boff & Boff 1987, Santos 1987, Davis 2006,

Bauman 2003).

Life in the slum expresses the precariousness and provisionality of the margins, the constant muddling through, and projects which break off all the time. My research findings coincide with Lewis' writings about slum dwellers' 'fortitude, vitality, resilience and ability to cope with problems… in their harsh and brutalising environment' (1965:xxvii)', their sense of dignity, kindness, generosity, compassion and the social embeddedness of their economic transactions.

Although inspired by Lewis, I do have serious reservations regarding his work. My critique is directed against the determinism and homogenisation present in his analysis of life in the slum. He argues that the urban poor are part of a "culture of poverty", a vicious circle in which the poor are doomed to remain marginalised because of certain attitudes and values that are intergenerationally transmitted, such as lack of willingness to organise themselves politically, and short-sightedness in planning their lives. My research findings contradict the negative characteristics that Lewis stresses such as a lack of organization. Lewis has frequently been criticised for blaming the poor for their marginalised conditions (Valentine 1968, Leeds 1971, Perlman 1976). His ethnographies have often been read in terms of cultural and psycho-social dimensions of marginality, rooted in then-in-vogue deterministic psychological reasoning, which centred upon notions of how personalities are shaped in accordance with culture in which values are transmitted from one generation to the next.

However, although Lewis does not explicitly analyse the discrimination and exploitation unleashed on those living in the margins, nonetheless his ethnographies should be read as a charge levelled against a world that allows for the brutal human suffering which results from severe marginalisation of the poor (cf Bourgois 1995, Scheper-Hughes 1992, Goldstein 2003). Furthermore, a neglected aspect of his writings are the revolutionary solutions he proposes, calling for 'basic structural changes in society', 'redistributing wealth' and endowing the poor with power (1965:lii) while presenting optimistic analyses of the poor in post-revolutionary Cuba.

If one follows Lewis' approach of depicting life in the slum according to its own parameters, then one can see that the boundaries between, what is often depicted as separate spheres, the economy, politics, and everyday practices do not hold. Demarcating boundaries between political and economic activities, between physical and social capital, and between maintaining connections and making a living, appear artificial and impede a full understanding of what is at stake for slum dwellers. From an external point of view, the slum does not fit in existing categories and may be considered a site of disorganisation. However, as this book shows, life in the slum is in fact highly organised.

Similarly, Marcos Alvito (2001) and Donna Goldstein (2003), both on slums in Rio de Janeiro, show that life in these urban margins tends to have a form and logics of its own. Alvito (2001) demystifies the ways in which local community leaders, drug gangs, the

police and evangelical movements simultaneously shape the reality of slum dwellers. He points at a particular perception of ethics, a local hermeneutics of terror, a masculine ethos, and unwritten laws based on power, respect, honour and pride. Goldstein (2003) points at specific ways in which female slum dwellers perceive of class, sexuality, death, and violence, and presents a particular kind of humour which enables slum dwellers to deal with the dire conditions of their everyday lives.

Slums and slum dwellers: some characteristics

So, how is life in the slum different from life outside the slum? How is the slum different from middle- and upper-class neighbourhoods? How are slum dwellers different from middle-class people? To begin with, there are many different slums. In spite of these differences, I present several characteristics which point out how the slum and its residents generally differ from other sites. These characteristics are of physical, social and political-economic character.

The first characteristics regard the physical built environment. There are slums which emerged long ago in a land occupation, evolved over time and nowadays display relatively large and well-built three floor brick houses, sometimes completed with fenced garden and garage and provided with all public services. Other slums display makeshift wooden shacks on top of scrap yards. Slums are rather organically built, which result in a rather heterogeneous urban landscape. They consist of both brick houses and shacks made of wood or scrap materials. In comparison, middleclass neighbourhoods consist of larger brick houses and often apartment buildings. In both areas, the brick houses are fenced, but slum dwellings do not have a sentry box with a guard. Slums have many dirt roads. If asphalted, streets are potholed and in the rain season parts are permanently flooded. A typical sign is formed by the water containers on rooftops of those people who can afford to buy them. Water is a temporally scarce resource in most slums, especially in summer time. With a container one is assured of water storage. In addition, slums have litter on the streets, sometimes covering sewage systems and canals.

I present the social characteristics of slums through the generalised stereotypes that slum dwellers have of themselves, accompanied by my own observations. In slums, the amount of people in the streets is far greater than in middle-class areas streets where – except for the commercial areas and traffic arteries – streets are all but empty. The streets in slums are lively places. They are filled with people using them as their work place, people chatting, men playing dominoes, street vendors recommending their goods, women looking after toddlers, and lots of children running around.

Slum dwellers are also known for a particular style of speaking and conversation. Many of the adults speak in dialects with expressions which can be traced back to the rural areas where they lived before moving to the city. The youth is especially known

for using urban slang. I understand speech as Bourdieuan cultural capital; speaking works as a clear indicator of class, with those of lower classes speaking poorly and those of middle- and upper-class speaking well (Goldstein 2003). In Brazil, poor speech is related to humble origins and being uneducated, often related to rural backgrounds. Middle-class people argue that slum dwellers do not know how to speak, make many grammatical mistakes and cannot tell stories in consistent ways. While this obviously is a condescending class structured discourse, slum dwellers do also employ different ways of speaking. In general, when telling a story, they use the active voice instead of the passive voice. Instead of saying 'I went to my neighbour, asked him what he was doing and he answered that he was repairing the roof' they say: 'I went to my neighbour. "What are you doing?" "Oh, I am repairing the roof".' Stories are narrated in a more animated and active way. In addition, slum dwellers quickly and easily switch between topics, which, according to middle-class people, results in incoherent speech. Slum dwellers acknowledge they speak relatively loudly and do not refrain from communicating over large distances by shouting. In the slum, loud sounds are indeed part of the landscape (Oosterbaan 2006). Music blasts from speakers in bars and car boots, sermons are amplified from churches and live percussion explodes from cultural centres. Music is a clear class indicator. Slum dwellers generally enjoy what is labelled as 'popular' genres of music. In Recife, they listen to *brega* – a slow music and dance style which can be considered as romantic and erotic – and not to world famous Brazilian singers like Caetano Veloso or Gilberto Gil, who are considered middle-class. Foreign music, popular among middle-class youth, is seldom heard in the slum.

Other differences relate to forms of food and popular entertainment. Although the *churrasco*, the Brazilian barbecue, is popular within and outside slums, outside the slum good quality steak is served with wine or beer, while, in the slum, liver, kidneys, ears, and paws are served with *cachaça*, the Brazilian equivalent of rum. With regard to football, immensely popular in Brazil, slum dwellers and middle-class people support different football clubs. In Recife, for example, Santa Cruz is far more popular among slum dwellers than Nautico. Slum dwellers have a different kind of humour, characterised by what is often referred to as toilet humour and obscenities, but also black comedy. They can joke about problems and poignant situations they face (Goldstein 2003). They enjoy a slap-stick kind of humour, and television programmes with "hidden cameras" in which uninformed passers-by are being scared or confronted with awkward situations are especially popular.

With regard to style and clothing, it is hard to indicate differences between slum dwellers and middle-class people. Apart from the poorest, most slum dwellers have a set of nice clothes to wear when visiting the city centre. Women change from shorts and tops to skirts and blouses, wear jewellery, model their hair and wear nice shoes. If they can afford it, they dress according to the latest fashion. Men change shorts and bare breast to jeans, ironed shirts and leather shoes. One indicator of class is the famous

Brazilian-style flip-flops. Although common to wear for everybody on the beach, outside the beach middle-class people wear shoes while slum dwellers use flip-flops. Moreover, middle-class people who wear flip-flops have top brand fashionable models, while slum dwellers wear the bottom-of-the-market simple models.

In the most generalised way, body shapes do differ between women in slums and their middle-class counterparts. Slum dwellers see being stout as more attractive. While the general idealised image of a beautiful woman is blond, slim, and white-skinned, slum dwellers in fact have a preference for more heavy set, dark-skinned women. Skin colour does function as an indicator of class, as slum dwellers on average have darker skins than middle-class people. However, segregation on the basis of skin colour is complex in Brazil, as there are white-skinned people living in slums and middle- and upper-class black-skinned people. I return to this later.

Other markers of class are related to disposable income, like which restaurants and shops people frequent. In addition, slum dwellers travel by foot, bike, or bus, while middle-class people travel by car or taxi. Some slum dwellers have cars – some of which function as taxis – but these are usually old and ramshackle compared to new cars of middle-class people.

The third set of characteristics is of a political-economic nature: the slum exists in the margins. Its connections to the political and economic order are precarious and tenuous, as it is constantly at risk of being ignored in policies and excluded from the benefits of the economy. The slum largely exists outside official rules and regulations. Many houses do not have titles, many businesses do not have registers or tax roles, and many organisations do not have juridical persons. The economy of the slum, although heavily dependent on, largely operates apart from the main economy (see chapter 4). Slum dwellers are considered citizens, but their citizenship rights are violated (see chapter 8). An important reason for this lies in the severe stigmatisation of slums and slum dwellers.

Stigmatisation of slums and slum dwellers

As my experience with the taxi to Chão de Estrelas showed, the general image of slums is one of danger, crime and violence. Life in the slum is largely shaped by processes of stigmatisation. Middle-class people depict slum dwellers as "the other" and consider slums free-fire no-go areas, labyrinths in which drug trafficking, assault and rape take place. When my wife and I moved into Chão de Estrelas, middle-class friends were not worried about the poverty or potential discomfort of the slum, but instead about violence. In their opinion, we would surely get robbed and probably not get out alive. For them, slums were breeding grounds of crime. This equating of the poor with criminals has led to high urban segregation, fencing off the poor from the rich (Caldeira 2000). The word *marginal* in Brazilian Portuguese has a telling double meaning. It simultaneously means –

socially, politically, and economically – marginalised, and delinquent.

Newspapers contribute to the negative connotation of slums. For example, they "explain" car assaults by plainly referring to proximity of slums. Also spectacular crime programmes on television – daily broadcasted at lunchtime and at night – present images of crime scenes in slums with victims often murdered and still covered with blood. Reporters interview family and neighbours and interrogate arrested suspects. What contributes to the sphere of lawlessness is that these programmes almost always depict the crime as 'without a motive', arguing that the police have no clue about the purpose. Doing so, they suggest people are being killed without a reason and invoke an image of senseless violence and utter chaos imposed by barbarians. Stories about murder by daylight and witnesses who claim not to have seen anything – out of fear for retribution – characterise the image middle-class people have of life in the slums. Their fear of slums – the urban jungle par excellence – is enormous (Owensby 1999). The expression *'o bicho vai pegar'* – literally meaning 'the beast will get hold of it' – in a figuratively way signifies that 'there is going to be trouble'. It is used in Rio de Janeiro to express the fear that the slums will one day come down the hills to take over the city. This picture of a lurking predator is also present in the Recife middle-class imagery of its slums.

Most people from upper- and middle-class have never set foot a slum in their entire life, except for perhaps passing through one by car on the main road. For them, slum dwellers represent everything which they struggle not to be. Slum dwellers do not only personify their fear for being victim of crime, but also for being victim of falling into what they consider a degraded kind of life (Owensby 1999). Slum dwellers are not only related to crime, but also to economic problems, expressed in current complaints by middle class people that slum dwellers consume too much state money by applying to social security and relief.

Communities and outsiders

This book frequently refers to communities and outsiders. Slums are labelled *comunidades* (communities), both by slum residents and by those who live outside of slums. *Comunidades* usually do not coincide with administrative areas, but exist as parts of officially recognised neighbourhoods or can – as is the case of Chão de Estrelas – be part of more than one neighbourhood. The term has geographical, historical, social-sentimental and utopian connotations. Geographically, a community forms a territory with rather clear boundaries. Slum dwellers can indicate where their community ends and another one begins. Usually, boundaries correspond with rivers, canals or large streets. Communities also have a shared history. The area often originated in a land occupation or a resettlement scheme and has developed through time. The social-sentimental dimension of community is based on this shared history. Residents of the

same community have a collective memory which creates feelings of belonging. This translates in a we-they dichotomy regarding residents of other communities, where often the latter are denounced as less trustworthy, more violent, and less organised. Finally, the utopian dimension is expressed in the longing to be a well-organised and united community. Communities are always divided, new people arrive who do not know or care about the shared history. Still, many slum dwellers express aspirations of solidarity as they want to be a community which is unified in its struggles for improving the area. As I come to show, community leaders emphasise this utopian dimension by recalling a shared history and evoking feelings of belonging and togetherness, sometimes inspired by religious ideas about being a community.

By "outsiders" I refer to people who do not live in a slum, such as politicians, officials and middle-class entrepreneurs. "Outsiders" are those who are not marginalised in the ways slum dwellers are. They are the ones who regard slum dwellers as "the other", while slum dwellers seek to be connected to them. This book shows how slum dwellers approach outsiders for resources and prestige. They do not approach them with much ado and relations are, although asymmetrical in terms of influence and resources, often of a rather horizontal nature. I describe these people as "outsiders" for the purpose of analysis. It is not an emic term employed by slum dwellers.

Slum politics

Slum politics comprises ways of experiencing and doing politics which are grounded in specific needs and aspirations. These needs and aspirations, although not confined to slum dwellers, are more emphatically and urgently present in their lives in disavowed and disenfranchised sites like slums. Slum politics are the politics of people living in the margins of the political and economic order (cf Koster & de Vries *forthcoming).*

The Brazilian political order is embodied in state institutions entwined with global processes of governance. Its representatives, like politicians and officials, are reproducing its status quo. The political order has been designed to allow slums only to exist at its margins and 'official institutions … have tended to operate in an exclusionary fashion' towards slum dwellers (Owensby 2005:338). Dressed up in various ideologies and currents, the political order constantly judged groups of persons without any value to the system and preserves a status quo which is grounded in a truly modern and highly homogeneous assemblage of prevailing ambitions aimed at maintaining power.

Furthermore, the slum population is marginalised within the national and world economic order. In accordance with Marxian theories, I contend that the current economic order is characterised by its exploitation of certain groups who are at constant risk of being made redundant as their merits are deemed low and their replaceability high. The current economic order presents modern needs of a highly material character,

primarily manifest in capitalism, as a dominant way of reasoning and dealing around highly individualised notions of growth, profit and progress. The political and economic order regards those who live in the margins only in terms of 'dis-connection, dis-engagement and un-commitment' (Bauman in Diken & Laustsen 2005:vii).

Thus, slum dwellers are constantly faced with, what I call, "the fear of abandonment". The heavy stigmatisation of slum dwellers that labels them dangerous and criminal, their redundancy to the labour market, and the negligible benefits accorded them within the current economic order, can be viewed as attempts to "push" them away the furthest possible. João Biehl, writing about Brazilian poor with AIDS, refers to this process as 'the continuous local production of social death' (2005:250) in which the very existence of the urban poor is undesirable. Analysing state and medical procedures around these people with AIDS, Biehl argues that, through 'technologies of invisibility', these people are turned into 'absent things' (2005:259). Although the position of poor people with AIDS is more tragic than that of the average slum dweller in Chão de Estrelas, I argue that slum dwellers are all constantly at risk of being rendered non-existent as a person. This act of abandonment implies degradation to being non-human, an animal instead of a person (Diken & Laustsen 2005), exempted from humanity (Bauman 2003a) and merely considered 'human waste' (Bauman 2003b). Slum dwellers are approached as nonpersons: 'those whose basic dignity and rights are denied' (Boff & Boff 1987:8). It is in this context that I set out to uncover and analyse slum dwellers' needs and aspirations which, I show, are profoundly based in strivings for connectivity and in a fear of abandonment.

The main articulators of slum politics are community leaders, who are the major protagonists of this book. Community leaders, born as regular slum dwellers with specific capacities to establish connections, are important – and largely misunderstood and underrated – players in the ways in which life in the slum is organised. Their practices resemble what Hansen writes about popular leaders in India, who are 'scrambling for visibility, public resources, and recognition of their demands and identity' and whose demands emerge from 'continued poverty, deprivation, illiteracy, and exclusion of large segments of the population from organised society and the economy' (Hansen 2001:230, 231). Chapters 2 and 3 analyse in detail who these community leaders are and what their projects entail.

Slum politics is the ongoing and never finished endeavour of slum dwellers of creating connections and possibilities which break off all the time. I depict it as a structuring and connective force in the slum. In the eyes of slum dwellers, their slum politics is not always understood as "politics". Slum dwellers who engage in it are not explicitly or consciously referring to their practices as being political, as what I mean by slum politics is about organising life in a broad sense, relating to family life, making a living, and dreaming about the future. Thus, slum politics contains a wider realm of practices than what in both academic writing and everyday language is referred to as

politics. Yet, in my view, slum politics is profoundly political, as it aims at establishing connections, be they tenuous and ephemeral, to the world outside the slum which is considered full of resources and inhabited by people who have influence and prestige. Slum politics contains the potential to connect the margins to the political and economic order.

Coming to grips with slum politics presents similarities with the intentions of feminist theory in its emphasis on qualities which are marginalised in the political and economic order in order to open up political horizons hitherto invisible (Tronto 1993). It is my contention that in the myriad of slum dwellers' practices – constantly being obscured, degraded, distorted, silenced, hidden or neglected through dominant views on politics and the economy (Gibson-Graham 2005) – a potential is present which needs to be recognised.

Moreover, given the current that slums are assuming an increasingly larger place on this planet – in absolute and relative terms (Davis 2006, UN-Habitat 2003) – the need to understand slum politics becomes clear. When a growing number of people, a soon-to-be majority of the world's population, lives life and politics in a way different from dominant views and theorisations on how life and politics in the margins are shaped, the need to review these theorisations becomes urgent. Unlike prevailing views, slum dwellers do not centre the ways in which they organise their lives and engage in politics upon notions like political parties, elections, governmental institutions and programmes, and – in Latin America – clientelist relations. Instead, the assemblage of material, intangible and utopian needs and aspirations, form the basis for a particular understanding of living life and of slum politics, different from the dominant understanding in which politics aims at assuming and maintaining power. I set out to come to an understanding and give voice to politics present in the growing margins of the political and economic order. This is not because slum dwellers cannot give voice to their own situation and interests, but because every additional voice contributes to a better understanding of their position and helps to unveil the potential intrinsic in their practices.

Slum politics, I argue, gives expression to new possibilities. Mike Davis points at the huge political potential of the margins of the political order, which may greatly affect the ways in which the world is organised. However, he depicts a negative prospect of fear and violence, in which a 'delusionary dialectic… dictates a sinister and unceasing duet', presenting bloody confrontations between slum dwellers and an 'Orwellian' state (2006:206). Instead, I argue that a more optimistic vision is rendered possible by an emphasis on slum dwellers' needs and aspirations.

Different perspectives on life in the slum

This book studies life in the slum through an analysis of slum politics. Many other approaches have been developed and employed to study life in the slum, both in academic research and political administration. These other approaches are related to slum politics and form a background to my research. However, they do not display the full complexity of life in the slum which is presented in slum politics. I present the five most popular and significant for my argument below.

First, a common approach for understanding the slum in Brazil focuses on issues of race. The link between race and inequality is an often studied and debated phenomenon in Brazil, leading to the poignant conclusion that race – expressed above all in skin colour – importantly determines class ranking in Brazil (Sansone 2003, Goldstein 2006, Marx 1998, Sheriff 2001, Santos & Maio 2004, Owensby 2005, DaMatta 1978 to name a few). This coincides with my experience that at entering a slum the average skin colour of people becomes darker. Likewise, the amount of African Brazilians living in slums is far higher than those living in middle-class neighbourhoods. Discrimination and urban segregation on the base of skin colour is common in Brazil. To invoke a stereotype, the unemployed male slum dweller with darker skin colour is considered equivalent of a criminal (cf de Carvalho 1992). Yet, compared to situations in other countries, like the United States (Goldstein 2003, Oliveira 1996, Marx 1998) and South Africa (Huchzermeyer 2002, Hansen 2006, Marx 1998), where urban segregation largely coincides with racial groups, Brazil presents a highly complex whole of interracial relations and blurred and blended racial categories which never simply coincide with social classes (cf Owensby 2005, Huchzermeyer 2002). Although the simple dichotomy which considers white skinned persons better – more beautiful, presumably richer – than black skinned persons also holds in Brazil, the situation is far more complex.

A focus on race is often entwined with cultural explanations, linking race to issues of cultural and religious expression – African Brazilian dance and music styles like *capoeira*, and African Brazilian cults like Candomblé – that are constructive of a certain identity (Sansone 2003, Bartholdson 2007). However, my experience is that this may easily lead to an approach that is too narrowly focused on cultural expressions and (re)invention of traditions which leads to a construction of ethnical or cultural identities that does not resonate with the ways in which people perceive of themselves. Most African Brazilian teenager boys I encountered, who were involved in expressions of so-called "black culture" – *capoeira*, *maracatu*, *afoxé* – were not bothered by issues of cultural identity or history; they wanted to impress girls with fashionable music, cool moves, and strong muscles. A too strong emphasis on race and cultural identity presents an elitist view on how life in the slum is organised which does not correspond with slum reality.

Racial segregation is less emphasised in Recife than in cities like Salvador and Rio

de Janeiro (cf Sansone 2003, IBGE 2000). The urban poor in Recife consist for the large part of relatively light-skinned descendants of Portuguese farmers miscegenated with African Brazilian and indigenous people, who migrated in from the rural areas of Pernambuco and adjacent states (cf Cowell 1975, de Melo 1978, Hecht 1998). Although roughly speaking Recife's rich neighbourhoods are inhabited by white-skinned people and slums by dark-skinned people, the divisions between race categories are in fact rather blurred.

In Chão de Estrelas, the majority of residents consider themselves moreno.[3] However, there are also many residents who are considered white. Some of whom are amongst the poorest. Similarly, there are those considered black who have better jobs and higher status within the community. Interracial relations are common, with many couples in which one, either the man or the woman, is darker-skinned than the other, and a kind of "colour-blind" sexuality certainly exists (Fry 1995/1996, Goldstein 1999, 2003). However, racism also persists in Recife, and Gilberto Freyre's (1999[1933]) conceptualisations of Brazil's "racial democracy" remain a myth. Within Chão de Estrelas, moving from the main street into its more impoverished alleyways, it is easy to perceive that the average skin colour gets darker. While complex and often blurred, race plays a role in the organisation of life in the slum.

The second popular explanatory perspective on life in the slum is centred on the organised drug trade, often in tandem with obscure interests of politicians who gain from it as well (Leeds 1996, Arias 2006). However, I contend that the emphasis on drug trade, although a dominant force in Rio de Janeiro – produces an exaggerated and sensationalist picture of life in Chão de Estrelas and many other Brazilian slums. Although drug trade is undeniably present and structures parts of life in the slum in horribly violent ways – as chapter 8 shows – life in Chão de Estrelas cannot be viewed as primarily centred upon drug trade. In contrast to the middle-class perspective that all slums are organised around drug trade – strengthened by stories from Rio de Janeiro – in Recife, this trade plays a smaller and less organised role. In Chão de Estrelas, the drug trade does not occupy a pivotal position in how life is structured, although the violence entailed does gravely affect slum dwellers. In general, community leaders and the slum dwellers who are not involved in the drug trade have an "I do not bother them and they do not bother me" attitude to drug traders, reaching a kind of pact of mutual avoidance. They never choose sides and steer clear of contacts with both drug traders and the police.

A third approach takes kinship ties and gender roles as an important dimension of the organisation of life in the slum (Gregg 2003, Goldstein 2003). Extended families, partly living in the same area, partly scattered over the city, form connections of mutual help. These connections based in kinship are enhanced by a language of kinship which incorporates "non-kin" into the family, such as godparents, neighbours and friends who are labelled uncles and aunts. Migrants moving into the city often first turn to family

members already living there and later establish new family members by appointing godparents for their children. Many families within the same extended family live close to each other. In Chão de Estrelas, many live in the same community. This occurs because migrants move to places where their family lives, and because adult children often marry within the same community with their neighbours' children or their schoolmates, and rent, buy, or build a dwelling close to their parental home. Furthermore, a focus on gender roles is crucial for understanding how life in the slum is organised. As chapter 4 shows, kinship ties form a central source of mutual assistance for slum dwellers, and gender roles are significant as women are pivotal in organising issues of family life and the household economy. These practices are included in my study of slum politics.

The fourth approach depicts life in the slum in terms of political divisions, both in administrative and electoral terms. The state generates the boundaries of slums on the basis of geographically set neighbourhoods. In election times, voting districts are also called into existence. In a recent attempt to "zone" the slums in Recife, carried out under the banner of participatory policy-making, the municipality appointed political-administrative regions, subdivided in micro-regions. However, slum dwellers are little affected by these divisions in organising their lives. Only as far as political-administrative boundaries coincide with historically grown limits between communities – which is not the case in Chão de Estrelas – do neighbourhoods resonate with people's own "zoning" practices. This idea of the ordering of slums is central to the proposition that in election time whole neighbourhoods turn into the constituency of a particular politician, faction, or party. As such, a kind of collective clientelism (Burgwal 1995) is hailed as an important organising force of the slum population (Gay 1994). However, as chapter 6 shows, in Chão de Estrelas, electoral political support and loyalties are scattered and move between different politicians and parties. Political-administrative and electoral boundaries are indeed present, but they do not present much explanatory value for coming to grips with everyday life in the slum.

The fifth approach centres upon the economic dimensions of ordering life in the slum. Evidently, the slum population is much poorer than those of other neighbourhoods. Unemployment rates are sky-high. The majority of residents are excluded from the regular labour market and makes their living through self-employed business or odd jobs. Within the slum, economic factors play a role. Social stratification is through people's incomes and economic situation, with categories varying from unemployed to those with permanent jobs, and from 'miserable' to those '*bem de vida*', meaning 'well in life' in the sense of not rich but better-off. Indeed, the 'miserable' are looked down upon by other slum dwellers. A related perspective focuses on the idea of 'entrepreneurship'. One such perspective, currently in fashion, is that proposed by the Peruvian economist Hernando de Soto (2000) who depicts slum dwellers as micro-entrepreneurs who would succeed in the economic order if they only had land and

property titles. This perspective, which, in my view, perversely argues that the poor are rich if they could only legally prove their richness with land titles and property documents, does not correspond with the reality of slum dwellers. For most residents of Chão de Estrelas, land titles are not an issue. For the house owners, it is more important to have the right connections with politicians – often through community leaders – who will help them once the lack of land titles becomes an issue for the security of their dwellings. For the many tenants, land titling will only increase rent. Land titling, the residents of Chão de Estrelas know, entails paying real estate taxes, which they now do not currently pay in accordance with the regulations under which the resettlement took place in the 1980s. Furthermore, land titling in slums leads to an exodus of its poorest residents as they cannot afford to pay for real estate taxes and bills for water and electricity connections, which are often formalised at the same time. Moreover, land titles will also bring the real estate market into the slum, forcing slum dwellers to leave because of higher rents and the increased cost of living (Davis 2006). What then occurs is that the poorest slums dwellers are pushed away to even further margins. This book demonstrates that slum dwellers cannot be seen as 'proto-capitalists' (Davis 2006:179), as their needs and aspirations do not correspond with those of the economic order in which De Soto wants to incorporate them. A long history of marginalisation of the slum has resulted in different economic needs. Chapter 4 shows how slum politics relates to the economy in the slum.

My own perspective to slum life, through a focus on slum politics, incorporates many of the different dimensions present in the five approaches detailed above to deal with the complexity of life in the slum. I analyse how slum dwellers deal with discrimination because of race and supposed involvement in crime, organise their family life, relate to electoral and governmental politics, and negotiate economic realities.

Slums: a history of marginalisation

Shantytown, ghetto, mocambo, favela, slum

My deliberate usage of the word slum relates to the differences between the terms shantytown, ghetto, and mocambo. In Brazil, slums are generally referred to as *favelas*. Though there are many similarities, *favelas* are different from shantytowns or ghettos in other parts of the world (Leeds 1971, Oliveira 1996, Huchzermeyer 2002, Hannerz 2004, Wacquant 2008). Shantytowns consist of self-made shacks, often built on land appropriated through illegal land occupation. Ghettos, studied mostly in US cities, or *banlieues* in France, generally consist of rundown houses, sometimes the former residences of the urban bourgeoisie such as old mansions in the city centre subdivided into many small apartments, often consisting of only one room, or of badly maintained public

housing projects (Davis 2006, Wacquant 2008). In shanty towns residents largely built their own shelters, while, in ghettos, houses existed prior to the arrival of residents.

Additionally, in ghettos ethnicity plays an important structuring role, giving rise to African American, Italian, Jewish, Puerto Rican, Chinese and – more recently – Polish ghettos. In contrast, although many shantytowns also have an important ethnic dimension regarding their population – which may consist to a high extent of indigenous population or, in the case of Brazil, of African Brazilians – shantytowns usually do not have an exclusive ethnic connotation. Shantytowns in Brazil cannot be seen, and are in everyday language not considered, the exclusive dwelling of African Brazilians, while ghettos in the US are primarily described in terms of the ethnic group residing there.

Favelas are the Brazilian Portuguese equivalent of the shantytown. In Recife they were long referred to as *mocambos* (Correia 1999, Freyre 1981[1936], 1937), but that term has become old-fashioned. Depending on the city's geography they are also referred to as *morros* (hills), while in some regions distinct names are used, like *baixadas* in Belém.

The term *favela* originated in Rio de Janeiro in the late 1890s. The name, stories have it, is derived from the name of a plant that grew in the arid areas of the state of Bahia. Soldiers – probably freed slaves – who suppressed the uprising of Canudos (1895-1896) in Bahia, were promised housing after returning from their victorious battle. However, the federal government, seated in Rio de Janeiro, broke its promise. Instead, the soldiers built makeshift shacks on unclaimed public land on a hillside near the city centre in order to put pressure on the government to keep their promise. They called their settlement "Morro da Favela", after the plant which had thrived on a hill while they were engaged in combat in Canudos. Some argue the name also referred to a hill in Canudos which the rebels used as a look-out point (Neuwirth 2005, Jaguaribe 2003, Valladares 2000).

Although it is a common term, I prefer not to use the word *favela* when referring to Chão de Estrelas. The community is considered a *favela* by most people, including residents of middle class neighbourhoods and of other slums. However, most residents of Chão de Estrelas do not use the term when talking about their community. They prefer the term *comunidade carente*, which means a community that is "in need", for instance of public services and other resources. Their rejection of the term *favela* has two reasons. The first is that a *favela* emerges from illegal land occupation, while the biggest part of Chão de Estrelas, on the contrary, originated as a resettlement scheme. Moreover, people argued, *favelas* consist of makeshift houses without any public services, while Chão de Estrelas has many brick houses and is mostly connected to electricity and piped water.

Secondly, as many residents of poor neighbourhoods point out, the term *favela* has a very negative connotation. The term *favelados* – as residents of *favelas* are called – is strongly associated with being dirty, criminal, and extremely poor. The *favela* consists of

the poorest of the poor, the 'miserable' or *flagelados* (scourged) as people describe them. My landlady in Chão de Estrelas told me that the community was 'not a *favela*, because I do not consider the people here *flagelados*.' For these reasons, most residents of Chão de Estrelas prefer not to be called *favelados*. As Juan Ayala (2004) shows, the *favela* is a flexible concept: at certain times the area is called a *favela* by particular people, while at other times, or by other people, this label is vehemently repudiated. Further, definitions differ in the administrative realm, as sometimes the main indicator for a *favela* is its illegal emergence, while at other times it is its lack of basic infrastructure.

In order to respect residents' views, I use the more general and neutral term of "slum" to refer to Chão de Estrelas and other areas that are often labelled *favelas*. In Portuguese, slum can be translated as *favela*, but also as *comunidade carente* or *bairro pobre* (poor neighbourhood). I also avoid the use of the term shanty town – which I used in earlier research (Koster 2002) – as it entails some uncertainties regarding what is still a shanty and what is not. Shanty towns – like French *bidonvilles* – evoke an image of only makeshift shacks, while slums may also consist of brick houses.

Perspectives changed, marginalisation unchanged

As Oscar Lewis (1959, 1965) argued, slums have long histories of marginalisation. Demographically, in most cities, slums form large segments of the urban landscape (Davis 2006). However, while slums have become part of the contemporary urban landscape, they have never been accepted as such. Socially, politically. and economically, slums still exist in the margins. I document how, in Brazil, while views on slums changed over time, from their emergence at the end of the nineteenth century to the present, left the marginalised position of slums unchanged. I draw mainly from academic and administrative reports on Brazilian slums, combined with writings on the United States – where interest in sociological and anthropological studies in urban issues has been relatively high – and several other relevant sources.

Early views of slums considered slum dwellers as dirty, harmful, and as a residual category of human beings existing at the margins of city life. At a speech held in 1926, Mattos Pimenta, an influential resident of Rio de Janeiro, at the local Rotary Club, depicted slums in terms of 'a dantesque spectacle' of criminals and loafers 'bringing insecurity and restlessness to all corners of the city by the multiplication of assaults and thefts', and argued that slums were a 'leprosy to aesthetics' (Pimenta 1926 in Valladares 2000:15). Similar opinions were divulged in Recife. Amaury de Medeiros, Head of the Health Department of Pernambuco from 1922-1926, and, later, member of federal parliament, described slums as 'the antithesis of hygiene' and a 'city enemy', 'built from wastes and remains of civilisation' that 'transmit an impression of rag and misery' (1925, 1926 in Correia 1999).

By the late 1870s, Recife's position as the regional economic focal point for the local

economy combined with droughts and a decline in the sugar industry saw massive in-migration and dramatic population rises within the city (Cowell 1975). Slums originated mainly in the swampy mangrove areas at the seashore and riversides and along the railway lines (Correia 1999).[4] As early as 1880, complaints were being made about the concentration of 'thousands of ambulant mummies covered with ragged clothes' residing in slums (Correia 1999:307). Slums were considered a threat to many dimensions of city life. Physically, slums were deemed dangerous to personal security and health, being seen as a stronghold of criminals and an incubator of epidemics. Aesthetically, slums were viewed as ugly spots in otherwise beautiful urban design. Morally, slums were seen as a shameful blight on the city – believed to shelter loafing, promiscuity, and pagan rituals (Correia 1999). Mattos Pimenta, like the planners who restructured Rio de Janeiro, Recife, and other Brazilian cities, opted for elimination of all slums, building cheap public housing instead. Plain eviction was considered not an option as it was recognised that the population would move to adjacent areas and continue their threatening existence. In Recife, this resulted in the "social crusade against the slum", a programme carried out in 1938, prohibiting construction of slums (Assies 1992). Still, Recife's slums kept on expanding. Between 1920 and 1940, Recife's population increased by 46% (Assies 1992:55). Again a wave of migrants from rural areas, afflicted by droughts and further decline of the sugar cane industry, ended up in Recife's slums.

This view of slums as problems that have to be removed in order to improve and beautify the city as a whole, harks back to Haussmann's rigorous restructuring of nineteenth century Paris (Davis 2006). In Recife, plans were invoked to 'free Recife from its wounds' by burning down slums with 'purifying flames' (Filgueira 1929, cited in Correia 1999). The city was seen as an organic whole body, slums being the cancers that needed to be cut out to recuperate the ill urban body. This view also resonated with the vision of society as an organic whole, which became crucial to European modes of governing in the 1930s. It appears most clearly in the writings of Karl Binding and Alfred Hoche (1920) and later in Carl Schmitt (1963) who espoused the notion of '*lebensunwertes Leben*', life unworthy of being lived, a political category that was horrifically put into practice under Nazi rule during World War II. In Recife, between 1939 and 1941, following contemporaneous German and Italian policies, forced re-migration of slum dwellers to the countryside was accompanied by destruction of slums, a policy copied in other parts of the country. This policy was supported by accusations that slums lodged communist dissidents (Correia 1999, Perlman 1976).

In the 1940s, attitudes in Brazil did alter as authorities became more interested in researching slums. Gilberto Freyre's studies of slums (1981[1936], 1937) and artistic and literary explorations of slum life from architects, novelists, and artists opened up life in the slums. Slum populations were included in censuses. Research implicitly moved away from viewing slum dwellers as non-integrated lazy criminals. More and more

became known of the social structure of slums, and survey data showed that slum dwellers were organised and integrated in the labour market. In addition, findings that many residents of slums paid rent for their dwellings showed their integration in the housing market (Correia 1999). Research helped to increase the administrative control of the state, increasingly subjecting slums to forms of modern government. Rules and regulations were created, in order to structure slums according to urban design, albeit mostly with little effect (Valladares 2000).

Meanwhile, in Brazil and throughout Latin America migration to the cities accelerated in the 1940s as a result of industrial growth. The Brazilian economy changed from being primarily agriculture-based towards manufacturing, with industries largely based in cities. Whereas in the first half of the 20th century industry was based on export of primary products, increasing competition from African and Asian countries meant that after World War II the industry thrived on import substitution for the internal market (Roberts 1995). Between 1940 and 1960, Recife's population increased with 129% (Assies 1992:55).

At the same time, changing attitudes in academic research in the United States was significant. William Foote Whyte's "Street Corner Society" (1943), a study of a Boston slum, documented how life in a slum was organised. In the 1960s, Charles Stokes argued against the 'non-integrated' view on slums when he showed how particular slums – which he labelled "slums of hope" – were in a process of integration in city life in which its residents would integrate in the labour market and 'acquire the cultural resources necessary' (1962:190) These slums were, for him, places of passage and transition. Importantly, in his categorisation, Stokes argued that processes of successful or failed social integration had two dimensions: on the one hand slum dwellers' own efforts and capacities to integrate and on the other hand society's willingness to absorb them (Stokes 1962). Indeed, in policy debate, understandings of marginalisation of slum dwellers have often drawn one-sidedly upon just one dimension. Conservatives argued, and still argue, that the urban poor lack skills and "culture" to work themselves up and be part of the economic and political order. Progressives argued, and still argue, instead that the economy and political order were to blame, as they discriminated against the urban poor and impeded their attempts at integration.

In the 1960s, Oscar Lewis' research, had enormous influence on policy making – although not directly in Brazil due to the language difference and lack of translations of his work into Portuguese. Many academics and policy makers were inspired by a skewed and particular reading of his idea that the urban poor are marginalised because of a cultural and psychological lack or difference. Living in a geographically and economically marginal area as the slum, or not having permanent employment was considered enough reason to label the urban poor as marginal people (Perlman 1976). Brian Roberts' (1973) book 'Organising Strangers' contested these ideas of cultural and psychological lack, providing great insights into how migrants, recently settled in slums

of Guatemala City, organised their lives and managed to integrate into the economy of the city. Janice Perlman's (1976, 2004) studies of slums in Rio de Janeiro further argued against the "myth of marginality", showing that slum dwellers are socially well-organised and make effective use of the city and its institutions. These studies showed that slum dwellers are marginalised, not because of a cultural or psychological lack or difference which impedes integration, but because of their integration in a system that exploits them (Roberts 1973, Stack 1975, Perlman 1976).

The urban planning of the military regime

The 1970s was the heyday of global technocratic city planning. Around the globe, slum improvement prevailed over slum removal and resettlement. Programmes centred upon sites and services, providing land and basic infrastructure while leaving the building of the houses to its future residents. Self-help projects presented a symbiosis between ideological labelling – "help the poor help themselves" – and low-cost development policy and state retrenchment (Davis 2006).

While the military regime of Brazil embraced technocratic modes of operating, they did not share the same preference for improvement over removal and resettlement. Slums were considered undesirable, not least because of slum dwellers' supposed allegiance to "communist forces". The military regime set itself the goal of eradicating all slums within a short period. Further, it was considered the first regime in Brazilian history that actually 'had the power, centralisation, and resources to implement full-scale eradication' (Perlman 1976:200,201). In Recife, between 1964 and 1979, slums made way for an upgrade of the city centre and the massive construction of a road system with large avenues and viaducts (cf Assies 1992). Investment in slum upgrading merely consisted of programmes that eradicated slums and instead built substitute public housing under the cynical banner of the 'humanisation' of slums (Assies 1992:131). The new public housing was too expensive for the poor, as they had to pay mortgage or at least water and electricity bills and taxes, and was often located far from the city centre where the jobs were, without any or affordable public transport. As many of the poor could not afford to live in this housing, the policy eventually worked as an indirect form of eviction (Assies 1992). Eventually, a disproportionate share of the money invested in so-called housing for the poor, turned out to be used to benefit better-off city residents (Perlman 1976). Further, a series of floods worsened the situation of many slum dwellers in Recife. The largest flood, in 1975, also caused damage and discomfort to middle class neighbourhoods (cf Andrade 1979). The authorities decided that to avoid future flooding, the rivers should be broadened. For this, the river bank slums had to be removed. Hence, after the 1975 flood, an estimated 58,000 families, totalling some 300,000 people, were at risk of being evicted (Assies 1992:122), among whom most of the adult slum dwellers introduced in this book.

Democratisation, participation, citizenship… and marginalisation

In Recife, the last thirty years have seen many attempts to include slum dwellers in planning policies and to give slums a more legitimate place in the city through programmes which centre upon notions of democratisation, participation and citizenship. These attempts – at least on paper – aimed at inclusion of the urban poor. However, I argue, these have not countered the marginalisation of slums.

In 1979, when the military regime started to relax its stance towards the urban poor, the municipality constructed Community Planning Nucleus (*Núcleos de Planejamento Comunitário*), popularly called *barracões* (large shacks), in poor neighbourhoods. These upheld popular participation and were accompanied by large slum upgrading programmes. However, critics argued that these programmes mainly aimed at land speculation in areas close to the city centre and other sites attractive to live in for middle class people (Assies 1992). As such, "do-goodism" was always entwined with calculating self-interest (Perlman 1976).

In 1986, after the dictatorship ended, the new democratic municipality introduced the programme *Prefeitura nos Bairros* (Municipality in the Neighbourhoods). The city was divided into six *Regiões Políticas Administrativas* (Political Administrative Areas), which elected representatives to participate in policy-decisions. Practically, it was 'meant to outflank the emerging "new" urban movements' that challenged the newly installed municipality for not living up to the expectations people had when "the left" seized power after the military regime (Assies 1992:173).

At the time, Brazil too followed a worldwide policy emphasis on decentralisation and local autonomy, giving rise to community based programmes (cf Roberts 1995). In 1987, Recife introduced a system of laws that attempted to legalise the slums and provide them with infrastructure (Assies 1992, de Souza 2001). This system of laws, which still exists, built upon the *Prefeitura nos Bairros* programme as a result of both the municipality and NGOs representing the social movements. This was called PREZEIS, *Plano de REgularização das Zonas Especiais de Interesse Social* (Plan for Regularisation of Special Zones of Social Interest). An important dimension of PREZEIS was that it prioritised shelter over ownership rights, thus condemning the frequently recurring situation whereby improved infrastructure leads to higher costs of living and land speculation, resulting in the expulsion of the original residents from their homes (Assies 1992). Within PREZEIS, several poor areas in the city were recognised as *Zona Especial de Interesse Social* (ZEIS; Special Zone of Social Interest). Defining these areas had already started in the last years of the dictatorship. They were described as 'subnormal settlements with a potential for consolidation and whose removal certainly would involve high social and/ or financial costs' (preparatory document of Prefeitura/URB 1980 in Assies 1992:148n). Every ZEIS has a Comul, a *COMissão de Urbanização e Legalização da posse da terra* (Comission for Urbanisation and Legalisation of land titling).

The board of this local consultative body consists of two *titulares* (directors) chosen from the ZEIS population, a representative of the municipal authorities, and a representative of the joint social movements. Other residents of the area take part in positions of substitute-titulares and assistants. Board members have regular meetings, alternating between the neighbourhood and the office of urban planning in the city centre. In addition a larger meeting – called Forum – is regularly organised by the board of PREZEIS for representatives of all ZEIS (FASE et all. 1997, PREZEIS 2001, Maia 1995, de Souza 2001, Schoof 2006).

In 2000, the Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT; Workers' Party) assumed power in the Recife municipality. In 2001, it introduced the *Orçamento Participativo* (OP; Participatory Budgeting), which soon overshadowed PREZEIS. In Brazil, the OP is most famously associated with Porto Alegre (Baiocchi 2003). It is less well known that currently the OP in Recife is one of Brazil's largest participatory programmes aimed at infrastructural improvement and citizenship construction. Several NGOs which had an officialised role in the workings of PREZEIS, are currently connected to OP (FASE et all. 1997, Teixeira et all 2004, Bitoun et all. 2002, PREZEIS 2001, Etapas 1989, Leal 2003, Fernandes 2004, OP 2008).

One major setback of this process in Recife, the complaint made by activists, is that social movements have been incorporated in the workings of state policies and that NGOs involved have become extensions of the state, or are merely engaged in financial survival, instead of working as representatives of the urban poor (Foweraker 2001, Nielsen 2002). Moreover, the OP is claimed to work against existing forms of political organisation by establishing a new sort of *delegados* (representatives) instead of approaching the "old" representatives, being the community leaders.

However, currently, many community leaders have become *delegados* too. Slum dwellers can vote for *obras* (public works). Firstly, different issues are presented, for example pavement, sewage, employment, culture, leisure, and health. Through voting, three of these issues are prioritised. In the next meeting, people vote for specific *obras* within the issues selected. In spite of the celebration of the OP by the municipality, its meetings rarely result in the realisation of the *obras* opted for. If they do, this is often over a much longer time span than planned. While *obras* in middle class areas are planned and begin immediately, in slums they are, if planned at all, postponed and eventually cancelled. I contend that, in spite of these initiatives that laud democratisation, participation, and citizenship, slum dwellers are still being excluded from the state's allocation of resources.

Meanwhile, throughout the 1990s, in Brazil and world wide, the numbers of slum dwellers keep on growing in absolute and relative terms, both through migration and natural growth. In Brazil, the crisis of the 1980s and processes of rapid de-industrialisation, resulted in 'urbanisation without industrialisation' (Roberts 1995:2). In this period, the structure of the economy changed as the service sector became more

important than manufacturing. Nevertheless, the economy could not keep pace with the increasing demand for work. Slum dwellers continued to make their living primarily through self-employment, 'petty commerce, small-scale manufacturing and personal services' (Roberts 1995:2), in what is often labelled the "informal" sector.

In this current climate, slum populations are ever more redundant within the larger economy. Roberts argues that slum dwellers are still necessary for capital accumulation in the cities, as they still form 'cheap and abundant labour … to provide complementary services and ancillary manufacturing' (1995:3). However, he continues, 'though the poor are an integral part of the urban capitalist system, few of them are employed in large-scale enterprises and they do not form an important part of the internal market for consumer goods' (1995:4). Most of the urban poor are disconnected from the benefits of the economy. They have become highly replaceable, largely redundant (Bauman 2003b) and form to a large extent a surplus humanity at the margins of the economic order (Davis 2006).

This kind of marginalisation can also be seen on a far larger scale in advanced capitalist economies where welfare states are giving way to market forces. Loïc Wacquant, in his work on ghettos in the United States and French *banlieues*, labels this phenomenon, 'advanced marginality', a 'novel regime of sociospatial relegation and exclusionary closure' (2008:2). It is telling that the influential Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben, who defines social exclusion as the foundational act of modern sovereignty (1998, 2005), returns to the concept of 'lebensunwertes Leben', 'life unworthy of being lived', when referring to the persistence of marginalised groups. His perspectives, which I refer to in this book to clarify the position of slum dwellers, bring questions of inclusion and exclusion to the core of the current social and philosophical debate.

Methodology

Methods and techniques

I conducted twenty-one months of fieldwork in Recife, of which eighteen months were spent in Chão de Estrelas. I was introduced to Chão de Estrelas by a middle-class couple who, through their work for the municipality and their involvement in social movements, knew the area and some of its community leaders quite well.

As other researchers have encountered (Gregg 2003, Oosterbaan 2006), my wife's and my decision to move to the slum was seen by many middle-class people as bordering on insanity. We arrived for the first time in 2003 for a period of three months, returned in 2004 for a stay of nine months and spent another six months in Chão de Estrelas in 2005. We rented part of a house in the street of *dona* Maria, who became one of the key informants of this study. At the end of 2006 I returned alone and lived three months in the house of Maria.

During this research, I tried to experience life in the slum in its different aspects, attending meetings, parties, celebrations, and church services, visiting people at home and talking in the street, playing bingo games, eating and drinking, buying groceries in the neighbourhood or the nearest marketplace, having domestic appliances repaired and hiding for shoot-outs. I also joined slum dwellers in their journeys to the city centre, the hospital, the beach, and to relatives in and outside the city. I tried to grasp people's perceptions of their own lives, while also participating in their activities and asking them to reflect on what had happened.

In the beginning of my research, I often assumed a fly-on-the-wall position, while later I became more actively involved in what was going on. After some months, I selected key informants: three community leaders (see chapter 3) and several other slum dwellers (see chapter 4). I spent most of my time with them, and lived through much of the experiences and predicaments they faced.

Alongside participatory observation, I conducted interviews. At the beginning of my research, I used semi-structured interviews, working with a checklist of topics which helped me organise the interview. Later, I switched to informal interviews, always keeping a notebook in my pockets in order to write down things as soon as possible, during or after the interview. Many residents of Chão de Estrelas knew I was doing research and thought it normal that I sometimes took some notes. With my key informants, I conducted several semi-structured taped interviews and life histories. I also conducted interviews with "outsiders": officials, programme directors and people who had been active in social movements. Most were informal interviews, as I approached them during meetings in the neighbourhood. In addition, I visited several in their offices where I conducted tape recorded interviews.

For some months, I had a research assistant, Augusto César Cabral, with whom I conducted a survey on household composition, income, history, and connections in the community. I frequently discussed with him issues regarding some key informants, whom he knew well. I also regularly visited a community leader I befriended, from a neighbourhood at the other side of the city. With him, I reflected on what happened in Chão de Estrelas. As he did not know people from Chão de Estrelas, I could give free rein to my thoughts without being afraid of treading on someone's toes or being accused of choosing sides. The necessity of not choosing sides was an important element of my research. As this book shows, there was intense competition between community leaders and stories about "who joined who" were very important. I tried to divide my time as much as possible between the three community leaders I selected for this study and refrained from choosing sides in their competing activities. Later, when actively involved in their projects, this became increasingly more difficult, as often their projects comprised of actively competing with other community leaders (see chapter 3). Yet, as I had come to know all of them very well, we remained at good terms.

I also carried out situational analyses and extended case studies (Van Velsen 1967,

Mitchell 1983). I focused on critical events (Arce & Long 2000), building upon the concept of 'social dramas' of Victor Turner (1957). Doing so, I took a problem – a conflict, a project, a governmental intervention, municipal elections – and studied what happened around it, who was related to it, and in what way. I tried to find out who related to whom, who avoided whom, what resources were applied, provided, and used, and in what way. This mode of doing research follows Wolf who calls for research focused on the 'flow of action', which entails asking 'what is going on, why it is going on, who engages in it, with whom, when and how often' and 'for what and for whom is all this going on and – indeed – against whom?' (Wolf 1990: 591 building on Arensberg 1972, Nuijten 2003).

Aside from these critical events, I studied the everyday happenings and conversations of daily life. I documented the everyday life of slum dwellers as they talk to their neighbours, buy groceries and try to generate an income. Through analysing both critical events and everyday life, this study brings to light the extra-ordinary and the ordinary, the exceptional and the routine-like dimensions of life in the slum. Furthermore, I analysed secondary material, such as newspaper cuttings, radio, television and government records.

Ethnography and social theory

Going from data to social theory without mystifying empirical reality is a challenging endeavour (cf de Vries 1992, Ragin & Becker 1992). Social theory always implies a transformation of or and abstraction from empirical complexity. This book is an attempt to grapple with abstract social theory, without losing the texture and complexity of everyday life. It presents empirical data intertwined with analysis and conceptualisations. I present detailed accounts of life, which serve not only to advance theoretical arguments, but also provide the "flavour" and *couleur locale* of the field of research. Nonetheless, the ethnography is ordered in such a way that dominant analytical themes are evident throughout the stories.

In ethnographic research, both during fieldwork and during the period of analysis and "writing up", empirical data is in constant dialogue, if not a battle, with ideas, biases, and theoretical positions. Empirical reality clashes time and again with social theory, but cannot be understood without it. Certain open-mindedness to empirical reality, realities which unfold in unexpected ways, is absolutely necessary. As Burawoy argues about ethnography, 'we begin with our favourite theory, but seek not confirmations, but refutations that inspire us to deepen that theory' (1998:16). Burawoy sees theorising as part of the research, but emphasises that the 'stance toward theory is kamikaze' (1998:20).

My affinity lies with Victor Turner's position when he describes how

> In moving from experience of social life to conceptualisation and intellectual history, I follow the path of anthropologists almost everywhere. Although we take theories into the field with us, these become relevant only if and when they illuminate social reality. Moreover, we tend to find very frequently that it is not a theorist's whole system which so illuminates, but his scattered ideas, his flashes of insight taken out of systemic context and applied to scattered data. Such ideas have a virtue of their own and may generate new hypotheses. They even show how scattered facts may be systematically connected! Randomly distributed through some monstrous logical system, they resemble nourishing raisins in a cellular mass of inedible dough. The intuitions, not the tissue of logic connecting them, are what tend to survive in the field experience (Turner 1974:23).

I am grateful that I did not have to look for all the 'nourishing raisins' on my own. Discussions with my wife and supervisors – face-to-face or by e-mail – provided illuminating insights and challenges to existing theorisations. In particular, I was greatly helped by my regular visits to Augusto Cabral, father of my research assistant and resident of Chão de Estrelas, who conducted research in the community for his Master's degree in geography. He and his knowledge of both social theory and the empirical reality of the slum was an incomparable source of inspiration.

Moreover, the purpose of ethnographic research is not generalisation or establishment of universal theory on human behaviour, but understanding a particular case and, through this, creating new insights which challenge existing theories. The researcher does not have a limited set of a priori formulated questions that need to be answered. Instead, questions are constantly being reformulated to keep up with and enquire further into the dynamics of empirical reality. An answer to one question calls for asking another. Doing so, empirical reality may lead the researcher into unpredictable, uncontrollable and sometimes apparently incoherent directions. The challenge is to keep on asking questions and delving deeper into empirical complexity.

Ethnography steers clear of fitting empirical reality within politically desirable categories. I view ethnographic research as a political endeavour, which carries the potential to question dominant modes of thinking about the world and bring to light usually disavowed, ignored, or obscured empirical realities. It contributes to making thinkable what was unthinkable. Whereas in the current political and economic order, certain views on life are constantly being disabled and excluded, ethnography provides the chance to disclose different realities and political possibilities.

Organisation of the book

This book sets out to understand life in the slum through the prism of "slum politics". Slum politics is the ongoing and never finished endeavour of slum dwellers of creating connections and possibilities, possibilities which break off all the time. These endeavours are marshalled against the fear of abandonment, comprising initiatives to organise family life, make a living and dream about the future. The main articulators of slum politics are

community leaders. Chapter 2 explains what community leadership is, and how slum dwellers perceive of and relate to community leaders. It presents how community leaders articulate and consolidate the needs and aspirations of their fellow slum dwellers. In addition, it explains the different tensions that community leaders face, the sometimes opposing expectations of fellow slum dwellers, the tensions between self-interest and unconditional love for the community, and, between resources and prestige derived from connections to outsiders, and the potential "contamination" of electoral politics. The latter concerns are based on slum dwellers' conceptions of electoral politics as both attractive – for its prestige and resources – and repugnant – for its tendency to steer away from community interests. Chapter 3 introduces three different community leaders. It presents how they became community leaders, how they make a living, and how they gain material and intangible resources for the community. Each community leaders is introduced by their own personal operational style and an interest for certain topics around which they organise activities. The chapter documents several of their projects in which they give expression to slum politics. Chapter 4 provides a perspective on how life in the slum is lived. It introduces several life histories and analyses the ways in which different economies are constructed and lived in the margins of the political and economic order. Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 deal with the imbrications, as well as the differences, between slum politics and governmental and electoral politics. Chapter 5 presents a theoretical elaboration of the concept of slum politics. It positions slum politics within anthropological literature on politics and political organisation and turns to Partha Chatterjee's theorisations of popular politics. The chapter demonstrates how slum politics overlaps with, but is distinct from, governmental politics, electoral politics, and notions of clientelism. Chapter 6 analyses case studies on the municipal elections and shows how electoral politics penetrates into the slum. It discusses how community leaders, who as they make a living through connections with political candidates and forsake community interests, face frequent accusations of being contaminated by electoral politics. Chapter 7 shows how a slum upgrading programme became part of slum dwellers' imaginings of order, even as it did not generate any tangible urban development. It analyses how the programme generated hope, cynicism and despair among the residents of Chão de Estrelas. Further, it shows, through community leaders' dealings with the programme, how governmental politics encounters slum politics. Chapter 8 discusses the ways in which life in the slum is framed by violence, and how slum dwellers cope with everyday violence. It focuses on the question of identity cards, showing the often violent encounters between slum dwellers and the police who consider them non-citizens, while in turn slum dwellers establish personal connections with state representatives by acquiring cards in alternative ways. Finally, chapter 9, as a conclusion, reviews the main arguments of the book and locates the major themes in relation to current debates on exclusion and marginalisation, explaining why slum dwellers cannot be understood through Giorgio Agamben's (1998) notion of *homo sacer*. I show that their position in the political and

economic order, and, especially, their engagement in slum politics, makes slum dwellers different from the passive and a-political category of *homines sacri.*

Notes

[1] This map is based on *Carta de Nucleação Centro* (FIDEM 2000) and adapted by Roberto Silva de Souza for the thesis of Augusto Cabral (2004).

[2] Local specialty whose main ingredients are beans and meat.

[3] *Moreno*: person with a dark skin, but usually not black-skinned (*negro*). The similar term *mulato* – common in other parts of Brazil – is hardly used in Recife. For discussion on the subtle but important differences between different denominations of skin colour among the Brazilian population, see e.g. Burdick (1998).

[4] Correia (1999) refers to a 1913 census and a 1915 work plan of the municipality.

2

What is a community leader?

… followers with possibly utopian or at least diffuse and unrealised aspirations cleave to an appropriate leader because he articulates and consolidates their aspirations
- Peter Worsley, 1968

Portraying community leadership

Outline of the chapter

Community leaders are the main articulators and facilitators of slum politics. This chapter shows how community leaders know and articulate the needs and aspirations of their fellow slum dwellers, how they make a living while working for the benefit of the community, and how they establish and maintain connections in order to gain prestige and access to resources. It also presents different understandings of what community leaders are, from the perspectives of their fellow slum dwellers, academic studies, and governmental discourses. In later chapters, I document how community leaders perceive of and perform their position.

This issue has been little and inadequately examined within academic literature, a lacuna that this chapter hopes to fill. This chapter reviews existing literature on the concept of community leadership in Brazil and relates this to community leadership in the specific setting of Recife. Furthermore, it highlights the discrepancy between the official view on community leadership and actual empirical reality. Additionally, the chapter rebuts several common views on leadership held by many, including anthropologists.

I argue that an important component of community leadership is the negotiation of tensions between opposing expectations, needs, and aspirations. In addressing and judging community leaders, slum dwellers draw upon different discursive registers, modalities to give meaning, which present opposing dimensions. Community leaders constantly need to find a balance between these dimensions. I document tensions between the expectation that community leaders work out of love for the community, and the acknowledgement that they are also self-interested, as they need to make a living too. As slum dwellers perceive electoral politics as simultaneously attractive and repugnant, I argue that community leaders are expected to both connect to politicians as this creates prestige and access to resources, while, at the same time, they are considered

tainted by these connections as these steer them away from community issues and into self-interest. Finally, the chapter presents how I perceive of leadership performance.

Discussing community leadership over a beer

At the time of my research, Chão de Estrelas had nine community leaders of different stature and prestige: three women and six men. However, in actuality, it is hard to document fixed numbers, as the concept "community leader" has certain flexibility and fluidity within the slum. This flexibility and fluidity is related to differences in opinion about what a good community leader is and should do. Slum dwellers quarrelled about who was a good community leader, and leaders often blamed each other for not meeting these requirements. Nonetheless, several general characteristics can be distinguished.

On one afternoon in Chão de Estrelas, I had some beers with my neighbour Edilson and asked him what he thought community leadership was.

'Yeah, what is it?' he repeated.

I persisted: 'Can every one become a community leader?'

He replied affirmatively, adding 'as long as you know the history of the neighbourhood and the problems of the neighbourhood, then people will come to you to talk about the sewage or the pavements, or when a public light got broken.'

I repeated: 'So everyone can become a community leader?'

He answered between sips of beer: 'Yes. But you need to know people and have friendships.'

Edilson was referring to three dimensions which are significant to understand community leadership. Firstly, by arguing that every one can become a community leader, he emphasised the ordinariness character of the leader. A community leader is not somebody of special origins, is not endowed with special powers, and does not have specific material assets. Secondly, Edilson points out that, although every one can become a leader, certain requirements do exist. One needs to intimately know the neighbourhood, its history, and the needs of its residents. Thirdly, according to Edilson, a community leader needs to know people, both in and outside the slum. Community leaders need connections with lots of different people, in and outside of the slum. This is one of the most crucial and obvious characteristics of community leadership. As such, although everybody can potentially become a community leader, some features are essential: being sociable, communicating easily with others, as well as the possibility of being well-connected. Further, as Edilson reveals, community leaders are those who are perceived to have detailed knowledge of fellow slum dwellers' needs and aspirations.

First among equals, knowing needs and aspirations and having many connections

The community leader in Recife is a *primus inter pares*. Community leaders live in the slum and are of the same humble origins as their fellow slum dwellers. They do not come from families of high rank, have special insignia, or specific clothing. Their houses are not bigger, they are not richer, and they do not possess special assets. They do not present themselves with much ado, neither do people approach them with adulation or elaborate ritual. They have seemingly horizontal relationships with their fellow slum dwellers, sit amongst them, chat and joke with them. Furthermore, similar to types of local leadership studied in other settings, community leadership is strictly informal (cf Whyte 1943). One cannot apply for the position of community leader nor be elected into it.

The term community leader is a way of referring to certain persons, not of addressing them. They are addressed with their first name or nickname – both far more common in Brazil than using someone's surname – sometimes preceded by *seu* or *dona*, Mr or Mrs, if age difference makes this desirable.

Both men and women can be leaders. Although the position is considered more common for a man, increasingly more women become community leaders. Currently, it is hard to tell whether there were more male or female community leaders. The increasing number of female community leaders keeps pace with general emancipation processes of women in Brazil (see chapter 4). Furthermore, as I show in chapter 3, gender differences certainly play a role in the operational styles of community leaders.

Community leaders are easy to approach, both for slum dwellers and outsiders. The only real obstacle in approaching them consists in their regular absence from home due to the innumerable activities they are involved in. They visit fellow slum dwellers at home and discuss things with them. They are engaged in setting up projects, organising festivities, and carrying out activities related to cultural expression, health, security, employment, the environment, charity, and solidarity. These vary from establishing communal vegetable plots to arranging a local police post, and, from organising folkloric events to lobbying for better public transport. Most of them do not have permanent employment, although it is not uncommon for them to have a more or less structured income. As I show, they are dependent on sources from outside the slum for most of their income.

Community leaders know every corner of their neighbourhood and parts of surrounding areas, and have a good knowledge of the rest of the city. They are well-informed about what is going on. As Edilson told me, people inform leaders about what happens in the community, from complaints about defect lampposts to police raids. Moreover, community leaders need to know their fellow slum dwellers personally. When slum dwellers mutter 'I never see him here anymore' or 'she never comes here', this implies that a particular leader neglects them and does not want to know them anymore. Slum dwellers would accuse community leaders of having forgotten about

them, arguing: 'He forgot about me. I have not seen him for a long time.'

Their position, knowledge of the area, and its residents, mean that community leaders can wander through the whole community and adjacent areas. Many slum dwellers do not dare to go to certain parts of their own neighbourhood because of fear of crime, especially after dark. Even more, they fear passing through other slums that they do not know. Community leaders, however, know people everywhere and people know them. This considerably decreases the chance of becoming a victim of crime. I only visited some parts of the neighbourhood with a community leader. Sometimes, when I mentioned to other slum dwellers that I had been to a certain area, they would worriedly tell that I should not have gone there as it was dangerous. When I mentioned that I had been accompanied by a community leader, they withdrew their concerns. Community leaders are considered 'respected by both good and bad people.'

In our chat, Edilson also hinted at the density of connections managed by community leaders. These connections extend beyond borders of class and place, meaning that they include many persons from outside the slum. Community leaders have many, some very cordial, contacts with middle- and even upper-class persons. They visit politicians, officials, and lawyers in their offices and negotiate with them. They organise and attend meetings all over the city, meeting many different people outside the slum. They have a talent for establishing and maintaining contacts, and may be regarded nodal points between different social networks. Jeremy Boissevain in his classic 'Friends of Friends' also highlights this as characteristic of local leaders: 'Every individual provides a point at which networks intersect. But not everyone displays the same interest in and talent for cultivating relationships' (Boissevain 1974:147). The community leader resembles Boissevain's broker, with their readiness to make time available for creating and maintaining contacts. Moreover, the broker is a *sociable* person, endowed with 'good measure and cunning' (1974:158). Community leaders are mediators who connect to both the slum and the world outside the slum. They embody, so to speak, a personalised contact zone between the slum and the rest of the city. There are of course many other people who establish connections between slum and other parts of the city, from the housemaids at a middleclass family studied by Gilberto Freyre (1999[1933]) and, later Donna Goldstein (2003), to attendants in a shop or petrol station, waiters in a restaurant, gardeners, private guards, construction workers, sex workers or drug traders. However, slum dwellers relate far less to people from middle- and upper-class than to other slum dwellers. Moreover, their connections with outsiders are often of a hierarchical and exploitative character with discriminative dimensions.

In contrast, I argue, community leaders connect to people from all sorts and conditions, and from all layers of the political order, in rather equalitarian ways. Community leaders turn to their contacts for collective, referred to often as community, matters. Fellow slum dwellers consider them a "gate to the offices", as their connections include those who work at governmental, judicial, and business offices. Community

leaders, as personalised contact zones, "provide faces". To outsiders, they give a human and personal face of otherwise discriminated and faceless slum dwellers. To their fellow slum residents, they confer a familiar face to state representatives and distant outsiders. On a more abstract level, when distinguishing the slum from the rest of the city, community leaders act as a bridge between two different worlds and embody, for outsiders, the contact needed to get in touch with "the ultimate Other" (cf Diken 2005).

In meetings in the slum, the importance of connectivity is expressed in what I refer to as the "gallery of connections". In every meeting, those who take the floor begin, before or instead of raising a point, or making an argument, by divulging their connections. They refer to others involved in the project, render thanks to those who organised the meeting, those who invited them, those who sponsored activities, remember those who worked on similar topics in the past, and mention those whom might help the current project. At these meetings, community leaders are also thanked by fellow slum dwellers and their past projects are remembered. In this way, community leaders present their myriad connections with people in and outside the slum.

Community leaders are actively sought after by outsiders – such as politicians, journalists, and university students working on a thesis – in order to provide information about or be introduced to the slum. Community leaders are important for outsiders, not only because of their knowledge and the way they provide an entrance to the neighbourhood, but also because they provide safety and legitimacy to outsiders, taking away possible suspicions and as they are endowed with respect or fear from possible malefactors. Other slum dwellers frequently point to leaders if somebody from outside wants to know about the slum's history or present occurrences. This happened with me as well, when I did my studies in Chão de Estrelas. Outside the slum, community leaders are commonly treated as a synecdoche for their neighbourhood. Their person represents their whole neighbourhood.

Community leaders have certain thematic interests: topics that they are specialised in, such as environmental issues, health care, gender, cultural expression, income generation, sports, festivities, and security. These topics emerge from personal inclinations, specific circumstances in the community, as well as the preferences of people they work with. Apart from relating to local needs and aspirations, the different thematic interests enable community leaders to establish connections around these issues with different outsiders, like state representatives, entrepreneurs and NGO workers.

Historical background of community leadership

The roots of the phenomenon of community leadership, as it exists nowadays in Recife, are hard to trace. One common view is that community leadership originated in the 1960s

and 1970s (cf Herkenhoff 1995). In that period, high migration led to the number of slums increasing, with slums also expanding and becoming more densely populated. Their residents started to organise themselves in attempts to get land titles and basic infrastructure. This was also the period of the highly centralised military dictatorship in Brazil (1964-1985), in which organised popular demands led to dramatic political polarisation. Slum dwellers who coordinated collective actions and requests and represented the slum population in negotiations and demonstrations were referred to as *líderes comunitários*, meaning community leaders. They were also called *lideranças*, literally meaning leadership, used to denote a leading person. These community leaders were politically heterogeneous, as some emerged from social movements opposing the regime, adhering to Marxist or liberation theology ideologies, while others were supported by the regime. When, towards the end of the 1970s, the regime became less repressive and left more space for political opposition, demands from the slums became more widespread, grassroots organisations emerged, and community leaders became more visual (Herkenhoff 1995, Assies 1992).

Besides this rather general background it is hard to reconstruct the history of community leadership for four reasons. Firstly, for a long time there were little to no studies conducted in Brazilian slums except for governmental censuses and studies similarly interested in constructing a body of statistical data. Secondly, of the few academic studies in slums, most were grounded in leftist ideologies, in which the position of the community leader proved problematic, as it did not coincide with the notion of "the people". Instead, the community leader was obscured in favour of the notion of "social movements" (Doimo in preface Herkenhoff 1995). Thirdly, for many years, the political elite did not recognise popular, oppositional leadership, especially during the military dictatorship (Herkenhoff 1995). As such, it did not appear in reports or other writings on slums or political struggles. Exceptions are Luis Machado da Silva and Janice Perlman, who, as early as 1967 and 1976, touch upon community leadership in Rio de Janeiro. Both present "*favela* leaders" as rather conservative power brokers, a kind of '*favela* elites' (Perlman 1976:166, da Silva 1967). Perlman argued that their importance – expressed in terms of obtaining titles, infrastructure, and services – would be reduced with the advancement of the settlement. Apart from these mentions, it was only in the 1990s that the concept began to appear in reports and academic publications.[1] Fourthly, both academic and governmental studies on life in the slum primarily approach the slum from a legalistic or institutionalist point of view, referring to local grassroots organisations and their presidents, without researching the actual reality of the slum and its leadership. I return to this later.

In discussing the issue, slum dwellers themselves argue that community leaders have always existed. As the concept does not have any specific meaning besides someone who leads a community, the concept may indeed have existed for long. This concept is mentioned in rural areas as well (Otsuki 2007, Queiroz 1999a). Evidently, for

most slum dwellers, many of whom came as migrants to the city, community leaders have existed as long as their own memories in the city can trace.

Filling a gap in the literature

An analysis of the nature of community leadership is crucial to shed light upon how life in the slum is organised and gives rise to a particular kind of politics. However, literature on community leaders in Brazil is scarce (cf Doimo in preface Herkenhoff 1995). Anthropological, sociological, or political science literature that deals with life in Brazilian slums has little to say about the figure of the community leader. Moreover, those works that touch upon community leaders do not explain what community leadership means. On the whole, the gaps in the literature leave the impression that community leadership is part of common sense, belonging to the realm of *doxa*: 'that which is taken for granted' (Bourdieu 1977:168) and 'goes without saying because it comes without saying' (ibid:167). Community leadership seems to be a completely accepted phenomenon that is indispensable in imaginings of the Brazilian slum.

Some otherwise instructive studies on Brazilian slums, conducted by both Brazilians and non-Brazilians, do not mention the community leader at all (Magalhães 1998 on Porto Alegre, Goldstein 2003 on Rio de Janeiro). Other studies present the notion as synonymous for "spokesperson of the poor", president of a grassroots organisation, or leader of a popular movement, without further clarification (Alvito 2001, Pandolfi & Grynszpan 2003 on Rio de Janeiro; Dutra 1998, Fontes 1999, da Silva 2000 on Recife). These views resonate with those expressed in newspapers, television news, and NGO brochures. A few revealing studies introduce community leaders as key players in the slum, yet without explanation of what community leadership is about (Gay 1994 on Rio de Janeiro). Perlman (1976) only gives a tentative explanation of community leadership as based in the ability to bring land titles, infrastructure and services to the community while playing up to the political establishment.

Herkenhoff (1995) and Nielsen (2002) present empirical studies of the role community leaders play in slums. However, Herkenhoff's account of community leaders in Vitória, Espírito Santo, takes a deeply biased and externalist view on these leaders, in which good leaders divulge the ideas of citizenship and participation, while bad leaders live up to authoritarian, paternalist, and clientelist logics. As such, her study, although revealing of several dimensions of community leadership, to which I return later, is in contrast to my own attempt to understand the internal logics of the phenomenon. Otsuki's (2007) and Queiroz's (1999a) work on community leaders in the rural contexts of Pará and Paraíba respectively, display many similarities with the urban leaders in my study, but without a clear explanation of the phenomenon itself. However, Nielsen's (2002) study of community leaders in Recife, which I use extensively, does partly corroborate my own data.

Critiquing existing literature

A flaw in literature which studies Brazilian community leaders or mentions them *en passant* is the assumption that the *sine qua non* of community leadership lies in the occupation of a formal position. In this view, community leaders coincide with presidents of grassroots organisations, board members of local consultative bodies, or spokespersons of social movements (Herkenhoff 1995, Queiroz 1999b, Assies 1992, 1999, Gohn 2001, da Silva 2000, da Silva et all 1988, Banck and Doimo 1989, Fontes 1999, LaValle et all. 2005). Even Nielsen (2002), though he examines community leaders and their individual histories, styles, and activities, constructs his analysis around these organisations. This view is not consistent with my studies. Chão de Estrelas has a number of different grassroots organisations, such as a Resident's Association, a Residents' Union, a Health Group, a Mother's Club, NGOs that work with cultural expression or environmentalism, and the Comul. Indeed, community leaders are at the head of these organisations, but these positions do not form the foundation of their leadership. Their formal positions as board members add to their prestige as a leader and open up possibilities for activities. Becoming president of existing NGOs, or setting up their own, corresponds with their leadership. Formal positions are among the most evident markers of their leadership. Indeed, slum dwellers argue that they know somebody is a leader because he holds a presidency. However, talking with many slum dwellers revealed that leaders can be leaders without occupying a formal position. Formal positions are an element or effect of their position as a community leader rather than its foundation.

In addition, many social scientists and government researchers treat grassroots organisations as the basic unit of analysis to understand how life in the slum is organised. This is based in the belief that the slum is neatly divided into and centred on these organisations. The first flaw of this approach, is the reification of organisations (cf Long 2004), endowing these organisations with agency. This can be seen in statements such as grassroots organisations "took decisions" or "mobilised themselves". The second flaw lies in overestimating the role of these organisations. I know researchers entering slums only with a list of local organisations. They gravely overestimated the role of these organisations and claimed to understand specific problems in the slum after only entering offices and talking to presidents (cf Pandolfi & Grynszpan 2003).

Amongst the grassroots organisations I encountered, the stated objectives of grassroots organisations, or their board members, are continually subject to debate, sometimes a nameplate is all there is to an organisation. Robert Gay points out that sometimes grassroots organisations may actually be run by one person (1994:45). Nonetheless, Gay too places his emphasis too strongly on these organisations, continuing to depict them as the centre of politics in the slum. Other authors, embedded in studies of community leadership (Herkenhoff 1995, Queiroz 1999b), social

movements and grassroots organisations (Assies 1992, 1999, Gohn 2001, da Silva 2000, da Silva et all 1988, Banck and Doimo 1989, Fontes 1999)[2] or citizen participation (LaValle et all. 2005), all in the Brazilian context, share the tendency of reifying and overestimating the role of organisations. In some cases this is understandable as they deal with political configurations on a more abstract level, but doing so, I argue, they provide a fragmented and blurred understanding of what occurs in slums. People relate to people, not to organisations or institutions. Bearing this in mind, I contend that one cannot study grassroots organisations without delving into the connections between the people involved.

Community leaders in official discourse

Community leaders are non-existent in official state discourse. During the military regime, this was a result of ignoring any forms of oppositional leadership. However, governmental programmes and policy documents still do not mention community leadership. As discussed above, one reason could be the problem that groups espousing leftist ideology have with community leadership, preferring instead to employ a notion of "the people" which does not coincide with community leadership. The municipality of Recife, since the PT took office in 2000, embraces a pro-poor ethos and has designed programmes that champion democracy and popular participation. However, existing community leadership remains contested. Instead of recognising community leaders as important local coordinators of the slum, new forms of representation have been introduced with room for other "regular" slum dwellers, as every individual is supposed to be a citizen with a voice and a vote (Nielsen 2002).

Officials and politicians who adhere to a leftist ideology, speak of community leaders in a romantic way as kind of "working class heroes", who were important actors in the social movements that led to the downfall of dictatorship. Simultaneously, they argue that unfortunately leaders have been incorporated in the kind of clientelist relations that existed before the social movements emerged, and have forsaken their original motives. In leftist programmes, the notion of the community leader has been discarded as "smelling" of the clientelism of the so-called old regime and as an obstacle to democracy (cf Ottmann 2006, Foweraker 2001).

This official discourse and these accusations actually run counter to the practical work of state representatives like politicians and officials who visit or work in the slums, as they recognise community leaders as important spokespersons and immediately seek contact with them. Community leaders are part and parcel of governmental programmes that connect to the slums and are, in practice, the entry points through which state representatives seek access to the slum.

Redressing views on community leadership

In order to come to a good understanding of community leadership in Recife, it is necessary to deconstruct some common views on leadership that I encountered in many discussions on the topic. Presenting my studies to others, including many anthropologists, regularly led to misunderstandings on the nature of community leadership, mostly caused by deeply ingrained ideas of leadership. It is not my aim to provide a detailed historical overview of definitions of leadership throughout anthropology's rich body of literature on the topic. Instead, I select some works that I see crucial for misunderstandings I encountered on community leadership and, by rebutting ideas presented, reorient views towards notions of community leadership in Recife.

I start with the common notion of hierarchy. In both everyday language and anthropological studies, notions of leadership are often associated with hierarchy and possession of power. This does not correspond to several forms of local leadership (Clastres 1987[1977]). Community leaders are not elevated above the masses. They are not at the top of a hierarchy, neither do they assume power because of descent, like African chiefs (Schapera 1959[1937]), village headmen (Gluckman et al. 1949) or Polynesian chiefs (Sahlins 1963). As said, a community leader is a primus inter pares.

Slum dwellers' allegiance to a community leader does not constitute the unity of their community; neither do they form their community around a central leader (as in Schapera 1959[1937], Gluckman et al. 1949). Community leaders do not present themselves to fellow slum dwellers as the only entrance to the bureaucratic labyrinth of the state apparatus, positioning themselves between the central state and the people, like Mexican caciques (de Vries 2002, Lomnitz-Adler 1992). Perlman (1976) indeed argues that the leadership style in the slum is far more open and precarious than that of local leadership in other Latin American countries. Furthermore, community leaders in Recife are not notorious for their – direct or indirect – engagement in practices that belong to the underworld, like drug trade and confrontations with the police, as is the case of the majority of community leaders in current Rio de Janeiro (Alvito 2001, Arias 2006). On the contrary, they eschew violence and crime. The position of the community leader is not based in fear, but in certain qualities and in connections to outsiders. The community leader represents the "peace function" (*gravitas*) of responsible leadership, as opposed to the "war function" (*celeritas*) of ruthless leadership (Hansen 2005) common for many types of local leaders like *gamonales* in Peru (Poole 2004), caciques in Mexico (de Vries 2002), or *dadas* in urban India (Hansen 2001).

Marshall Sahlins' classic article 'Poor man, rich man, big-man, chief' (1963) on typifications of Polynesian chiefs and Melanesian big-men is particularly useful in explaining community leadership. Steering clear of the article's evolutionist ranking of organisational forms, I argue that the differences between the chief and the big-man

illuminate the position of the community leader. At the risk of simplifying, I position the community leaders much closer to Sahlins' ideal type of the big-man than to that of the chief. The chiefs gained their influential position through assuming a formal position. They were installed into existing positions of leadership over groups. On the contrary: 'the attainment of a big-man's status is rather the outcome of a series of acts' (Sahlins 1963:289). Big-men need to constantly prove themselves worthy of being leader, in contradistinction to the chiefs who were leaders by definition. In order to describe the difference in power base, Sahlins takes recourse to the metaphors of "the Prince of Danes" to refer to chiefs, and "prince among men" to refer to big-men (1963:289).

Most studies on leadership, including some on Brazilian community leadership, depict leaders as if Polynesian chiefs. Their point of view coincides with Sahlins statement that 'people of high rank and prestige ipso facto were leaders, and by the same token the qualities of leadership were automatically lacking … among the underlying population' (1963:295). This view – that may hold perfectly well for Polynesia – presupposes a formally institutionalised and hierarchical order which is not present in Recife slums.

In Sahlins' view, the Melanesian big-men were leaders only of their own, relatively small faction. They did not make part of a bigger whole. Polynesian chiefs, however, were part of a bigger unity; they had a position in a larger pyramid shaped polity. For reasons that become clear throughout this book, I emphasise the need to view community leaders not as elements in a bigger structure of national unity, but as persons who try to maintain their contested positions in their own specific locales.

Before leaving a picture in which big-man and community leader are portrayed too closely, I emphasise several differences between them. An important difference is that whereas the big-man is – be it through hard work – elevated above the masses, a community leader remains equal to his fellows. Neither do community leaders manage to acquire command over a group of followers. To use Sahlins' terms, community leaders have renown, but never command (1963). Although community leaders in Recife can count on a relatively small group of people who work with them and attend their meetings on a regular base, this group is subject to changes as different constellations come and go. As such, a clear distinction between an "inner circle" and "outer circle" of followers, as presented by Javier Auyero's (2001) work on local urban leaders in Argentina, cannot be made in Recife. Having rebutted some general misunderstandings of community leadership in Recife, below, I continue describing the nature of leadership based on perspectives of slum dwellers and my own observations.

How to become a leader: historical trajectories, records of achievements and laying claims

One question I pursued was: how does one become a community leader? Is there some *rite de passage*? Is there a rupture after which formerly regular persons are considered

leaders? In practice, it turned out that leadership is gradually formed. I already mentioned that the title is rather flexible and fluid, but there are community leaders, like the protagonists of this book, who have, through a historical trajectory, proven themselves worthy of being a community leader. In these trajectories – that often include learning from other community leaders – they gradually evolved as leaders. The next chapter shows these histories of three different community leaders.

An important element of these historical trajectories is formed by a record of achievements, like setting up projects, improving infrastructure and organising festivities. Involvement in the struggles that stood at the inception of the community is especially highly esteemed. In the case of Chão de Estrelas this means active participation in the struggle for resettlement, later land occupations, and acquisition of basic services. A community is not considered to belong to a community leader, but the intertwining of initiatives and achievements of community leaders with the community's history is highly appreciated by slum dwellers. Hence leaders – usually the older ones – with a longer history of being a leader have an advantage over those who hold shorter records. The former are remembered because of their accumulated achievements that add to their prestige (cf Herkenhoff 1995). People remember how they led mobilisations and achieved successful projects. In addition, through time community leaders can establish connections. Community leaders who have a longer history as a leader, are usually better connected than those who more recently became leaders.

For community leaders, it is important to lay claim to a large record of achievements which enhances their prestige. Laying claim to *obras* is a hard task, since decision making processes preceding *obras* are long, the bureaucracy involved in programmes is opaque and results are susceptible to different explanations. Moreover, competition is great, as many others – politicians, officials and other community leaders – lay claim to the same achievement at the same time. One strategy community leaders employ is to sometimes refrain from participating in already existing programmes – to which claims are abundant – and work on the basis of own initiatives for which responsibility is easier to claim. However, joining in existing governmental and NGO programmes without investing much can be a way to lay claim to at least part of its attempts and outcomes.

Reiterating this history to construct a record of achievements is important for community leaders. They never tire of publicly recalling praiseworthy activities and their share in successful projects. They need to be visible and viewed as successful community leaders. They need to be seen in the neighbourhood, at meetings and in activities they organise. When community leaders manage to give an impressive *acte-de-presence* and be known to many people, this adds to their prestige (cf Nielsen 2002). They are criticised for not being a good leader if they do not show themselves. They need to show commitment to the sake of the community and remain engaged with all kinds of activities. They need not only to show what they do, but also divulge the range

of their connections, the kinds of influence they have, and the probable deals they can carry out of these (cf Leeds 1964).

Failure and continuity

Community leaders are not only valued for their record of achievements, but also for their attempts to achieve things. In the precarious circumstances of the slum, many of their plans and activities end without results. The overwhelming majority of their attempts to set up a project or attract a programme go awry. Even when initial goals are more or less achieved, it is often in different and unforeseen ways. Failure was an essential dimension of community leadership.

At first this surprised me. Sometimes, when I met a community leader whom I had not spoken to for two weeks, he had let go of initiatives enthusiastically introduced a fortnight before. The same happened when I returned after a period in the Netherlands and found that the community leaders appeared to be engaged in completely different projects than before. It is necessary to emphasise that community leaders operate in circumstances of infinite precariousness. They belong to a section of the Brazilian population that is heavily discriminated against, and, for whom little resources are available. It is in this environment of scarcity – both in terms of resources and influence – and provisionality, that they constantly engage in endeavours to fulfil needs of fellow slum dwellers and themselves. Community leaders can be viewed as described as jacks-of-all-trades, as they are constantly improvising and making creative use of whatever resources there are to hand.

However, notwithstanding failures, certain continuity was present in their activities. Many of the impeded projects resurfaced later, and leaders seemed to return to ideas and specific thematic interests in their activities, around which they established their connections. Indeed, most of their efforts fail, but they always set up new attempts to cater to the needs present in the slum. In both failed and successful projects, community leaders give shape to slum politics.

Fellow slum dwellers recognise the precarious parameters in which community leaders operate. Thus, they do not only value the efficacy of community leaders. Next to achievement of *obras*, accomplishment of viable projects, and solutions to personal problems, they appreciate attempts to achieve things. Intentions and initiatives are honoured, even if nothing is achieved, as slum dwellers acknowledge that initiatives may fail.

Social base of community leader: needs and aspirations

What is the social base of community leadership? I argue that it lies in a complex set of social relations, needs, aspirations, expectations, and imaginings that emerge from and

constitute life in the slum (see also Koster & de Vries *forthcoming*). It is my contention that community leaders are created both through their own agency and the ways in which others depict them.

Community leaders take into account the needs and aspirations of their fellow slum residents. That is what they are known for and what people expect them to do. I argue that community leaders have a particular talent for understanding and consolidating the needs present in the slum. Slum dwellers also use the verb *articular*, to articulate, meaning communicating and looking after needs in order to solve them. A part of their needs and aspirations is of a material character, such as the wish for employment, food, and concrete *obras* in the neighbourhood. Others are of a more intangible character, often with utopian dimensions, like cravings for solidarity, social justice, and a better environment.

Peter Worsley's (1968) work on popular leadership in Melanesia is of especial use to understand community leadership in Recife. Worsley argues that the leader's performance fits and anticipates upon certain expectations, needs, and aspirations of the "followers". Herkenhoff suggests something similar when arguing that community leaders have the 'capacity to articulate and express the will of the group' (1995:56). Worsley explains:

> …followers with possibly utopian or at least diffuse and unrealised aspirations cleave to an appropriate leader because he articulates and consolidates their aspirations. He then specifies and narrows these aspirations, converting them both into more concrete and visible goals towards whose achievement collective action can be oriented and organised, and into beliefs which can be validated by reference to experience (Worsley 1968:xiv).

Worsley presents the leader as a 'catalytic personality' who 'must strike responsive chords in his audience' and 'convert[s] latent solidarities into active ritual and political action' (1968:xviii). In order to do so, the leader must have an intimate knowledge of the needs and aspirations of her or his followers. Community leaders in Recife are intimately acquainted with their fellow slum dwellers' needs, living as they do in the same sites and facing the same predicaments. They do themselves also generate aspirations, but always in accord with the values of their fellow slum dwellers.

In turn, what are the needs and aspirations projected onto community leaders by slum dwellers? What expectations do fellow slum dwellers have and how do they appeal to community leaders? Slum dwellers project on community leaders their need for good leadership, to be represented as a community, and recognised as people who – although living in the margins – exist and count. In the rest of this chapter, I explain how the need for good leadership and the expectations entailed with it are expressed.

Articulating needs and using conhecimento

Slum dwellers expect community leaders to do things for the community and grant personal favours. In my conversation with Edilson (see above), I asked what a good leader was supposed to do. He replied: 'A good community leader? He needs to bring improvement to the community. He needs to go after it (*correr atrás*), do everything for the improvement of the neighbourhood, sewage, pavement.' Continuing on this theme, he criticised the leaders, because, according to him, they did not do what they ought to. He pointed at the street we lived in, which was unpaved and had no connection to the sewage system. If they would do what they were supposed to, according to Edilson, 'the street would since long gone have been paved and provided with a sewage system.'

Fellow slum dwellers argue that community leaders have to 'bring the community further' (*levar adiante a comunidade*) and 'bring improvement to the community' or 'to the people' (*trazer melhoria para a comunidade* or *para o povo*). "Improvement" is often – as in my chat with Edilson – related to tangible *obras* like sewage, pavement and public lighting, and projects of all kind (cf Nielsen 2002, Fontes 1999). Moreover, doing things for the community is always viewed in a context of struggle. Those who engage in this struggle are respected persons with characteristics to be community leaders.

Next to doing things for the community, granting personal favours are specific needs expressed by slum dwellers when relating to leaders. It refers to acquiring resources, solving problems, or both at the same time. It must be remembered, however, that community leaders suffer from the same lack of resources as their fellow slum residents and are constrained to the limits this entails. Favours in the sense of resources are mostly of little monetary value, like free bingo tickets, a bottle of beer, chlorine to purify water or coffee, and snacks provided at meetings. Apart from resources, people come to community leaders for assistance in a wide array of problems. Some want advice in an inheritance case, others ask for information about where to find work. Some have a problem that is beyond the leader's direct capacities to solve, but for which he may *encaminhar* (pass on, direct) them, introducing them to somebody who can be of help.

Community leaders often make use of their *conhecimento* to do these things for the community and grant personal favours. The term *conhecimento* was used by Edilson to refer to community leaders' need to know people. The term literally means knowledge, but connotes a *savoir-faire* of which strings to pull, which people to approach, and in what way. Usually, when slum dwellers use this term, they refer to a "know-how" to approach outsiders who can provide access to resources not available in the slum, like materials, documents, and information about directions in the state bureaucracy. Also *encaminhar*, "passing on" a person to somebody else belongs to the realm of *conhecimento*. Being a community leader is not only about knowing people in and outside the slum, but also about doing something with this knowledge. *Conhecimento* is

a general dimension of social relations in Brazil. It is commonly considered necessary for access to resources, influencing decision making, and upward mobility through all layers of society. Anthony Leeds documents similar practices among middle- and upper-class people (1964).

As stated previously, it is not only a community leader's achievements, but also his attempts to achieve things, that are valued. Although they cannot always help, they present themselves as willing to do so. If their intention to help is – temporarily or selectively – absent, they are criticised for this. Slum dwellers then feel ignored and forgotten by the leader. A leader willing to give ear to somebody's problem is valued. Many people highly appreciate the ability to come to a community leader to express their problems, to unburden themselves (*desabafar*). Also accompanying a person – to an office, a meeting, a bus stop – is highly valued among slum dwellers. Community leaders often accompany people, or ask them to come together with them. This "being together", sharing time, paying attention to each other, is considered an important social need.

Good speech

In order to be able to use *conhecimento*, slum dwellers expect community leaders to be good talkers. *Falar bem*, the ability to speak well, is a talent that is considered especially important for those who operate in the public arena, like community leaders and politicians. These persons should be able to express themselves in an eloquent, enthusiastic, and knowledgeable manner. This is less about contents of a speech – although centring discourses upon needs and aspirations is important – and more about the beauty of expressing oneself. As explained in the former chapter, the ability to speak well, as a form of cultural capital, points at being well-educated, which implies being able to talk to and connect to "well-educated" people from middle- and upper-class (Goldstein 2003). For community leaders the gift of speech is considered vital for being well-connected. If they lack this ability, they are criticised by fellow slum dwellers. For example, one person said of a particular community leader: 'She is very uneducated. You can hear in her voice that she is not an educated person. I think that she cannot even read nor write.'

The gift of speech is deemed important in much anthropological literature on leadership (Bloch 1975, Clastres 1987[1977]). Yet, instead of a characteristic, I present it as an expectation of good leadership. Good speech is a feature of the ideal community leader, since in practice not all community leaders are good talkers. Those who are not capable of good speech have to make up for that in other ways, like being able to recall savoury anecdotes, or to be able to evoke sentiments that strike 'responsive chords' among slum dwellers (cf Worsley 1968).

The changeable slum dweller – community leader connection

Although community leaders do not manage to constitute factions, groups or "inner circles" around them that remain loyal over time, they nevertheless try. Community leaders argued to me that they would be able to do much more for the community, if they had a loyal group of people that would share the same vision and fight for the same stakes. Still, slum dwellers have no obligations whatsoever to turn to community leaders. The relationship between slum dwellers and community leaders is of a rather changeable, uncommitted, and contingent character, in contrast to understandings of leadership that assume a rather rigid connection between leader and follower, typified as one of obedience and obligations based in kinship and political bonds (e.g. Schapera 1959[1937], Gluckman et al. 1949, Sahlins 1963).

Loyalty is certainly present in the relationship between leader and slum dweller, but it is never determining. In order to come to grips with the relationship between community leader and slum dweller, I present the relation between Raquel, a resident of Chão de Estrelas, and Zezinho, a community leader. The main purpose of the story, is to present an example of the general idea of, what I call, the changeable slum dweller – community leader connection.[3]

Raquel, a woman in the end of her thirties, has known Zezinho already for over twenty years. At the time of this story, Raquel often attended Zezinho's meetings. She did not care about the discussions, but provided those present with coffee, water, and jokes. She argued that the meetings were a distraction from the troubles she had at home – her in-living mother was ill, her husband was underemployed and mentally ill, and she often had conflicts with her stubborn adolescent son. Raquel benefited from Zezinho's favours. As a matter of fact attending his meetings was in itself already favourable to her, as it provided some diversion. In addition, she often passed by to unburden herself, complaining about problems and injustices that she encountered in her life. She also received more tangible favours of Zezinho. Her youngest son received milk which Zezinho distributed under the banner of a governmental milk programme. Her son actually was too old to participate, but Zezinho managed to wangle it so she received a litre of fresh milk daily. Sometimes, Zezinho lent her money, although this was a rare occasion, as Zezinho had little to spend. When in need, Raquel did not only go to Zezinho. Years ago, she had lost her identity card, highly problematic as carrying the card is compulsory (see chapter 8). Acquiring a new card from the police department through the official procedure is expensive. Instead, Raquel went to a police officer she had befriended, who arranged a card for her without charging the fee involved. When, later, she lost her card again, she asked Zezinho to arrange a new one, but he did not manage to do so. So instead she went to a community leader she knew from an adjacent neighbourhood, who managed to get her a new card for free. This leader had set up a provisional health post where he distributed expired medicines

which he received from hospitals. Raquel sometimes helped him and sometimes received free medicines for her ill mother. When a friend was in need of medical treatment, Raquel repeatedly requested this particular leader to arrange regular taxi transport to hospital, but he did not comply. Raquel then turned to a middle class woman whom she knew through volunteer work in literacy programmes for the poor. This woman had at the time become a candidate for municipal councillor. Apart from asking her for the transport, Raquel made some money by working in her electoral campaign. Still later, when Raquel was doing a course to become a nurse, she re-established her connection to the leader who had the health post as, she argued, he might help her to find a job in health care.

Raquel's story shows how slum dwellers, even though they know a community leader very well, are not hierarchically bound or morally obliged to this particular leader. Furthermore, competition between community leaders contributes to deconstruct loyalty towards a particular leader as slum dwellers move from one to another. Without championing a voluntarist perspective, as slum dwellers are constrained by the precariousness circumstances in which they live, I argue that they frequently "shop around" with different persons, when attempting to have their needs fulfilled. As such, the "inner-circle" of followers observed by Auyero in Argentina (2001), is not present in Recife. This absence is most evident when looking at photographs of leaders' activities in the past: these displayed different constellations of people through the years.

Moreover, some residents of Chão de Estrelas hardly ever contacted community leaders. Some only obtained some free groceries once in a while at a food programme coordinated by a leader. Some refrained from business with community leaders, criticising them for not being good leaders. Others argued that they were able to take care of themselves. Some of the latter had permanent jobs or their own personal connections to outsiders to whom they turned in time of need. A certain correlation can be observed between poverty and the intensity of relating to community leaders. Usually, unemployed slum dwellers are among the poorest and have most time to partake in leaders' activities. They join projects of a leader willing to find opportunities to provide for their needs for food and an income. They attend community meetings and celebrations for reasons that often merge diversion with the hope to acquire benefits. Employed slum dwellers have less time and often less urgent needs for participating in leaders' activities.

Community leaders providing structure

Community leaders provide the slum with central figures who are highly visual and known to everyone. They are part of slum dwellers' shared realities. Whilst arguing against the view that positions community leaders as slum directors or chiefs heading a

hierarchy, this book shows how community leaders structure life in the slum in ways related to the physical built environment, history, and moralities. With regard to the physical built environment, the dwellings of community leaders are well known to everybody and often used as points of reference. People say: 'Enter the second street on the right, counted from [a community leader]'s house' or 'She lives two streets behind the street of [a community leader]'.

Furthermore, the activities of community leaders and the events they organise act as milestones in the shared history of slum dwellers. People speak of 'before' and 'after' a certain event or project, as such categorising and ordering their past. Moreover, the retelling of these events and activities configures life in the slum, creating a collective memory that grounds senses of belonging. The next chapter displays how certain community leaders are talented "orchestrators" of retelling history, thereby creating an image of solidarity among slum dwellers.

Finally, with regard to moral standards, community leaders eschew the drug trade and other crime present in the slum. They condemn violence and steer clear of involvement in these matters. Mothers whose sons are in prison frequently request community leaders for help to set their sons free. Although community leaders, with their connections to influential people, are able to achieve something in this field, they do not honour these requests.

Oscillating between different needs and expectations

Arenas

I showed how slum dwellers have certain expectations of community leaders and project certain needs and aspirations on them. Hitherto, I have not touched upon the contestation of such expectations and needs. Community leaders deal with diverging expectations, needs, and aspirations from different persons. Not only do politicians have different needs and expectations than slum dwellers, but also, needs expressed by individual slum dwellers differ. Community leaders work in different arenas and are 'likely to generate conflict arising from contradictory interests and objectives or due to differential power' (Long 1989:238). Their position 'inevitably creates ambivalence' as they have to respond to contradictory demands and expectations (ibid). 'Yet, those who become skilled in their job manage, whenever possible, to exploit such ambiguities, turning them to their own personal or political advantage' (ibid).

Tensions between different registers

Apart from the contradictions that exist between the needs and expectations of different persons in an arena, community leaders also deal with simultaneously existing but

opposing needs and expectations of their fellow slum dwellers. As people draw on different and contradictory registers at the same time (Nuijten 2003, Nuijten, de Vries & Lorenzo *forthcoming,* Nuijten & Lorenzo *forthcoming*), slum dwellers draw on different discursive registers, modalities to give meaning, when approaching community leaders. They position community leaders between contradicting needs and expectations, which, I argue, are always present next to each other. As a result, community leaders need to constantly find a balance between contrasting dimensions, like walking a tightrope. Community leaders oscillate, so to speak. To explain what I mean by this oscillation, I elaborate upon two different types of related and overlapping tension. The first is between unconditional love for the community and self-interest, that is working for the community versus the need to make a living. The second tension is located between the need for prestige and resources that emerge from connections to influential and resourceful outsiders, and the potential contamination with the interests of electoral politics.

Love for the community versus self-interest

One woman, who had worked in several projects run by community leaders, argued that a community leader needs to have love for the community: 'He needs to have a good heart and love for it, is it not? Because if he does not have love, the thing does not work.' Another woman, Marta, who was at the time engaged in the activities of one community leader, stated: 'A good leader does not pull the benefits to himself, but to the community.' She too explained that a community leader has to seek after the 'well-being of the community', and should not think of how much he would gain, but instead of what the community would gain. For slum dwellers, the ideal community leader does his work out of love for the community, for its people. He should do this in an unconditional way, without attempting to benefit from it himself (cf Herkenhoff 1995). Hence, a community leader should not act in self-interest. This ideal was highlighted by one community leader from an adjacent community who called his organisation "*Amor ao próximo*" (Love to your neighbour).

While slum dwellers often draw upon this "idealist" register of community leadership, simultaneously, they draw upon a "realist" register, as it is no secret or taboo that community leaders receive benefits from their contacts with politicians, and that they receive stipends for attending meetings or assuming positions in governmental programmes. It is also no secret that they skim off funding or goods of projects. Some community leaders gain more or less fixed wages, or other kinds of support from politicians that are critical for their survival, such as employment, food aid, or materials needed.

Nielsen refers to the tensions that emerge as 'contrasting, but simultaneous moral configurations' (2002:40). He deals with the contrast between what is considered as

morally good and bad, working for the community and working for oneself, respectively. He concludes that a leader attempts to live up to the image of working for the community in public and hide his self-interest. Going further, I would argue that it is simultaneously expected and acknowledged that community leaders work both for the community and for personal interests, finding a balance between different dimensions.

On one morning, I watched the implementation of a sewage project in Chão de Estrelas. A man from the neighbourhood argued to me that Brazil's main problem was that money remained "sticking" everywhere. He pointed at the workers who were digging a hole for the sewers and stated: 'The first puts fifteen in his pocket, the second five and the worker, who really deserves it, gets two. That is the way it goes.' He related this to the community leaders, arguing that: 'The community leaders do the same. They also make money with this.' He stated that this should not be the case, as a community leader 'has to work out of love for the community.'

When I remarked that a community leader needs to live as well, the man turned to me and said: 'Pay close attention, if he receives five hundred *cestas básicas*[4], he can take three for his own family, can he not? Because he also needs to live. But it is not like that.' The latter was said in such a manner as to insinuate that the leaders would keep many more than three cestas. Finally he concluded: 'I always say: if there is a person saying that he is helping the community, there must be some kind of deal there.'

This last conclusion demonstrates the contradictory dimensions between which community leaders operate. He did not think it a problem if a community leader kept a few benefits. However, he criticised leaders because they kept too much. The ambiguity of "keeping too much for oneself", the indistinct blurring between unconditional work for the community and making a living is, I argue, symptomatic of the position of community leaders vis-à-vis fellow slum dwellers. This corresponds with the findings of other authors about leadership. Leaders have to find a balance – they need to know how to "play the game" – between self-interest and the interest of the community (Nuijten 2003, Sahlins 1963, Nielsen 2002). Whereas for many leaders described in other studies some enrichment and ostentation is allowed for, for community leaders, anything that exceeds bare necessities is considered absolutely inappropriate and is subject of gossip and criticism.

The different discursive registers related to community leadership, resemble Lévi-Strauss' notion of complementary oppositions. Levi-Strauss describes two opposing perceptions of shamans among Brazilian Nambicuara people: on the one hand that the shaman acts with the aid of supernatural powers, and on the other hand that the shaman sets up a hoax for his own benefits. Lévi-Strauss argues: 'The two explanations are logically incompatible, but we admit that one or the other may be true; since they are equally plausible, we easily make the transition from one to the other, depending on the occasion and the moment. Many people have both explanations in the back of their

minds' (1963:171). I agree with Lévi-Strauss that the two explanations – different needs and expectations – are logically incompatible but are simultaneously present, like with the registers about community leadership.

The second type of tension I present concerns the workings of electoral politics. Before moving into this, first it is necessary to understand the particularities of the presence of electoral politics in the slum, and how slum dwellers perceive of it.

Slum dwellers and electoral politics: contamination and attractions

Slum dwellers refer to electoral politics as if it were another world, completely different from the slum. They call this world *a política* – politics – or, with reference to the beings that resided this world, *os políticos* – the politicians.[5] *Política* is never exactly defined, but consists of dealing with politicians, officials, campaign workers, and others active in political parties, and, of practices that are instrumental for enhancing influence and money. It includes activities that are in some way aimed at getting votes, even in the distant future, and assuming or maintaining public positions. Although slum dwellers sometimes use the term "*política partidária*", party politics, as well, *política* is not limited to party boundaries and is best translated as electoral politics. Governmental politics, in the sense of the workings of institutions and participatory programmes, do not directly belong do this realm, although the two are understood to be closely related. In addition, *política* is also used to refer to rivalries and battles over power in the community, not necessarily linked to politicians or elections. For the sake of clarity, I translate *política* with electoral politics.

Two opposing registers are simultaneously present in slum dwellers' perception of electoral politics. The first views electoral politics as repugnant and untrustworthy. This frequently employed register is rooted in, and frequently substantiated through, slum dwellers' daily experience of being ignored by politicians and broken promises. The second register links electoral politics to the spectacular possibilities it presents: its potential for creating access to prestige and an unlimited amount of resources. The registers are simultaneously present; Scheper-Hughes (1992) argues in 'Death without weeping' that, for the Brazilian poor, their enthusiasm about and loyalty to politicians always goes hand in hand with expectations that politicians will deceive them by taking self-serving decisions, a suspicion which is frequently confirmed by events.

In this register, electoral politics is considered a tainted issue, related to issues of corruption, nepotism, and arbitrary decision-making which never result in anything positive for the urban poor. Recurrent themes about electoral politics in the conversations of residents of Chão de Estrelas are about delay in *obras* and broken promises. A young man factually argued about electoral politics: 'It is only talk. Nothing happens, it only delays.' Slum dwellers refer to electoral politics as 'dirty', 'nauseating' and '*safada*', meaning devious or indecent. They depict politicians as persons who are

not to be trusted and who only use the poor to assume and maintain their positions (cf Magalhães 1998).

The elections form a critical event in the connection between slum dwellers and the world of electoral politics, as I show in chapter 6. Suddenly, politicians en masse come out of their world into the world of slum dwellers, trying to gain votes. They grant favours, such as distributing goods and arranging documents for free, and look for support. According to Marta, these are not favours, but exchanges, because the politicians want votes in return. She blamed politicians for only granting favours in elections times and not when people are in need. She complained: 'If you have this power to do this for free for every citizen, why do you not do it when I need it? This is the problem, that there is politics that promises but does not do, politicians who guarantee, cry, they even cry, and then do not do it.' Slum dwellers' feelings of betrayal are expressed in their bitter statements that rich neighbourhoods obtain many *obras*, while slums receive few.

Outside election time, electoral politics also pervades slums. It is often related to activities that community leaders engage in. Community leaders look for the assistance of resourceful politicians, and politicians seek leaders to aid them in executing certain projects. Part of these projects are carried out in name of politicians involved. Another part is executed under the banner of the government, yet individual politicians lay claim to its outcomes. Parts of these projects are labelled social work, but slum dwellers acknowledge the electoral politics entangled with it (Auyero 2001). Further, contacts with resourceful outsiders other than state representatives also often entail electoral politics. Entrepreneurs who provide assistance for projects in slums try to impose their political preferences on slum dwellers or later, in election times, become candidates. The same holds for NGO workers from outside the slum who, although officially not engaged in electoral politics, express defined political preferences. Even projects which do not have a link to electoral politics become subsumed by it when politicians appear to claim partial responsibility for the project's success, often in exchange for resources.

Electoral politics circulates throughout all the connections between the slum and the world outside it, in many mundane and banal practices (cf Rap 2004, Nuijten 2003, Auyero 2001). Time and again, it penetrates into community matters and betrays slum dwellers (cf Jensen 2004). The involvement of electoral politics in activities for the benefit of the community is often deemed necessary and threatening at the same time. Electoral politics is thought to steer away projects from slum dwellers' needs and aspirations, into electoral political interests. In other words, projects for the benefit of the community are at risk of being "hijacked" by politicians. In practice, this happens when politicians start paying people or contribute resources to a project in exchange for the right to shape the project according to their likings, or use it as a showcase in their campaigns. A community leader based in an NGO told me how electoral politics had threatened the work of the NGO. She described how, in the last elections for the NGO's

presidency, several persons stood for candidate that did not know anything about working for the community. She argued with disgust that electoral politics had been behind it. According to her, politicians had pushed candidates in an attempt to lay claim to the NGO's successful activities in order to act as benefactors of the community. She referred to these candidates as *líderes entre aspas* – leaders between brackets. These leaders between brackets were considered marionettes of politicians, only working *por causa política*, for electoral political reasons.

Another slum dweller, who was active in theatre projects, also told me of the penetration of electoral politics in community projects, with reference to a theatrical event she was organising. When another woman involved, who was acquainted with the mayor, suggested to call in the latter's help, she rejected it. She explained to me that, with help of the mayor the event had chances to be better than without, but that she wanted to organise it 'independently'. However, she continued, it was hard to do things independently, because funding was needed. She stated mournfully: 'If you like it or not, at a certain moment politics will enter.' She distinguished two different scenarios. The first was to allow politicians in a project already from the beginning, or even have politicians guide the project. The second was to enter into negotiations for assistance with politicians when the project was already set up. She was in favour of the second as the contaminating effect of electoral politics would be less.

Raquel, whom I introduced above, expressed her feelings about electoral politics in a poem:

Conversa de político e pior do que ladrão	*A politician's talk is worse than a thief's*
Só passa de quatro em quatro anos	*He only comes once in four years*
Para apertar a nossa mão	*To shake our hands*
Conversa muito bonita	*Very beautiful talk*
Mas deixa a gente sempre na mão	*But always forsakes us*

The poem's dominant theme is disgust. The politician 'always forsakes' the slum dwellers. For slum dwellers, electoral politics contains a threat of betrayal, as it time and again presents a promise of betterment and finally turns out to ignore the needs of slum dwellers (cf Linger 1993 on Brazil, Jensen 2004 on South-Africa). Hildo, Raquel's husband, told me how he had recently met a politician whom he had actively supported in his campaign for the city council half a year earlier. He had greeted the man, but the latter had not reacted. Hildo bitterly stated: 'He saw me, but turned his head. Did I not wear his T-shirt last year? But they are like this, they are politicians. They are your friends, but after the elections they forget about you.'

In contrast, the second register approaches electoral politics from the point of view of the attractions and possibilities it presents: its potential for creating access to prestige and resources. Raquel's poem – although on the whole negative – displays a hint of

fascination with the politician's beautiful speech. After a party thrown by a politician in election time, Raquel could not stop telling how nice it had been. The people had been very chic, she exclaimed, and 'the place was filled with the scent of French perfume!' In general, in Brazil, it is common to find high esteem for influential and rich persons. Slum dwellers talk about *gente fina*, meaning fine people, which boils down to esteemed, well-educated people from middle- or upper-class. In spite of repeated betrayals, electoral politics holds promises and generates expectations and hope (Nuijten 2003). Politicians have access to unknown richness and have high prestige. Connections to the world of electoral politics hold a potential that can be transformed into many things, into resources beyond measure. The moment that the potential materialises, when it transforms into cash or kind, it never lives up to expectations, these being always larger than can be fulfilled. Maintaining, establishing, and re-establishing connections are important in order not to lose this potential. The appreciation of establishing connections to influential and resourceful outsiders becomes clear in the enjoyment slum dwellers have in shaking hands with politicians during electoral campaigns. Through contacts with politicians and other big shots people gain prestige and possible access to resources. Although in urban Brazil there is no humble subjection, bowing, or scraping involved, a fascination with power and people in high positions is certainly present.

The two registers are merged in the ways slum dwellers deal with electoral politics. To return to Marta, she criticised electoral politics and simultaneously was involved in it herself as she worked in campaigns of politicians. Working for politicians provides money – although often very little – and possible access to other resources. Additionally, prestige is gained as well. Community leaders are positioned between these two worlds. How do they face the tensions present between the opposing registers?

Prestige and resources versus contamination

It is greatly appreciated in the slum if a community leader brings a politician to the community as this creates possible access to resources. In addition, the community leader gains prestige from it, which is considered a characteristic of a good leader. Simultaneously, slum dwellers scornfully assume that the community leader gains something from the politician, as such diverting from community matters into self-interest, potentially betraying the community.

Above slum dwellers in general, community leaders have most connections with the world of electoral politics and are directly or indirectly involved in electoral politics. Fellow slum dwellers regard community leaders with some of both the attractive and repugnant dimensions of electoral politics. On the one hand, they hail the prestige and resources that come with leader's contacts with politicians. On the other hand, they see community leaders as contaminated by electoral politics, as co-opted by politicians and

hence not purely working for the community. Electoral politics is viewed as contaminating the community leader, bringing self-interest out in the leader, leading him to forget about his people and disavow community issues.

The capacities of a community leader to do things for the community and grant personal favours to its residents largely depend on his connections with influential and resourceful outsiders. Slum dwellers acknowledge that community leaders need these connections in order to create access to resources needed to set up projects. Next to resources, connections with influential persons endow community leaders with prestige. Slum dwellers rejoice in community leaders' contacts with politicians, officials, entrepreneurs, NGO workers, and university researchers. They say in awe that a leader 'knows so many people' or that he can 'ask his politician', while they enjoy leaders' stories about politicians they meet. A woman in Chão de Estrelas stated about community leaders: 'He needs to know somebody who gives him more strength. The name of such a person is, in popular language, a *costa quente*' – a "warm back", being a protector and entry-point to resources.

At the same time, these contacts with resourceful and prestige-enhancing outsiders are considered a threat to the community leader's unconditional love for the community. Community leaders gain money and other resources for themselves from politicians. In return, community leaders provide forms of support to politicians, like organising workshops and events, coordinating implementation of a health or cultural project, or participating in an electoral campaign. These forms of work for politicians are viewed by slum dwellers as diverting community leaders away from community matters. They are deemed to have a polluting effect on the person involved with it. Hence, community leaders who operate in the overlapping field of community issues and electoral politics are at risk of losing the confidence of fellow residents.

Ideally, love for the community should be a community leaders' only incentive to do his work. A slum dweller pointed to the temptations of other incentives which might draw community leaders away from their love. 'Not all persons are good community leaders. There are persons who, out of love, became leaders. Then they encountered so much corruption and ended up not being good leaders. They only come at a certain time, only to gain the vote.' In this perspective, corruption is related to the interference of electoral politics in the community, where a community leader only appears when his personal interests, and those of the politician he supports, are at stake. The community leader thereby is contaminated by electoral politics, and disavows the community.

Furthermore, people argued that contamination with electoral politics led to competition and fights between the community leaders, because they only thought of making money and assuming power, instead of the benefit of the community. My land lady in Chão de Estrelas stated that a good leader is he

> …who does not only aim at power. Not "I am, I order, I make it", but he who works in the community

with the community itself, with the residents, on what has priority in the community. In general, that is not what you see here. They keep on fighting each other for power. They remain in this battle with each other and sometimes forget about the purpose and the benefit of the community.

Hansen and Verkaaik (*forthcoming*) highlight the 'magicality' of urban leaders (idem: 16). They argue that current urban leaders have, like shamans, the 'ability to deal with taboo and abjected matter and to incorporate these dangerous situations or substances into [their] own body' (idem: 4). An urban leader 'can interpret a dangerous and powerful natural world, but also has to violate taboos along the way' and is 'allowed to break taboos as long as he/she can perform the key function of interpreting the present and giving a direction amidst an unknowable and ostensibly dangerous environment' (ibid). Community leaders in Recife, like shamans, make trips through "the other world" – being the world of electoral politics – which they translate to their fellow slum dwellers into innumerable resources. Their connections to politicians, their understanding of electoral politics and their *conhecimento* leads them through the offices of a Kafkaesque world, one where regular slum dwellers can barely enter and do not know how to address the beings that reside in it. Yet, it reaches too far in this case to consider engagement in electoral politics as a taboo in the sense of not being allowed to relate to it or talk about it. On the contrary, the practices of community leaders in the realm of electoral politics are subject of gossip and direct criticism.

Other types of tensions than those mentioned can be indicated, for example when community leaders need to have prestige and be visible and simultaneously must be one among equals (cf Nielsen 2002). As I show next, the way community leaders perform their leadership, in order to maintain their position in the face of these tensions, is crucial.

Leadership performance

Performance: constitutive or derivative?

When one elaborates the notion of performance, the critical dilemma is whether performance is constitutive or derivative of a person or position? In other words: does a particular performance create a certain person, or does a certain person need to perform in a particular way?

Claude Lévi-Strauss provides an interesting account of the shaman Quesalid, whose diary was formerly analysed by Franz Boas. Quesalid was a Kwakiutl Native American who did not believe in curing capacities of shamans. Yet, after apprenticeship he became a shaman and was able to heal people. Lévi-Strauss argues that two elements are important here: the shaman's performance – 'a curious mixture of pantomime, prestidigitation, and empirical knowledge' that Quesalid had learnt from other shamans – and the belief other people had that Quesalid was able to cure (1963:175). Lévi-Strauss

concludes: 'Quesalid did not become a great shaman because he cured his patients; he cured his patients because he had become a great shaman' (1963:180). This story exemplifies Lévi-Strauss' argument that performance is derivative, as in the sense of being an outcome of the position of a person.

Almost three decades later, Judith Butler (2006) proposed the opposite point of view – in which performance is constitutive of the position of a person.[6] Her argument is that 'there need not be a "doer behind the deed," but that the "doer" is variably constructed in and through the deed' (2006[1990]:195). In other words: *l'habit fait le moine*, the habit makes the monk. In this line of reasoning, the performance of a community leader convinces himself and others of the existence of his position as a leader. Hence, performance of leadership constitutes the leader.

In my study of leadership performance, the question of what comes first – the person or the related performance – is irrelevant. What is relevant is the notion, present in both points of view, that performance relates to a social understanding of what a position entails. I contend that certain positions, such as community leadership, fit in a vacuum created by needs and expectations of others, such as slum dwellers. Social expectations – towards a shaman or a community leader – relate strongly to a performance given. In the case of Quesalid, Lévi-Strauss argues that failure to cure led to criticism, but did not affect the belief in shamans. The expectations, needs and aspirations of slum dwellers are important for the existence of community leaders. I expand on this later. First, I wish to frame this through my more general theoretical understanding of performance.

Staging performance

Community leaders *perform* their position as a leader. To borrow from Goffman's (1959) use of theatrical terms: community leaders are actors who stage themselves as leaders before their fellow slum dwellers. Performance is a concept that, although and perhaps because it seems rather trivial, carries certain fuzziness with it. Indeed, as Annemarie Mol argues, it resonates with too many agendas (2002). An apt way of studying performance is through a praxiographic approach (idem) in which practices – words and deeds – are noted. In addition, the reaction of the other actors/audience is part of this praxiography of performance. Performance is not one-way traffic from one person to the others, but it brings forth a reaction; it is 'socially effective' (idem:36). In short, a single actor on an empty stage in an empty theatre does not constitute a performance; other actors and an audience are required.

A praxiographic approach to performance is significantly different from the more psychological approach of Goffman (1959) who engages in questions about sincerity and genuineness of the performance. Goffman emphasises the calculative and manipulative possibilities present within performance. He points out how a so-called front stage

performance always consists of insincere elements, whereas a backstage performance presents the "real self" (1959). In contradistinction, I contend that performance is eclectic, as it exists of a melange of dichotomous elements: sincere and manipulative, impromptu and rehearsed, conscious and unconscious, planned and contingent. In addition, performance, partly based on training and skills, and partly on fortuitous events, builds upon a high degree of improvisation (Richards 1993).

A praxiography never labels performance as sincere or deceitful; it can only notice that a performance is labelled as such by others. If a person puts herself forward in a manner that gives rise to others labelling it as deceitful, the term deceit enters the praxiography – not in a moral way, but as part of an analysis of performance in its social effect. Hence the praxiography notes: In public leader X praised Mr. A; in private he criticised him. Or: At home Mrs B criticises leader X; when she meets him in the street she honours him for his work. Furthermore, performances given by a single person vary between different stages, depending on others and artefacts. Artefacts, as objects "staged" by human actors, play a role in performance. 'Performances are not only social, but material as well' (Mol 2002:40). Goffman also points to the symbolic use of artefacts as 'assemblages of sign-equipment' (Goffman 1959:23). Chapter 3 – showing how slum dwellers perceive of particular artefacts – documents the symbolic importance of artefacts for the performance of community leadership.

Socially embedded performance

For much of political anthropology's history, anthropologists, mainly doing research in stateless societies, grounded discussions of leadership in Weberian understandings of charisma. A leader was supposed to be endowed by nature with features of leadership which instigated others to follow him. In this way, a leader could mobilise people and yield results. Here, studying leadership needs to merely focus on typical features of a leader's personality. Peter Worsley (1968) challenged this, arguing instead in favour of an interactionist idea of leadership (cf Rey 1998) in which the leader should be studied as socially embedded. The leader, depicted as a 'catalytic personality', stages a performance which 'must strike responsive chords in his audience' (Worsley 1968: xviii). In addition, leaders must be aware of how to "play the game" about what they can and cannot do, and about what is acceptable. Community leaders in Recife fit this image well. They are not endowed with charisma and special capacities. Instead, their legitimacy lies in being the same as their fellow slum residents, with whom they share needs and aspirations. My analysis of their leadership performance includes the practices of the leaders and their social embeddedness and acceptance among fellow slum dwellers.[7] Within the performance of leadership, community leaders perform both a 'collective representation' (Goffman 1959:27) of leadership and a specific personalised genre. As such, there are common aspects in each individual community leader performance of leadership, while

other aspects are "unique" to, as I elaborate in the next chapter, the personal operational style of a leader.

Conclusions

This chapter gave a portrait of community leadership through the perspectives of fellow slum dwellers, and presented how they are seen in academic literature and official governmental discourse. Here I show community leaders as the main facilitators of slum politics, articulating and consolidating the needs and aspirations of their fellow slum residents, bringing improvement to the community and granting personal favours. Community leadership is an informal position which is not recognised in governmental discourse. Yet, in practice, community leaders are sought after by politicians and officials as the most important entry-point in the slum. Community leaders often head a grassroots organisation, but I argued that these positions are not the foundation, but rather an effect of their leadership.

Moreover, community leaders are "first among equals", who know from their own experience the predicaments implicit in living in a slum. Slum dwellers value them for their achievements, but acknowledge that their attempts may fail, given the precariousness and provisionality of life in the slum. I document how the connection between community leaders and fellow slum dwellers is of a changeable and tenuous character. I document how community leadership faces two major tensions, between love for the community versus self-interest, and, prestige and resources versus contamination. Slum dwellers expect that community leaders work unconditionally, out of love for the community. Meanwhile, they acknowledge that community leaders also have to be self-interested as they need to make a living. In order to work for the community, community leaders need to establish and maintain myriad connections to people in and outside of the slum. Through connections with outsiders they gain prestige among their fellow slum dwellers who expect them to gain access to innumerable resources. Slum dwellers acknowledge that community leaders have to engage in electoral politics as this is a realm in which prestige and resources are available. However, while electoral politics can be attractive in terms of prestige and resources, slum dwellers also conceive of electoral politics as repugnant and tainted, as it tends to move away from community issues and into assuming public positions and making money. Community leaders constantly need to find a balance between these opposing dimensions. In my study I take community leaders as fundamentally socially embedded, and examine the ways in which they attempt to find this balance between service and self-interest, and to cater to the needs, aspirations, and expectations of their fellow slum dwellers. Thus, I take an interactionist approach to community leaders.

Notes

[1] Assies (1992) refers to Carvalho & Laniado (1989) who argued that recently popular leadership had been recognised by the then authorities.

[2] The debates on social movements that dominated sociology and anthropology in the 1980s and 1990s, especially in the Latin American context, have led to an inspiring revaluation of collective action and formerly marginalised political ideas and shed light on the fragile aspects of supposedly rigid state "systems". However, I argue, the emphasis on social movements led to a reification and overestimation of these movements and tended to obscure practices of individual human beings.

[3] Detailed introductions of Raquel and Zezinho are presented in later chapters.

[4] Literally 'basic baskets'; packages with basic food products, at least containing a kilo of beans, sugar, flour and pasta and a litre of soy oil.

[5] I am aware that my portrayal of the dichotomy between slum dwellers and politicians is too simple. A more differentiated perspective can be developed, introducing slum dwellers who have become politicians themselves. These "slum-politicians" are recognised by slum dwellers as "one of us", as well as criticised for "having forgotten about us". For the sake of clarity, I leave these considerations out of my main argument.

[6] Butler distinguishes between performativity and performance (2006[1990]). This distinction goes beyond the scope of the use of performance in this book.

[7] One might argue that community leaders are not only embedded in needs and expectations of their fellow slum dwellers, but also in those of outsiders with whom they deal, such as politicians. Not denying the influence of the latter, I contend that a community leader's foremost social base lies with his fellow residents. To put it bluntly, a community leader without connections outside the slum could still be considered a leader. If he was merely working on behalf of a resourceful outsider, he would not be considered a community leader by slum dwellers or outsiders.

3

Three community leaders, their projects, and styles

The community of Chão de Estrelas is the concrete result of the dream, the organisation and the conquest of the land by the people
- Lúcia dos Prazeres, Brazilian social activist

Three community leaders

Introduction

'What?! Ovídio dead?!' Maria reacted in disbelief to the news. The long- time friend and former neighbour of Ovídio told me how, many years ago, a woman spread the news that Ovídio had been killed. Many people from the community of Chão de Estrelas and adjacent neighbourhoods hurried to the street were the murder was supposed to have occurred. However, Ovídio's body could not be found and they concluded that nothing had happened. When Ovídio, who had been elsewhere, returned in Chão de Estrelas, people embraced him enthusiastically. 'He was so surprised,' Maria recalled with bright eyes, 'He did not understand anything of it!' Thoughtfully, she added: 'But if Ovídio really had died, that would have been a big shock for the people. If he really dies one day, we will be shocked.' Why had the news of Ovídio's supposed death hit the residents of the area like a bolt of lightning?

The previous chapter explained what community leadership entails and how slum dwellers perceive and relate to community leaders. This chapter introduces three community leaders of Chão de Estrelas: Ovídio, Creuza, and Zezinho. I selected these three in particular, as they are currently active as leaders and engage in a wide scope of activities across varied themes. This chapter gives an overview of each individual's history and trajectory to becoming a leader, their present situations, how they make a living, and their relationships among one another. As I show, they occasionally cooperate, but mostly compete each other. Competition is a key element in their relations, directed at deriving material and intangible resources for themselves and their fellow slum dwellers. Moreover, rivalry exists for establishing connections, gaining prestige and being recognised as a leader, both within and outside the community. The tensions between the different dimensions that flank the operations of community leaders become visible when they accuse each other of not working for the community

or being contaminated by the interests of electoral politics. This section outlines the thematic interests, consisting of various themes, within which community leaders operate, as well as their different operational styles and connections with fellow slum dwellers. Finally, I introduce three case studies of community leaders' projects. By bringing leaders' thematic interests and operational styles to life, these cases show how they engage in slum politics, articulating their fellow slum dwellers' needs and aspirations.

Ovídio: founder with a vision

Ovídio Ferreira de Paula was introduced to me by a mutual friend as the most well-known community leader of Chão de Estrelas. He was born in 1936, in Vitória de Santo Antão, a small town 50 kilometres from Recife. When Ovídio was a child, his father left him and his four siblings with their mother. Ovídio spent his youth in dire poverty. He recalled a march in his place of birth when he was a boy, 'I was annoyed because mama could never buy shoes or clothes for me to march.' When his classmates made fun of his clothing, he thought, 'When I grow up, I will achieve things and nobody will make fun of me anymore.' What follows here is the story of his success.

After moving to Recife, in the wake of high numbers of migrants from rural areas in the 1950s and 1970s (de Melo 1978), Ovídio became a respected and inspiring community leader, engaged with issues of community, environment, income generation and health. He continues to envision his activities as expressions of higher ideals, like a vocation for leadership, the importance of solidarity, and humans as stewards of God's creation. He speaks of utopias to slum dwellers and has a relentless energy for and belief in what he does, stating: 'When one dream ends, I already start believing in another one.' Ovídio considers himself a natural born leader. He envisages leadership as follows: 'I think, for being a good leader, a natural born one, the human being has these characteristics which emerge from being part of the community… Now, for really being a leader, I think one needs three things. First, a complaisant spirit. Second, the conception of researching, of knowing the problems, the things that happen, in order to work on top of them. So, having a complaisant spirit, serving, having a conception and a critical sense of things. And then there is a third characteristic which is the principal one: gather other persons, coordinate them for coming into action together. Not for documenting, but for coming into action, mobilising. Being helpful, having a critical sense and coordinating persons for discussing, for looking for a way out.'

Ovídio is a short, dark-skinned man with a limp, seemingly indifferent to his clothing and appearance: in his enthusiasm to plunge into a new meeting or project, he often forgot to tighten buttons and left his shirts hanging out of his pants. As one of the driving forces behind the resettlement and development of Chão de Estrelas, Ovídio is by many considered founder of the community. Time and again he sets up new projects

and involves people in them. He has many connections with politicians, officials and other influential persons. He has finished secondary school, started continuing education, reads newspapers, and emphasises his professionalism, his experience, and education.

Creuza: canny and strategic health worker

Creuza Nascimento da Silva was born in 1949 in the city of Olinda, neighbouring Recife. She spent her whole life in the city, and is the best-known female community leader of Chão de Estrelas. Canny and strategic, she can be fierce or sweet, depending on what she wants to achieve. She is active in the fields of health and gender, facilitated by her job as a health agent, for which she was educated. Her leadership trajectory started in the early years of Chão de Estrelas, as a disciple of Ovídio. Before long, she positioned herself apart from and even opposing him. Her historical record is not as long as Ovídio's, but she makes for a good second place when it comes to achievements in the community.

In terms of her appearance, Creuza always looked neat. Her clothes, although old, were clean and ironed. She wore her long hair tight up in a knot, except when speaking in public or taking pictures, when she would wear it loose. She always wore skirts – never trousers – and never had make-up or jewellery, in line with her Protestant ideas. Her light-coloured skin showed many wrinkles, reflecting the hardship she had lived through.

More than other community leaders Creuza faces distrust from fellow slum dwellers. This is mainly due to her strategic way of operating, in which she sometimes makes easy promises, causing disappointment. Dealing with Creuza is thus said to be done with caution and a grain of salt. Creuza is the only leader who frequently referred to herself as one, using the concept of "community leader" like a title. In both public and private communication she has stated, 'I am a community leader,' or claimed that something had been achieved 'thanks to the community leader that I am.' Arguing that she had 'commitment to the community,' she repeatedly emphasised her love for the neighbourhood, especially for its poorest residents. She can read and write and, as an adult, took courses related to health care, a field in which she regards herself a professional.

Zezinho: harmless dreamer who enjoys leadership

Zezinho da Cruz was born in 1960, in Glória do Goitá, a village in the state of Pernambuco, 60 km from Recife, close to Vitória de Santo Antão, where Ovídio was born. His official name is José Antônio, but everybody refers to him in the diminutive, Zezinho. He, a *moreno*, is a son of a farmers' family and has thirteen siblings, some of whom are

half-siblings on either his father's or mother's side. In contrast to Ovídio, Zezinho only completed first degree at primary school, the equivalent of five years, resulting in a limited ability to read and write. In 1978, he migrated to the city, dreaming of employment and a better life. Zezinho never found employment, but he continues to dream. He strongly aspires for leadership and, in his poverty, enjoys waxing about the richness and opulence of politicians and other influential people. He boasts about his connections to important people.

In appearance, Zezinho, like many other men in the slum, wears shorts and flip-flops in and around his house. When he goes to a meeting in the city centre or passes through the community in order to solve some problem, he is shaved and wears long trousers, leather shoes and a neatly ironed shirt.

He is frequently viewed as ignorant by fellow slum dwellers and community leaders, mainly due to his inability to express himself. Nonetheless, he achieves things for himself and the community. Zezinho describes his position and activities as a leader in rather vague terms of 'bringing improvement to the community.' Of all the leaders, he is the most equal to his fellow slum dwellers. He likes to drink, organises parties and works on issues like security and festivities. He started his leadership trajectory much later than Ovídio and Creuza and has achieved far less. Contrasted with these two, he cannot lay claim to large tangible and visible achievements. The most significant tangible result of Zezinho's work was the reconstruction of a bridge, which unfortunately collapsed again a few months later (see chapter 7). As he is viewed as rather ignorant, other community leaders consider him harmless and rarely compete with him. Consequently, Zezinho – mostly working apart from other leaders – can choose his path without much resistance.

Histories, trajectories to leadership and establishing connections

Historical record of achievements

As mentioned in the previous chapter, a community leader's historical record of achievements is important. Their leadership qualities are often expressed in terms of past achievements or attempts to achieve things. Through this record certain slum dwellers gradually evolved into community leaders. Here, I present the historical records of achievements of Ovídio, Creuza, and Zezinho. In these histories, the connections leaders establish through time constitute an important element as these help define their prestige as a leader, possibilities to create access to material and intangible resources and utopian aspirations, and, more profoundly, embody attempts to gain recognition and safeguard against abandonment.

These histories also show how certain themes which community leaders currently work on were shaped over time. In Ovídio's case, his present emphasis on community

issues is based in the foundation of Chão de Estrelas as a community, but also emerged from his participation in basic ecclesiastic communities and ideas from Liberation Theology involved during the military dictatorship. In the case of Creuza, her current work in the field of health care stems from her involvement in the foundation of the local health post and other health issues. Zezinho's history shows the origins of his current 'rightist' connections, as he was introduced to rightist politicians by a late community leader in the area. I pay more attention to Ovídio's history than the other leaders' for two reasons. First, Ovídio's history is more extensive than those of the others, as he is older and has been a community leader for a longer time. Second, his history is closely entangled with that of Chão de Estrelas. Through Ovídio's story, I narrate more about Chão de Estrelas.

Two histories entangled: Ovídio and Chão de Estrelas

Several slum dwellers argued that Chão de Estrelas does not have a mother, but a father. This father was considered to be Ovídio. Indeed, his life story, in which he gradually evolved into a community leader, is intricately entangled with the origins and development of the community. Many current residents of the community and adjacent slums as well as many outsiders consider Ovídio as the founder of Chão de Estrelas. Governmental reports (Prefeitura do Recife 1993) and academic studies (Cabral 2004, Araújo et all. 1993, Dutra 1998) also introduce Ovídio as key player in the establishment of Chão de Estrelas.

In spite of diverging histories of the community which argued instead that Ovídio was not the only and perhaps not even the most important founder, I present Ovídio as the protagonist in the foundation of Chão de Estrelas. I am aware that in this way I reproduce a version of history that has been revised and moulded by Ovídio's own point of view. I am by no means arguing that this history is the only true one; however, I do contend that this version of history has become the most common one, largely thanks to Ovídio's talents for reproducing it in stories, ceremonies, puppet plays and other theatrical projects in which he involves many people. Taking into account Foucault's notion of the history of the present, the fact that this version of history is currently the most common one is telling of Ovídio's present position in the neighbourhood: he is still considered an important leader whose role in the establishment of the community is undeniable. This story includes many of the glorious achievements that stand out in Ovídio's career as a community leader. Simultaneously, it shows how he passed through and overcame hard times during which he was even threatened with death. For parts of this story, I gratefully draw on the work of Augusto Cabral (2004), who carried out a wonderful study on the history of this community.

Ovídio: establishing connections with "the left" during military dictatorship

When he was in his twenties, Ovídio migrated to Recife. He found work as a market vendor of flour. He was keen on studying and, through connections of his father – the latter he met again in Recife – managed to take evening classes at a local school. In the years before the military coup of 1964, Ovídio became connected to a group of leftists who organised meetings. After the coup, he left his school and continued his studies at a school in the city centre that was known to be an assembly point of leftist activists.1 The military regime lasted from 1964 until 1985. During the first period of the regime, opposition movements were not allowed to organise at threat of imprisonment (Assies 1992). Nonetheless, Ovídio became more and more attracted to the ideas and activities of the mostly middle-class leftists, varying from hard-line communists to moderate political activists. He recalled: 'It was the little *foco* of the leftist leaders of that period. Well, I was the poorest, but I became involved in it as well, in the bus strikes, the issue of mobilisations, discussions.' Ovídio argued that this period was his 'school' for becoming a community leader. He was particularly attracted to the clergy who spread the ideas of Liberation Theology, a current in the Roman Catholic Church with a focus on fighting poverty and social injustice. Although criticised by the pope and other politically conservative clergy, Liberation Theology was very strong in Brazil, not in the least in the Northeast (Nagle 1997, Burdick 1993, Lehmann 1990, de Theije 2002, 2006). The clergy founded small groups, called *Comunidades Eclesiais de Base*, basic ecclesiastic communities, or CEBs, organising people in communities according to the way Christians did in the first century after Christ. Ovídio joined the social action programmes of the CEBs, fighting marginalisation by distributing goods like mattresses and construction materials, among the urban poor whose houses were flooded or demolished by the government. Consciousness-raising was an important ingredient of this social action. Ovídio remembered these programmes as those that 'fed' him. Meanwhile, he had a job in a large library, known for selling leftist literature. Ovídio's work was frequently impeded by his weak state of health that left him bedridden for some periods, but, as he stated: 'I always stayed connected to the movement.'

In 1971, Ovídio went through a difficult period when his then-wife left him, taking their baby with her. He tried to commit suicide by drinking cleaning products, but vomited and survived. 'It was a damned mess,' he recalled. Before long, he met his current wife, Nida. With her, he left for the state of São Paulo, like many people from the Northeast who were in search for employment at the time. Ovídio confided in me that he did not go for work, but to escape from the traumatic events he lived through in Recife. He found work in construction in the harbour city of Santos, where he worked night shifts. Life was rough, he recalled: working all week and squandering money on the weekends. He sought contact with local padres again, foremost, he recalled with a smile, for confessing his sins.

Ovídio's first achievements

After some years, Ovídio and Nida returned to Recife with their recently born daughter. In Recife, they had three sons. Because of Ovídio's leftist contacts and activities, it was hard to find employment. Finally, he found work among Liberation Theology clergy he knew in a Catholic college in the city centre, as an altar server in a local church and as a builder constructing a chapel. A *padre* he had befriended bought him a shack in Cabo Gato, a slum on the banks of the Beberibe River on the border between Recife and Olinda. Ovídio repaid him in instalments. Ovídio again worked in social action programmes in the diocese of Dom Helder Câmara, the bishop known for his leftist and pro-poor ethos who was one of the leaders of local Liberation Theology.

According to Ovídio, ironically, a good thing of the military regime was its prohibition of opposition, as this led to solidarity among the people who organised despite the proscription. 'What happened was that we went on inviting persons to discuss problems. That was hidden. Hidden activists came to meet us and deal with our problems.' He emphasised the unity of the leftist movement at the time: 'The communists, for example, did not have two or three factions. It was all only one group. And that greatly strengthened our work. I was closely befriended by the left in that period. They came to look for me and I worked with them.' Due to his activities, attitude and connections, Ovídio soon became considered an important community leader in Cabo Gato. He was active in the local Residents' Council, a recently founded grass roots organisation with the objective of improving conditions of the slum's residents. He lived next to Maria, who became one of his closest friends.

An important achievement of Ovídio, still remembered in the community, was the Bridge of Friendship. There used to be a bridge across the river that was exploited by a man who charged a toll for the crossing. As there was no piped water in Cabo Gato and the river water was already polluted, many people crossed the bridge to fetch water at a fountain on the other side. Those who remember say that the owner charged double for those who carried water and pregnant women, because they were heavier. In the rainy season of 1975 a large flood swept the bridge away, after fifteen years of exploitation by its owner. Ovídio and his fellows decided to build a new bridge that would serve everybody for free. During its construction, the owner of the former bridge, seeing his source of income disappearing, tried to destroy the new bridge, but Ovídio and his fellows persisted. They finished the bridge, which they baptised the Bridge of Friendship and described as 'a symbol of the struggle of the people of the Beberibe River bank' (Conselho de Moradores de Cabo Gato 1979). The bridge, however, was precariously constructed. After serious threats of being torn down by floods and many efforts of the residents to get assistance, the municipalities of Recife and Olinda finally built a concrete bridge that still exists today.

The struggle for resettlement

Initially, most people in Cabo Gato lived off of the river. Many men were fishermen, while many women worked as laundresses, washing in the river clothes of families from adjacent better-off neighbourhoods. Other work was found in a big slaughterhouse, some factories, warehouses and a large leather workshop nearby. The residents of Cabo Gato lacked sewage and litter services and used the river instead. As not only the residents of Cabo Gato, but also many others in the then quickly expanding city were polluting the river, soon enough the water could not be used for washing anymore and all the fish died. Every year, during the rainy season, polluted water flooded the riverbank slums – as it still does. The flood of 1975 – when the old bridge was swept away – reached not only the banks but also many a middle-class neighbourhood further from the river (cf Andrade 1979). As a result, the government[2] decided that action should be taken to avoid future inundations: the river was to be broadened. In 1978, in a time in which many evictions took place, Ovídio and the other residents of Cabo Gato were informed that many of their shacks were to be removed. Some shacks were on the banks that would be dug off, while others had to be torn down in order to create access for heavy machinery. Although residents were initially told that they would all be given new houses, it soon became clear that only a small financial compensation would be paid out.

After this news, Ovídio and others founded a commission called Pro-Resettlement, with the aim to fight for new houses for those who would be expropriated. They were accompanied by many activists from outside the slum whom Ovídio already knew – Liberation Theology clergy, leftist politicians, journalists and activists from pro-poor NGOs. They started what Ovídio refers to as a movement. The government tried to convince them to abstain from mobilisation through speeches of politicians and officials at local meetings, police presence in the area and dealings of so-called "false leaders": people from the slum persuaded by the government to divulge their views. Ovídio strategically divided the movement in different groups, so that if one group was impeded, the other groups could persist.

When the government proposed resettlement to a far away site – as often happened at the time – the commission objected. Ovídio and others organised a march to the offices of the governor. They demanded resettlement nearby, as they depended on their connections and jobs in the area. In addition, they demanded complete houses – in contrast to the government's plans to deliver only building materials. Maria recalled excitingly: 'Yes, when we made this march, clanging with pots and pans, they stopped us and wanted to arrest Ovídio if he continued. But they did not dare to, because we were with so many.'

Eventually, the government decided to buy a coconut palm plantation on the other side of the river. This terrain, of about 30 ha, would form the future Chão de Estrelas,

the new dwelling of the expropriated from Cabo Gato and several other riverbank slums. The government registered the people from the slums – 872 families in total (Cabral 2004) – and designated them to their new houses. In this period, the first half of the 1980s, many similar projects took place (Assies 1992, Gomes 1989).

Stories have it that a group of future residents, who visited the area of Chão de Estrelas by night, invented the name of the community. As the moonlight projected star-shaped shadows of the palm leaves in the mud, they called the site Chão de Estrelas, meaning Ground of the Stars. This, a resident told me, is 'the oldest story of this community'. Meanwhile, Ovídio faced troubles as a group of people who were not part of the resettlement threatened him. They lived just outside of the targeted area, and accused Ovídio of excluding them. Conflicts like this were not exceptional. Maria recalled another time, when Ovídio was ill and bedridden. A padre took care of him and had somebody regularly bring food. Others, seeing this, accused him of being self-interested.

In 1981 and 1982 the houses were built and delivered block by block as *embrião*, embryonic style, meaning that they had to be completed by the residents in the then in-vogue self-help style. The houses had concrete floors, and consisted of a porch without a fence, a living room, annex kitchen with a worktop, two bedrooms without doors and an external toilet with a door. The walls were neither plastered nor painted and had holes without windows. The streets were unpaved and there was no sewage system. Most houses acquired piped water and electricity – as presumed in sites-and-services projects like this, but not all. Public transport was absent (Cabral 2004). Family homes were put in the name of the woman. This was a new tendency in policy at the time, as it was believed that female homeowners would, more than their male counterparts, take care of the family and therefore be likely to keep the house instead of selling it for "quick money". Nobody received land titles to this day, but residents acquired ownership rights over their houses.[3] The ownership document prohibited sale.

According to the original residents, the houses stood 'in the middle of the mud'. 'When we came to live here,' one of them said, 'there was only a mangrove and coconut palm plantation.' The first residents lived through hard times, slowly building up the community. The largest segment of the residents was from Cabo Gato, but many came from other slums. In the distribution of the houses, the government mixed people from different slums as much as possible in order to disarticulate existing groups and diminish the capacities of resistance against governmental policies. It resulted in a community with people from "mixed origins" living next to each other. Cabral refers to this as a *colcha de retalhos*, a "bedspread made of scraps", a quilt (2004). Residents still recall how difficult it was, as they had to learn to live with neighbours that they did not know. In spite of all the hardship, many people liked the site, as it was next to the river – used for fishing and washing – not far from a marketplace, a local supermarket and another neighbourhood with much commerce.

More achievements

In the new community, Ovídio and others from the commission Pro-Resettlement organised meetings in the streets, discussing the needs of the people like food, employment, better infrastructure and public services, as well as their aspirations of creating a viable, safe and prosperous community. These meetings were attended by people who were originally all from different slums.

After the resettlement, the government assisted in establishing a Residents' Association and provided it with an office (Araújo et all. 1993, Lima 1992, Dutra 1998, Cabral 2004, Prefeitura do Recife 1993). Ovídio and many of those recently arrived did not appeal to it. Instead, they founded the Grand Commission Union of Chão de Estrelas, henceforth the Grand Commission. An urgent need for many residents was employment. As a consequence of unemployment, many were forced to sell their houses as they could not afford to pay water and electricity bills. In addition, many could not afford to buy enough food, and thus sold their houses and returned to the area they came from or to another slum where they occupied a piece of land and built a shack. The Grand Commission was severely against this reselling. Ovídio said: 'At the time, my campaign was that nobody would sell his home.' He made enemies with this point of view, especially with some wealthier residents, who tried to obtain other houses at low prices and resell them later.

In 1983, in reaction to the hunger which forced people to sell their houses, the Grand Commission started a community soup project. Ovídio recalled: 'Every street had its representative who brought soup to everybody, first to the single mothers, the ill and those who had a lot of children.' Officials from the state housing company, with whom Ovídio cooperated in the resettlement scheme, donated a cooker for the soup. In addition, an official whom he knew recommended the project to the Health Department, which contributed rice, beans and pasta. The project lasted for two and a half years. Meanwhile, Ovídio and the Grand Commission set up other projects: a community school, a health group, a community newspaper and an urban agriculture project for vegetables and medicinal herbs.

Another attempt to find combined solutions to the problems of hunger, unemployment, and the resulting forced sale of houses was the Grand Commission's community bakery (Araújo et all. 1993). It employed people from the community who also gained experience for other jobs and sold bread at low prices. The Grand Commission managed to get a plot from the government to build the bakery. In order to gather building materials, Ovídio asked every community resident to contribute two or three bricks. His fellow slum dwellers still remember how he went around with a handcart and collected three thousand bricks.

The bakery was inaugurated in 1985 and immediately faced serious problems. Competing bakers and bread vendors nearby threatened the workers of the new bakery,

which sold beneath market price. Ovídio was threatened with death. However, he persisted and for many years – with ups, downs, temporary closures and changes in workers – the community bakery remained. Currently, the bakery is still functional, but owned by someone from outside the community and without the original objectives. Nevertheless, it continues to be considered an important achievement of Ovídio. At the time, his prestige among his fellow slum dwellers was enhanced. A woman recalled in admiration: 'At 5 o'clock in the morning Ovídio was already working in the community, with his feet covered in mud up to here,' pointing halfway up her lower leg.

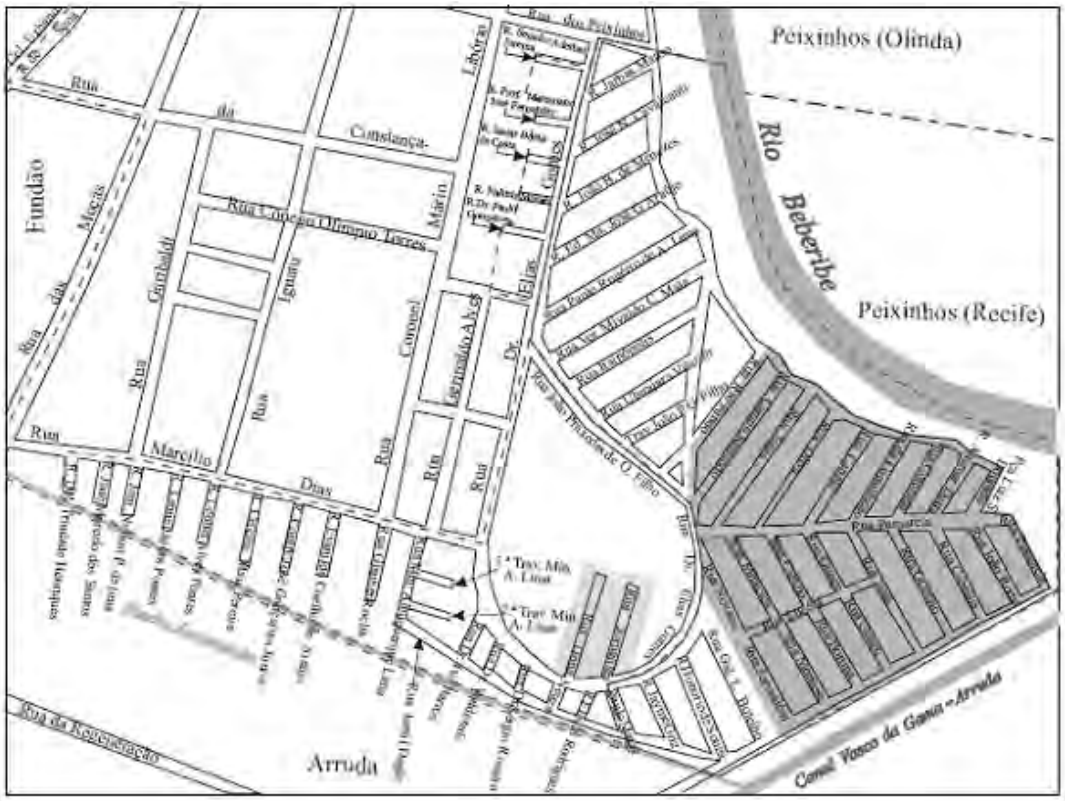
In the 1980s, apart from his work for the resettlement scheme, Ovídio worked for several years for the municipality of Olinda, mostly in groups working on cultural expression. Without going into detail here, I argue that positions like this served two goals: they provided Ovídio with an income and a convenient position to establish and maintain political connections that were of use for his activities in Chão de Estrelas.

In 1985, the Grand Commission registered the Centre of Community Organisation (*Centro de Organização Comunitária*) of Chão de Estrelas, henceforth the Centre, functioning as an umbrella organisation for all groups in the community. Its objectives were to improve the conditions in the fields of land titles, infrastructure, health, sports, culture, education, and to organise the people in general. The new democratic regime highly validated the popular movement that had, according to the leftist discourse, helped to overthrow the dictatorship. Ovídio and others managed to lay claim to the two buildings of the Residents' Association which had been implemented by the old regime. In this way they gained an office for the Centre in one of the buildings and, in 1987, a fully- equipped health post, implemented by the state government, in the other (Cabral 2004). Ovídio became the first president of the Centre. This caused him serious trouble, as those in charge of the Residents' Association, who, according to rumours, used the offices for selling drugs, blamed Ovídio for taking their buildings and threatened him so that one day he had to take refuge in his house until they calmed down.

Some years later, Ovídio established his own organisation: *Movimento Cultural Desperta Povo*, meaning Cultural Movement Wake Up People, henceforth Wake Up People. It was established 'with the objective,' Ovídio told me, 'of rescuing the history of Cabo Gato and Chão de Estrelas.' Later, when Ovídio became more interested in environmental issues, this became a second focus of Wake Up People. Ovídio organised many activities, varying from cultural events to workgroups for creating employment, from consciousness-raising about the environment to ceremonies like the birthday of the community. Ovídio also started a community newspaper. Several papers were issued, with articles highlighting the history of the resettlement focusing on the people from Cabo Gato and Ovídio's role, the activities of Wake Up People, reports of current events, and different columns by residents.

Ovídio also established a community radio station, with speakers on poles in the

streets. Chão de Estrelas continued to evolve with the construction of a nursery school, a bus station with a line to the centre, and several churches. In the meantime, the community was extended in two stages. In 1987 another resettlement scheme took place when a nearby canal was being cleaned and its quays strengthened. For those expropriated, another 531 houses were built in Chão de Estrelas (Prefeitura 1993). The houses were smaller and of lower quality than those built earlier. Some were completely built by a company, while others were built through a self-help scheme in which residents finished the houses with delivered building materials. Next, in 1988, Ovídio played an important role in the addition of another two streets to the community, all built through self-help. His engagement was rewarded through the naming of the two new streets: "*Conjunto Residencial* (Residential Area) Ovídio Ferreira de Paula".



Map of the community of Chão de Estrelas.
The large coloured area (r.) is the second resettlement scheme, of 1987. The small coloured area (l.) is the *Conjunto Residencial* Ovídio Ferreira de Paula. *Jacarezinho* can be found along the *Riacho Jacarezinho* (under) and *Beira Rio* along the *Beberibe River* (r.) (FIDEM 2000 in Cabral 2004).[4]

The Jacarezinho

Establishing connections

All community leaders have many connections to people in and outside of the slum, but Ovídio tops all of them. His connections extend along all sorts and types of men, predominantly in Recife and Olinda where he spent most of his life. As I showed, during the military dictatorship he came to know many leftists who, after the regime fell, remained engaged in politics and ended up in different political parties and factions. Ovídio maintained these connections. Most of them spiralled in and out of Ovídio's activities, as every now and then these persons were involved in one of his projects, be it as resourceful "outsider", part of a collective memory of shared struggles, or both. Ovídio's connections were like a pool from which he could fish when needed.

For a better understanding of Ovídio's connections, I turn to Jeremy Boissevain who, studying social networks, uses the metaphor of the 'many- bladed Japanese or Chinese hand fan' with 'each blade representing an activity field, but all converging at one point, the person at the centre of this network' (Boissevain 1974:29). Ovídio's different activity fields, or blades, are the different political factions, local liberation theology clergy, projects in the slum, government programmes, and social movements. In these fields, Ovídio related to others in different roles – although always as a community leader. Boissevain argues that in isolated communities the blades of the fan 'possess a high degree of overlap' whereas in 'complex, industrialised' societies 'the fan is fully extended; the blades of the fan do not overlap, and a person knows different sets

of people in each activity field in which he plays a role' (Boissevain 1974:30). Ovídio's assemblage of connections resembles a fan with a high degree of overlap between the blades, since many people he knows in one activity field are also present in another. Think for instance of a politician whom he knows from a social movement, currently works with in a government programme and requests for resources for a community project. Viewed in this way, Ovídio's densely knit assemblage of connections bears resemblance to that of a person in an isolated community. However, Ovídio lived in the complexity of a modern metropolis. One might argue – with reference to DaMatta's ideas of Brazil as a relational universe (DaMatta 1984) – that connections of Brazilians in general tend towards the picture of the blades that possess a high degree of overlap – even in complex societies. Still, Ovídio's case was extraordinary when taking into account that most slum dwellers have very few connections with middle- and upper-class people.

Ovídio's present life

Ovídio, although a successful community leader, has always remained poor. This was to the disappointment of his wife who said with a sigh that her 'big dream' of having the house patched up would never come true. They share the house with an adult son, their daughter and her two daughters. The house, obtained in the resettlement scheme, has become dilapidated over time: the roof is leaking, the plaster of the walls is damaged and the concrete floor worn out. The living room displays a threadbare sofa, an old TV on a ramshackle iron frame and a rocking chair lacking half of its seat.

Ovídio's adult daughter works as a health agent at the local health post. She makes one minimum wage which she mainly uses for herself and her daughters. Ovídio's adult son has a temporary job at a recycling deposit for cardboard, metals, and plastics, on the other side of the city which Ovídio arranged through connections with the owners. Nida did not provide an income and neither did his granddaughters.

For years, Ovídio's main income consisted of the minimum wage he received from *deputado estadual* (member of state parliament) Pedro Eurico for work related to both environmental projects and electoral politics. Chapter 6 presents a detailed analysis of this kind of income – not unusual among community leaders – and its consequences. In 2006, Ovídio quit this work and applied for a pension which was awarded.

In addition, Ovídio gains income in cash and kind through 'skimming off' benefits of community projects. For example, when Ovídio receives cestas básicas to distribute, he keeps one or two for himself, or when he gets free food for his workshops he and his family eat as well. In addition, when he attends meetings with politicians or officials, they often offer him lunch. These are petty, but important contributions for Ovídio and his family. Finally, Ovídio can use public transport for free, since he has a senior-pass.

History and present of Creuza: learning from Ovídio and working in health

Creuza, now in her late fifties, started as a disciple of Ovídio, thirteen years her senior. Before the resettlement, Creuza had lived just outside the area that was to be moved to Chão de Estrelas. As she wanted a new house, she bought the shack of somebody who was included and, in this way, gained a house in Chão de Estrelas. This type of strategic operation proved to be characteristic of Creuza. Stories have it that Ovídio helped her to prove to the authorities that she bought the shack in order to be registered as part of the population that was to be resettled. Creuza never talked about the resettlement process.

Besides the stories about the acquisition of her house, her trajectory to leadership occurred at Ovídio's side. Some argue: 'Creuza is Ovídio's offspring'. She never denied that she learnt from Ovídio. They have both been active in the foundation of the Centre – of which Creuza became the third president – and in many events and celebrations.

Although she was not involved with the foundation of the community, Creuza is known as one of the historical community leaders of Chão de Estrelas, as she has been locally active for a long time. Emphasising this, in the election campaign of a local consultative body, she put up the slogan: 'Creuza, a woman with history!'

According to Creuza and many others, her main achievement was the building of the local health post. She was openly self-confident about her achievements in statements like: 'The health post exists because I exist'. She claimed that those responsible for the post's construction were first God and then herself. After its construction, Creuza worked for eight years as a volunteer. Reflecting on this period, she said: 'I did the work out of love… Many people came and said to me: "You will not achieve anything here. Woman, find yourself a job as a maid or whatever other job!" I did not have anything to give to my children.' Eventually, with governmental funding, the health post was officially established and its health agents appointed to paid jobs. Finally, the municipality decided to put all of the city's health posts under district administration. As a health agent, Creuza earned about one and a half times the minimum salary per month.

Besides this work, Creuza was for a long time the *titular* (title holder, director) of the local Comul, the local consultative body of Prezeis, as explained in chapter 1. She held this position for five successive two-year-terms, from 1996 until she was beaten in the 2006 elections. Although the local ZEIS contains more slums than Chão de Estrelas, the heart of the Comul's activities lay in this community and for years its residents held the key positions on its board. Although the official task of the Comul was related to land titling and infrastructure, its results in on these matters were second to none. However, the Comul had effects of a mainly informal character. As is often the case, governmental programmes have consequences that were not intended in their design, while the intended consequences do not materialise (Koster 2002). Fellow slum dwellers came to Creuza in her position as *titular* or visited Comul meetings in order to have legal

problems solved, like not knowing how to deal with difficult government regulations or settling problems related to inheritance. Creuza could often offer assistance, out of her own experience, or by turning to the Comul's representative on behalf of the social movements, who was a lawyer. Furthermore, through her work in the Comul, Creuza established many connections with outsiders, like officials and contractors involved in *obras* in the neighbourhood, through which she gained prestige as a leader and possibilities for accessing material and intangible resources for the community and herself.

In her personal life, Creuza had six children with two successive husbands. She arrived with her first husband in Chão de Estrelas with whom she had three boys and a girl. Her daughter died as a baby, while her oldest son died as an adult, from alcoholism and depression. The two remaining sons from her first marriage lived nearby with their own families and frequently visit their mother. Her first husband had left her and, according to Creuza, later passed away. After he left, Creuza passed through a difficult period in which she was very ill and hospitalised for some time.

Currently, Creuza lives in a relatively large house with a built out kitchen and a new large roofed extension at the front side. She is good at saving money for larger investments, to which also her high-quality television and new cupboards bear witness. She had a new husband who, after fathering her two sons, also left to live with a lover. Recently, after several years, he returned to Creuza who, with protest, eventually accepted his return. She now lives with her second husband and two adult sons. As most of the time her sons and husband are unemployed, Creuza financially supports all four of them. She does so with her job as a health agent and revenues gathered from work related to her being a community leader. Her Comul position was remunerated with a monthly transport fee of R$100. Yet, as she travelled to many locations throughout the city – not all related to the Comul – she probably spent most of this money on transportation. She also gained some money through other work for the community, as such giving expression to the tension between self-interest and unconditional love for the community. A third source of income was related to electoral politics, as she, like Ovídio, for a long time earned a wage from a politician (explained in chapter 6).

History and present of Zezinho: learning to be a leader and establishing rightist connections

When I told Zezinho that I would like to write down the story of his life, he responded very seriously: 'The story of my life, about how I am today. I am grateful towards God. I did not have anything, but now...' After a short hesitation he continues: 'Well, I still do not have anything, but I thank God for the life that I have.'

After migrating to the city, he came to live in a slum along the Beberibe River, belonging to Olinda, on the border with Recife. Here he met Marilene and they had four

sons together. The slum where Zezinho lived was included in the resettlement scheme, resulting in his arrival at his present house in Chão de Estrelas in 1985. In his trajectory to becoming a leader, his relationship with João Manoel, a deceased community leader who already lived in the area before the resettlement, was important. Manoel was the president of the local Residents' Association (*Associação dos Moradores*). Zezinho, according to himself and other slum dwellers, learnt 'doing politics' from João Manoel. 'It was he who taught me everything,' Zezinho said. He explained that when he arrived in 1985, he joined the struggle of the community leaders. Zezinho argued that at the time he was not a leader himself, but that he learnt from others. He explained: 'João Manoel lived here for more than sixty years. Here I joined him. Right, I was no community leader then, but I knew him and he was a community leader. I became solicitor of the Residents' Association.'

In 1991 Zezinho founded a new organisation, the Residents' Union (*União dos Moradores*). This organisation has its office in an extension of Zezinho's house: a meeting room he built together with his half-brother. Zezinho stated that the establishment of the Residents' Union emerged from his cooperation with João Manoel: 'After five, six years as solicitor of the Residents' Association, uniting together with the residents, we founded the Resident's Union in 1991. I am the president until today.' He has been continuously re-elected through an assembly in which active members can vote. However, as no one wants to pay a contribution – an obligation for active members in accordance with the articles of the Union – there are no active members besides Zezinho.

It is hard to give a clear view of the objectives, means or activities of the organisation. Through the years, Zezinho himself has been the most stable factor in the activities of this non-profit grassroots organisation. A slum resident commented, in my view rather appropriately: 'The Resident's Union, that is only Zezinho da Cruz.' The reason why Zezinho founded the Residents' Union, though other local organisations, like the Resident's Association and the Centre, were already present in the community, remains unclear. Hesitatingly, Zezinho reflected that it was his purpose to 'ally to the other organisations in order to bring improvement to the poor people of our neighbourhood.' In the case study at the end of this chapter, I add a more detailed analysis of the importance of the organisation.

As João Manuel was closely connected to right-wing politicians and officials, Zezinho 'inherited' a lot of rightist connections from him. Through them, he established new connections with other rightist persons. Zezinho never talks about political ideologies, but has developed a strong dislike of the PT and other leftist parties at all levels. His rightist orientation should be viewed in relation to his personal contacts with rightist politicians, who disliked the PT as their political opponent. Furthermore, as I show later, Zezinho cherished the opulent and ostentatious aspects of electoral politics, with regard to which the PT has built a far more modest image than most rightist parties. Symbolising Zezinho's rightist orientation is the huge portrait of Joaquim

Francisco in his living room. This rightist politician – who started his political career under the military regime and became a big shot of the PFL[5] – was state governor when Zezinho founded his Union. Zezinho was given a framed portrait which is still on his wall.

In his present life, just like Ovídio, Zezinho is as poor as most of his fellow slum dwellers. He lives with his wife Marilene and four sons, aging from eleven to twenty-three when I met him. Marilene, who had recently converted to evangelism, was found in the living room reading her Bible while sermons blared from the radio. Meanwhile, her sons watch DVDs on the old television that stands next to the rusty fridge. On the walls many family pictures find their place against the flaking paint, next to a clock with a picture of an open Bible, a company's publicity calendar and an image of the Holy Virgin. Among the photos are also pictures of two godchildren and their parents.

For a long time, Marilene had a job as a domestic worker with a middle-class woman, working two days a week, earning between R$300 and R$400 a month. She knew the family from her village of birth where they possess a large estate. However, when the woman moved in with her daughter, who already had a worker, Marilene was dismissed. This precipitated a difficult period for Zezinho's family as their joint income declined dramatically. Marilene depended heavily on a grant for their school-age children (see chapter 4). Luckily, their second son got a job in the Centre and contributed to the family income. In 2006, their oldest son, after years of unemployment, found work as a janitor in a state government office, which Zezinho arranged for him. He did not contribute to the family income, but kept his income for himself and his pregnant girlfriend.

Rildo, half-brother of Zezinho on his father's side, is a self-made builder who built his house several years ago on top of Zezinho's, where he lives with his wife. He does not pay rent. He helped Zezinho extend his house and build a new toilet and shower. Moreover, Zezinho's other half-brother from the paternal side, Alcides, mostly unemployed, lives primarily in Zezinho's house, although he sleeps in the house of Rildo. It is his dream to become a missionary in Africa. He does not pay rent or any other expenses. Joaquim, another half-brother, from the maternal side, lives just around the corner. He sells homemade detergent on a carrier bike.

Zezinho was never employed except for one year, as a cleaner in a hospital. After that, for seven years, he had a small front window shop at home, selling bread, candy, soft drinks, beer and cachaça, but, as he argued, it was not profitable and he closed it at the end of 2003. When occasionally asked to fill in his occupation on forms, he puts down *comerciante*, being a trader or shop-owner, stating: 'This may mean many things. I am *comerciante*, but lately I am a little out of business.'

Otherwise, Zezinho generates revenue through activities related to being a community leader. From mid-2004 until the end of 2006 he was *titular* in the Comul, which granted him a monthly transport fee of R$100. When he lost this position, he was

only left with increased expenses due to the installation of a residential phone. Zezinho also had income for which he depended on his connections with politicians, in cash and kind (see chapter 6). In addition, he "skimmed off" some of the funding or goods of projects that he coordinated, as I will show.

Relations among community leaders

Ovídio and Creuza: cooperation and competition

The relationship between Ovídio and Creuza was one of love and hate as often happens between "master" and "disciple". They cooperated on several occasions, especially on environmental and health issues which were often connected to hygiene and food. At the same time, they lived through many conflicts and often could not stand each other's presence. They accuse each other of weak organisational skills, not living up to promises and cooperating with the wrong people, like untrustworthy or negligent politicians and officials. They talk badly about each other in the other's absence.

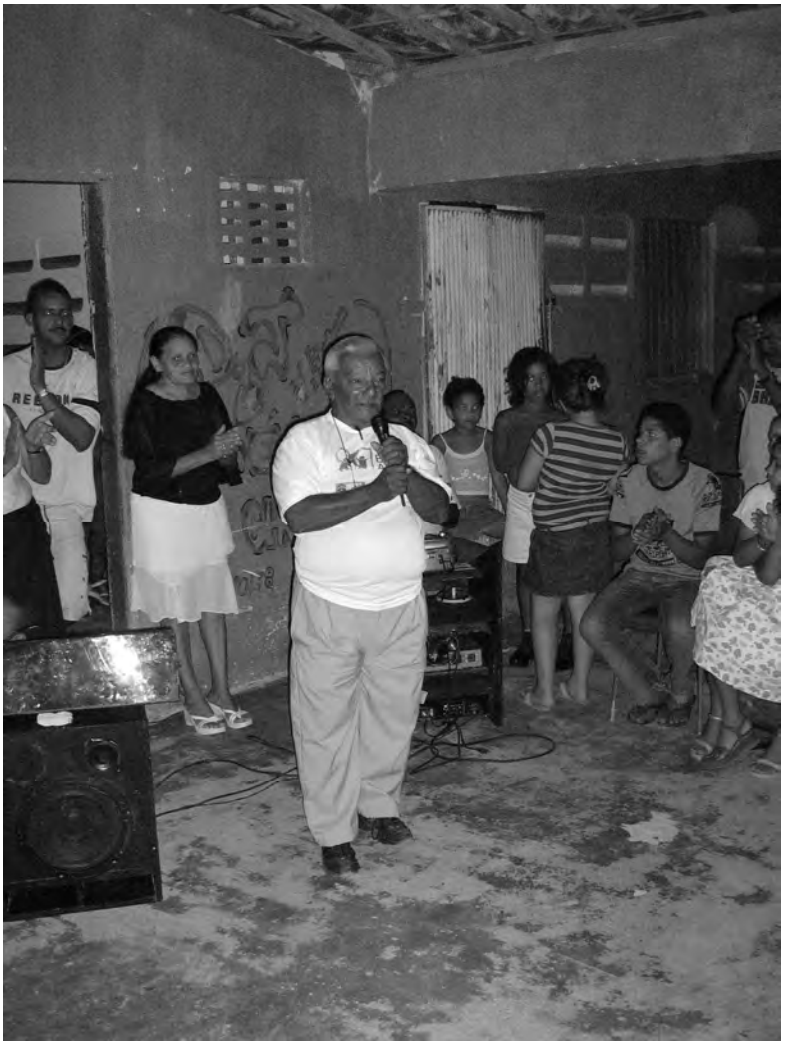
Nevertheless, they recognise one another as community leaders. Ovídio confided in me that for a long time he wanted Creuza to be his successor, but not anymore because she did things in other ways than he would have liked. This coincides with Bailey's writings about leaders and 'subordinate leaders' who are 'at least potentially, rivals of the main leader,' and are in relationships that may easily lead to a break between the two, especially when the subordinate's credits grow large (1969:77). Still, Ovídio viewed Creuza as an important leader. Creuza in turn considered Ovídio a competent community leader and respected him for his achievements throughout the years: 'Ovídio made a great effort for the neighbourhood. He did many things. He is a real leader, committed to the case of the poorest.'

Their first conflict occurred when Creuza became president of the Centre. In the elections, Ovídio had supported her opponent for presidency. When Creuza won, Ovídio distanced himself from the Centre and established Wake Up People. According to Creuza, when she wanted to enter her office for the first time, she found the building padlocked with a new lock. She immediately went to look for Ovídio. She reported, 'When I saw him in the street, he started to shout: "No, no. I do not have a key! I do not have it!" Ovídio did not give the key and made himself scarce. He distrusted everybody.' Ovídio had a different memory of this event. This happened frequently, as both leaders regularly tweaked versions of each other's stories for me or fellow slum dwellers. In Ovídio's version, Creuza had thrown him out and put a new lock on the door as soon as she became president.

Sometimes, during a conflict with Creuza, Ovídio referred back to the fact that Creuza actually did not belong to the population that was to be resettled to Chão de Estrelas and that she, therefore, did not really belong to the community. Nonetheless,

with Creuza's long history in the community, Ovídio could not find much support for this view.

Their competition was expressed in many ways. Ovídio organised meetings in streets close to Creuza's house. In doing so, Ovídio showed himself as a community leader in a part of the community where most people recognised only Creuza as a leader. Also with regard to my presence they competed. When I met Ovídio after I had not seen him for long time, his concern was written across his face: 'I thought you were working with Creuza.' He frequently warned me that Creuza was untrustworthy.



Ovídio on the microphone, Creuza behind him[6]

Meanwhile, Creuza said of Ovídio that 'He has one big disadvantage: he does not trust anybody. He always wants to be ahead. He cannot leave anything to someone else. He does not give any room, you know.' In addition, she argued that Ovídio treated her badly: 'Sometimes he addressed me in a way as if I were nothing.' When I asked her

why she kept working with Ovídio despite all the conflicts, she clarified: 'Because I am committed to work for the community.'

Ovídio and Zezinho: working apart

Ovídio and Zezinho rarely work together. They are involved in different projects and have different interests. Ovídio does not take Zezinho seriously as a real community leader, as he considers him ignorant and opportunistic. However, Ovídio never spent many words on Zezinho and just operated apart from him. Zezinho, for his part, considered Ovídio to be an important community leader who had achieved much. When Ovídio once praised him for something he had done, Zezinho beamed with happiness at the compliment.

Creuza and Zezinho: strategic alliance and annoyance

Creuza's relation with Zezinho was one of annoyance and strategic alliance. Before 2004, Creuza was hardly linked to Zezinho. When in mid-2004 Creuza's fellow *titular* left the Comul (see chapter 1), Zezinho took over this position as in the last elections he was voted in as a substitute. With the new elections approaching, Creuza and Zezinho decided to work together in a joint campaign for the two positions as *titular*. Creuza knew that Zezinho had many voters who were not included in her "constituency". Zezinho lived up to their agreement, divulging that Creuza and he worked together and urged everybody to vote for them. Meanwhile, Creuza hardly ever mentioned Zezinho to others and requested people to vote only for her. As a result, Creuza gained extra publicity from Zezinho's efforts and through Zezinho's connections in the community, while Zezinho gained little or nothing in return. When they both were elected, Creuza contended that Zezinho had won thanks to her and her widespread prestige. After the elections, Creuza had to cooperate with Zezinho in the Comul. She did this with a stream of criticism, calling Zezinho ignorant and blaming him for always being late and not understanding the official procedures. In one of her milder moments, she argued: 'Zezinho has a certain interest, but still I see him as very immature. He needs to learn a lot for being a real leader. He has the interest and the will, but he needs to enable himself.'

Zezinho, in turn, time and again expressed his distrust of Creuza. After finding out what Creuza had done in the Comul elections, as such ignoring their joint campaign, Zezinho was angry with her. Since Creuza had had more votes than he, Zezinho considered this proof of her cheating and remained distrustful of her.

Thematic interests and operational styles

Thematic interests

Introduction

Each community leader developed a different thematic interest to which they related their activities. As their historical trajectories made clear, the themes emerge from personal likings, events and circumstances. These thematic interests enable community leaders to establish valuable connections around certain themes with different outsiders, like state representatives, entrepreneurs and NGO-workers. Where thematic interests overlap, like in the case of Ovídio and Creuza, community leaders sometimes cooperate but more often compete for connections and access to resources.

Ovídio's thematic interests: community, environment, income generation and health

The first important theme Ovídio worked on was community. He emphasised notions like unity, sincerity and solidarity and divulged his belief in the possibility of being a united community, of being a collective. He stated to me, 'I can lose my work, but I will remain a believer in this collectivity.' He envisioned the importance of community from a religious point of view that he learnt during his time working with CEBs and emphasised that Jesus Christ had a strong belief in collectivity.

Ovídio had a talent for reproducing the history of the community of Chão de Estrelas in a manner that suited him in all kinds of different settings: telling stories in meetings, singing songs about the past in celebrations, and having performances of dance, theatre and puppet plays that reminisced about the past. As such, he articulated the community's shared memory while giving expression – in the words of Victor Turner (1957) – to the politically integrative function of ritual in all sorts of celebrations and ceremonies. Ovídio argued that retelling history was necessary in order to keep the true version of a story as people always tried to change history according to their own interests and ideas. Upset, he once stated that he read a claim that the Catholic Church had introduced Easter in the fourth century. He protested, 'But that is completely untrue! The celebration existed before. It had been celebrated already by the Jews! And that is what happens to the history of our community as well if we do not pay attention.'

At some meetings he told a story himself – beginning with "I am curious if you still remember about…" – while at others he invited others to do so, often after providing an opening. In this way people narrated, listened to and exchanged their experiences on the many projects that Ovídio had been involved with. Even projects of which no tangible proof was present anymore, like the building of a school that was later demolished, regained life in this shared memory. At the 25th anniversary of the community, he

coined the idea of publishing a book on the history of the community 'that registers the important facts of all who have contributed with their experiences, their dreams, who help to reinforce the march towards an equal and solidary society' (Ferreira de Paula, 2006). In addition, Ovídio had a personal archive – folders with newspaper cuttings, photographs and piled papers – on the community which he kept as a tangible record of history and personal achievements.

In 2005, his emphasis on community and solidarity was embodied in the composition of a community anthem, together with local musicians, which was then issued on CD. It catered to his fellow slum dwellers' aspirations to be proud of their community. The lyrics referred to the name of Ovídio's NGO 'Wake Up People'.

Anthem of Chão de Estrelas

Wake up people for a new day
Of liberty already announced
On a ground of stars (Chão de Estrelas) that brighten life
And illuminate our whole road

Wake up people, the hour is nigh
Come to show how you have grown
The people vibrate with its victory
In this refrain you and I sing:

Liberty, achieved
Tells the history of this neighbourhood
Our land, conquered
Brave people, comrades

On a piece of land, cut off by rivers, mangroves and canals
We built with courage, struggles and work
We conquered our ideals

And come to show with great pride
The community, you have grown
And the people shout in liberty
Giving thanks to our great God

A second element of Ovídio's thematic interest was his environmental focus. Through the years, he became more and more interested in issues of environmental degradation. He started projects for waste collection and recycling. Eventually, in 1994, he founded the first cooperative of waste-pickers in Recife in which the waste collected was exchanged for food with the municipality (cf Cabral 2004 and Diario de

Pernambuco 16/10/1994). He was also active in NGOs fighting against pollution of the Beberibe River. In 1992, through a local NGO he was invited to attend the Earth Summit, the UN conference on climate held in Rio de Janeiro, but did not go as he was afraid of flying. After the Earth Summit, Ovídio developed an Agenda 21 for the community (Jornal do Commercio 09/06/2002). Up to the present he organises consciousness-raising lectures, workshops and theatre plays about pollution and waste recycling. In terms of environmentalism, he also held a religious point of view, as he considered people stewards of God's creation.

Thirdly, Ovídio engaged in attempts to set up projects of income generation for slum dwellers. Besides the community bakery, he had arranged employment for female street sweepers and invented many projects, sometimes entwined with his environmental focus, like selling homemade Christmas cards from recycled paper.

Finally, Ovídio was involved in health issues. He had been actively involved in the establishment of the local health post. More recently, he linked up health issues with environmental issues like pollution, hygiene and the need for clean drinking water. Regarding this theme he often competed with Creuza, who was also active in this field.

Ovídio's operational style: religious, acting solo, enthusing and obliging

In the past Ovídio combined the leftist ideology of Catholic Liberation Theology with social activism. In recent years, he made a move towards evangelist Protestantism and became a so-called *crente*.[7] He had been a member of several Protestant churches and for some time studied as an aspirant pastor. Eventually he had always left a church in search of other congregations due to differing opinions with the preachers. Whereas Protestant churches in general were far less politically engaged than the Liberation Theology movement in which Ovídio was active, he never refrained from his political struggles.

Whereas many *crentes* value a life according to strict rules, are cautious about participating in occasions taking place outside of their church and hold disapproving views of the Catholic Church (Oosterbaan 2006), Ovídio was more open-minded. He emphasized precious friendships that he had among Catholics – including those whom he knew from his engagement in CEBs. For a long time he was a member of the Anglican Church, a church which displayed less animosity towards the Catholic Church than many other Protestant Churches. Additionally, Ovídio did not abstain from cooperating with Afro-Brazilian-dance-groups, although these were abhorred by *crentes* who associated all Afro-Brazilian culture with the work of the devil (cf Burdick 1998). Ovídio shared the *crente* point of view that drinking was not good, but would not refrain from having a traditional glass of wine at a São João festivity.[8] His activities with the community radio are telling of his religious views: at the time, every social group in the community, including Catholics, *crentes* and followers of Afro-Brazilian cults, had equal broadcasting time. Ovídio connected to crentes, Catholics, activists from black

movements, conformists and communists – in spite of the disagreements and conflicts that existed between these groups (Burdick 1998).

A second dimension of Ovídio's operational style is his acting solo. Although he worked with many fellow slum dwellers, he took most decisions alone without consulting others. His fellow slum dwellers frequently criticised him for being unaccountable. One of the few slum dwellers who frequently accompanied him grumbled that she always had to remain in the waiting room while Ovídio entered the offices. However, as his individual endeavours often bore fruit, slum dwellers maintained their connections to him.

The third dimension lies in his talent for convincing people to support his projects, as he is able to present things in optimistic and inspiring ways. Furthermore, he has a gift for combining bad news with good news. With these talents he has many slum dwellers join his projects.

Finally, characteristic for Ovídio's style is his capacity of obliging people – in other words, of enforcing their commitment to his projects. He could, for example, ask people to come to a meeting or do something for him, arguing that he had been looking for them for days and that now, when he finally found them, they could not do otherwise than accept his invitation or help him. He first made people enthusiastic about a project and then quickly appointed them to a task, like enticing women to come to a meeting and then stating that they should come early in order to help preparing the meeting's lunch. Finally, he obliged NGOs to contribute to his projects by publicly expressing his gratitude for their help before they actually did anything. He sometimes printed names of NGOs, which had promised help but did not deliver, on project leaflets and showed these in the face of the NGO workers, suggesting that now they could not refrain from assistance.

Creuza's thematic interests: gender and health

Creuza is especially known for her activities in the fields of health and gender. As a health agent, on many days she was in the street, a file under her arm, visiting those ill or otherwise in need of care. Next to medical counsel or referring people to the health post, she gave advice about breastfeeding, hygiene, nutrition, and taking care of others. She also was the coordinator of the local health post.[9] Her job was considered tough, both by herself and fellow slum dwellers, as she had to pay visits while the hot summer sun cast its rays upon her or the wet winter rain made her jump puddles in the streets. Creuza carried out her job with endurance. She checked patients, listened to their stories, gave them advice and sent them to a pharmacy or doctor if necessary. The cases she took care of varied from tuberculosis to pregnancy and from broken legs to nervousness.[10] In the process, she visited the homes of many people, knowing their needs and being of help. This was an important element of her position as a community

leader, as she maintained personal contacts with many residents of the area. People said that they 'owed many favours' to Creuza, because of the good job she did as a health agent.

Creuza had positions in several health-related councils and associations in the city and was invited for workshop and courses in this field. The theme of health and her work as a health agent provided her with good opportunities to establish connections with outsiders. Health was a favourite issue among politicians, as it was considered to be related to taking care of people. This neatly fits in the ideal-typical image of a politician and was supposed to attract voters. As a result, Creuza was an often sought-after community leader, especially in election times, because politicians wanted to connect with her and through her to the theme of health. Additionally, as the public responsibility for health was divided between the state and municipal levels, Creuza was in the position to establish connections with representatives of both administrative levels.

With regards to gender, Creuza was *delegada* in OP with specific attention to gender issues. She was also involved in education for women, like workshops for mothers on how to breastfeed. Creuza, as a woman, was better able to address women's issues than her male fellow community leaders. It was not uncommon to find only women at meetings on gender issues, also at those organised by the municipality. Hence Creuza, more than Ovídio or Zezinho, was suited to work in this field. Creuza took up this "niche", calling in speeches upon 'the women of the community, the women who fight.'

Creuza's operational style: embodying the idea of care, religious and canny

Part of Creuza's operational style consists of a public manifestation of the idea of taking care of the population of Chão de Estrelas. Her caring is strongly related to her job as a health agent in the position of which she was known to look after persons or even cure them. When she walked through her area as a health agent, people came to look for her, asking her to pay a visit to the diseased. Others shared their needs with her, both medical and emotional, like talking to a pastor. People praised Creuza for her work and the additional favours she granted, like delivering medicines from the pharmacy to people's homes or dealing out water purification drops as a part of health programmes.

Creuza's caring did not emerge from dedication. Instead, as I see it, she publicly embodied the idea of care, closely linked to her profession as a health agent and to electoral politics. Often her care contained a strategic element, like when she would make a show of lending her umbrella to somebody in the pouring rain in front of many others while campaigning for the Comul elections.

Creuza resembled the two female leaders Auyero introduces in his book Poor people's politics (2001), who take care of poorer city dwellers. These 'mothers of the poor' (2001:129) performed, according to Auyero, the personality of Evita Peron. Creuza

did not try to imitate any other person, as far as I know. Through her embodiment of the idea of care, she laid claim to the position of community leader.

A second aspect of her style was her religiousness. A tile on the wall of Creuza's house says:

> Christ is the Light of the world.
> I can do everything through Him who gives me strength (Phil. 4:13).
> I want God to give my enemies a long life, so they might be present at my brilliant victory.
> Do not envy, work.

Like Ovídio, she is a *crente*, though a member of a far less libertarian congregation than those Ovídio frequented. During services, men and women sat separately and the latter had to wear skirts and veils. Creuza passionately carried out her beliefs, sang hymns in public and never tired of talking about God's goodness.

She was explicit about the practical implications of her creed, arguing that she would not dance nor serve alcoholic beverages at community festivities, as both were considered sinful. She disliked Afro-Brazilian cults and fulminated against gambling. She had connections with both *crentes* and non-*crentes*, but unlike Ovídio, made a distinction between the two by referring to the former as *irmãos* and *irmãs* (brothers and sisters). Yet in practice she was not always a hardliner. When a strict evangelical stance could harm her position as a leader, Creuza became more flexible. As such, she sometimes danced at community festivities, planned a victory party with alcoholic beverages when she won the Comul elections and pushed others to organise São João and carnival festivities as she thought this important, but did not allow herself to be involved due to her creed.

This example points to a third aspect of her operational style: her canniness in dealing with others. This was expressed in several ways such as acting highly strategically, publicly emphasising her own poverty and repeatedly mentioning how busy she was with her work for the community. In this way, she anticipated possible accusations of making money through politics and being self-interested at the expense of the community.

I came to know Creuza as a strategically acting woman, able to flatter a person and then criticise them instantly thereafter. She could be cloyingly sweet if she needed things, especially towards those in influential positions, and very tough if disagreements arose. In contrast to Zezinho, who was unable to reflect upon his own actions, Creuza was very self-conscious. Furthermore, more than Ovídio, she strategically reconstructed her deeds for the sake of her public image. Finally, as the tile in her home expressed, she wished her enemies well, but mainly in order to make them aware that they were wrong and she was right.

Creuza publicly emphasised her poverty. She often had most of the lights in her

house switched off. With a sad face, she made it publicly known that she had to economise on energy. Similarly, she stressed time and again that she had little money. Likewise, when going to a meeting in the city centre, she always complained about the costs of bus fares. Yet Creuza's economic situation can be considered average in Chão de Estrelas. What was at stake was not Creuza's poverty, but making poverty part of her operational style. She performed poverty on several occasions, like in the current soup distribution project. An organisation funded by the municipality delivered soup to the office of the Residents' Association to be distributed among the poorest residents of the area: mostly elderly women, single men and teenage mothers with their children. Creuza did not help with the distribution, but occasionally came to fill in forms. She praised the quality of the soup and loudly stated: 'If I only had brought a bowl, because I would like some too. There are people who think I am rich, but I am poor too.' Emphasising her poverty, Creuza smothered ever-present accusations of being self-interested and making money with politics instead of doing good.

Finally, her canniness was displayed in her emphasis on how busy she was with her community work. In contrast to Ovídio or Zezinho, she often publicly complained about being too busy, arriving late at meetings and announcing with a pained expression that she had just come from another activity. Sometimes she wearily argued that she was too old to be a community leader: 'Sometimes I would like to stop with everything.' Yet, she carried on.

A closer look at Creuza's operational style: provoking pity while being powerful

Here I present an example of Creuza's canniness, expressed in her ability to provoke pity while remaining powerful. One day, Zezinho agreed to meet Creuza at the bus station and campaign for the Comul elections for which they were co-allied as candidates. Zezinho went in a bad mood. That week Creuza had told him that she wanted to make her own pamphlets, though they had agreed upon doing everything together. The night before things had worsened, as several people had warned Zezinho not to be dragged away by Creuza. Walking to the bus station, Zezinho met Ovídio who also warned him about Creuza, saying that she was devious and had let him down as well. Zezinho was angry, and prepared to take Creuza to task.

I do not want to suggest that Creuza was deceitful. Instead, by showing Creuza's reaction to the trouble, I present her artfulness in dealing with difficult situations. Creuza was forewarned about Zezinho's distrust and anger, by a neighbour. If she wanted to continue working with Zezinho in the elections, she had to reconcile with him. When she arrived, shortly after Zezinho, she complained with a sore expression that she slept very badly, woke up with terrible pains in the head and, taking two painkillers, had forced herself to come to this meeting with Zezinho which she thought was very important. After her pitiful story, Zezinho reacted considerably less angrily

than he had planned to. Calmly, he requested Creuza to promise to make joint pamphlets. Creuza readily did so and they left together.

For their Comul campaign, Creuza and Zezinho discussed the text of the flyers they wanted to distribute. At a meeting, they wrote down a list of promises to the population. Eventually, Creuza wanted to include the fight for land rights for residents of some recent land occupations in the community. She said shrewdly: 'Let us say that we will fight for this. If we succeed, good. If we do not succeed, well, then it has been a struggle. That is political strategy.' The most frequently heard criticism of Creuza was that she was a liar and a cheater. In spite of this, Creuza maintained her prestige as a leader and was well-respected. Those who spoke badly of her, she said, did so only out of envy.

Zezinho's thematic interests: security and festivities

Zezinho was known for working on issues of security, mostly expressed through his endeavours to get more and better organised police for the community.[11] He articulated the aspiration of slum dwellers to live in a safe place without fear. In 2005 he launched an attempt to have a fully-equipped police station built in the community, instead of the mobile unit – a caravan with a handful of officers – that existed then. Many people in Chão de Estrelas shared Zezinho's view that a station with more police officers would mean improvement in combating crime, especially the drug trade and related violence. However, after several meetings with police representatives, the request was put aside. For some time Zezinho tried to collect building materials from local stores in order to build a police station with Rildo and other slum dwellers. When he did not receive support from the store owners and Creuza and Ovídio accused him of hard-headedness, he desisted. Although he had not achieved anything tangible in the field of security, his fellow slum dwellers appreciated his efforts and his connections to important police representatives.

Zezinho was known for organising all kinds of parties and festivities. Apart from the weekly drinking sessions for friends in his house, he organised festivities, usually on a Sunday, for the whole community like sack races and a *quebra-panela*[12] on Children's Day and bingo on Mother's Day. At Christmas, he organised an *Amigo Secreto*[13] for his close friends and relatives. He would begin inviting people weeks, sometimes months, in advance, for these festivities. He asked local shops for the resources he needed, like candy for the kids and prizes for the bingo. Sometimes he collected money from 'outsiders'. At election times he tried to attract campaign festivities to the community (see chapter 6).

He arranged Sunday picnic trips that were similarly popular. For these trips to the beach or a swimming pool, Zezinho arranged a bus with a driver. He sold tickets in Chão de Estrelas and beyond, at low prices, as he always managed to get a discount or

some financial contribution from a politician. The bus left early in the morning, cramped with women, men and children. The women prepared food in advance, while the men brought drinks and the children had balls and other playthings. After a whole day of swimming, drinking, singing and playing, the bus returned at the end of the afternoon, with most of the men drunk and everybody happy and exhausted. Zezinho's festivities and trips were happy events that lasted for hours, attracting many people from the community.

Zezinho's operational style: naïve, harmless, partying, bragging and having consulting hours

Zezinho's most obvious characteristic was his apparently naïve attitude. He was considered 'simple' by many fellow slum dwellers and outsiders. While none of the community leaders were elevated above the masses, Zezinho was the least exalted of them all. People made jokes about his ignorance and clumsy style. Some called him a fool, or laughed at him. When Zezinho once organised a lottery in which he put up prizes like cakes and soft drinks instead of the usual kitchen appliances, cosmetics and toys, he was ridiculed. At meetings he attended he usually limited his role to a fixed script. Sitting down with a faraway look in his eyes, he kept his mouth shut, only to stand up at the end of the meeting and introduce himself: 'My name is Zezinho da Cruz. Some of you already know me, do you not? I am president of the Residents' Union.' He would subsequently re-address a topic that had already been discussed. This became like a ritual, often causing annoyance to others present. Although invoking an image of naiveté, as I see it, this way of presenting also conferred a name and a certain visibility on Zezinho. As a consequence of his apparent naïveté, Zezinho is often approached by outsiders in a condescending way. In this he differs from Ovídio and Creuza who want to be treated with respect and act offended if they are not, although Creuza can also act very humbly if this is more convenient from a strategic point of view. Whereas Creuza and especially Ovídio established many rather cordial and egalitarian contacts with outsiders, Zezinho engaged in more hierarchical relations. Yet his fellow slum dwellers did not think badly of this, and appreciated his connections. To clarify, I must note that Zezinho's connections did not display the humble submission of the poor to high-rank people found in other Latin American countries like Bolivia, Peru or Mexico (Koster 2002, Nuijten & Lorenzo *forthcoming*, de Vries 2002, Nuijten 2003). Like many slum dwellers, Zezinho obtained a bus card which allowed him to use public transport for free as a 'mentally deficient' person (see chapter 4). Ovídio and Creuza would not do this, as they were too proud. While some slum dwellers said that Zezinho was crazy for having the card, others, however, saw it as a sign of his cleverness: he was smart enough to obtain the card and travel for free. Crazy or clever, Zezinho, in contrast to Ovídio and Creuza, was not able to reflect extensively on his own activities. When I asked him why he did certain things, he often did not react apart from wrinkling his forehead. Once, I inquired why he granted

people favours, and he responded: 'Because I am a community leader'. When I inquired about his tasks as a community leader, he replied: 'To bring improvement to the community', without further clarification.

Second, due to his apparent naïveté, Zezinho was thought of as relatively harmless. Unlike Ovídio, who was often criticised for being unaccountable, or Creuza, who was often charged with having a double agenda, dealing with Zezinho was considered relatively risk-free. Fellow community leaders did not see him as a threat to their activities. They – especially Creuza – criticised his ignorance and political dim-wittedness, but not as having bad intentions. Fellow slum dwellers – who accused other community leaders of being devious, self-interested, or of having a hidden agenda – did not think badly of Zezinho in this way. Rather, Zezinho was known to keep his word, adding to his image of harmless trustworthiness. When he made promises to people, he tried his best to fulfil them. In short, because of his apparent naïveté, he was rarely hampered by people's criticism or obstructive actions.

A third element of Zezinho's operational style consists of partying. While on weekdays he did not drink a drop, on the weekends he spent his time talking, joking, singing, dancing and getting drunk on beer and cachaça with friends, in a bar or at home. He often played loud music from large speakers on his porch. People would bring food and drinks, a friend would grill and sell meat on a charcoal barbecue, and when the party was for a specific reason, like a birthday, São João, or a family get-together, Marilene prepared food as well. Zezinho greatly enjoyed parties. One night, returning late from a party, he stated: 'Did you see how it is? Everybody knows me. I am very popular. There are people who like to fight, who want to fight. But not me. I like friendship. I make friendship everywhere.' On Mondays, he rarely got up before noon and suffered from what he called 'headache' and 'high blood pressure'. Marilene remarked with a resigned smile that 'Mondays are also part of the weekend for Zezinho.' Sometimes he drank inside his house with a small group of friends, keeping the door closed to avoid everybody entering. In contrast with common findings of studies of Latin American popular leaders (e.g. de Vries 2002, Rap 2004), Zezinho did not buy rounds of drinks. A simple reason for this was that he could not afford to treat everybody. More importantly, as Zezinho explained to me, once one starts buying rounds, a lot of people come who only want to take advantage of you. Moreover, if community leaders spend much money on going out, fellow slum dwellers suspect them of having made money in electoral politics or other tainted businesses (cf Alvito 2001). Some blamed Zezinho for being a reveller who drinks too much. Once Zezinho stopped drinking for some weeks, even during carnival – according to others because he almost drunk himself to death one night – but he soon returned to his usual routine.

A fourth element in his operational style lies in his bragging. He liked to boast about his connections to influential people. To fellow slum dwellers he mentions handshakes with politicians and meetings with people in high positions. People enjoy Zezinho's

stories as an indication of his prestige, while most of them know that he exaggerates. Once, Zezinho publicly bragged about his participation in a meeting, exclaiming that he started talking and 'had closed the meeting', meaning that after he started his speech, nobody interfered until the meeting ended. This was, in my view, a hilariously positive way of depicting his habit of raising an issue when a meeting was about to end.

Zezinho serving food at one of his parties.

Finally, Zezinho is the only community leader in Chão de Estrelas who holds consulting hours. Usually, from morning to evening, people passed by Zezinho's house, standing at the bars of his porch, clapping their hands and calling his name or knocking at his door. When he was not at home – which often happened during the day – his sons or Marilene would inform the visitors. Several nights a week, he sat in the meeting room of the Residents' Union at a desk and received people, listening to their needs and trying to help them. He called this '*atender ao povo*', meaning serving or heeding the people. People came with personal requests, like for a certain document or a new identity card (see chapter 8). Through his connections with politicians and involvement in projects and programmes, Zezinho had access to arranging these things. Others came to register

for one of Zezinho's programmes – like the milk and food programme I introduce later – or for activities like a picnic. Some needed advice on how to find their way in the labyrinth of official procedures. Still others sought information about the plans or progress of public works. Finally, people came to inform him about problems in the neighbourhood, from police raids to defective lampposts.

A closer look at Zezinho's activities: doing politics, doing favours and bringing improvement

In order to better understand Zezinho's activities, I take a closer look at his activities. In Zezinho's view, two elements constituted the whole of what he is doing: *fazer política*, 'doing politics' and *fazer favores*, 'doing favours'. These two closely related terms are commonly used among slum dwellers, but hard to unpack in an analysis. However, examining the use of these terms helps to understand the activities of community leaders.

For a picnic trip to the beach, Zezinho arranged for a bus with a politician who was also the owner of a large bus company. To join, people had to pay R$4. Zezinho, proud and with a cunning smile, stated: 'Normally, the price is R$9, but I do politics, so I receive a reduction.' Later, at the beach, a rather drunk Zezinho said: 'I do not have other work. I am president of the neighbourhood. I do favours. The residents ask me for something, for example to write a petition.' When I asked him if people pay him for favours, he replied: 'No, I do this for free, because I am the president.'

With 'doing politics' Zezinho refers to all activities that are related to getting things done through his connections with outsiders, varying from a bus for a picnic trip, a work permit for a neighbour to his own salary. 'Doing politics' is related to *conhecimento*, as it is a savviness that aims at deriving resources from people outside the slums (see chapter 2). Similarly, Zezinho refers to 'having friendships' or 'intimidade' with people like officials whom he approaches to create access to resources. Intimidade, connoting a less intense relationship than the English term "intimacy", is used in the sense of knowing somebody well or being friends. Frequently, he obtains things for free or at a reduced price – like a bus, tickets for a swimming pool, or photocopies – or manages to attract a project to the neighbourhood, because he knew how to 'do politics' through his connections. There are also resources which Zezinho obtains from people in Chão de Estrelas or adjacent communities. Like for parties, Zezinho 'makes a round', asking owners of local businesses for food and drinks. This, in contrast, is not within the domain of 'doing politics'.

With the other term, 'doing' or 'granting favours' (*prestar favores*), Zezinho refers to things he arranges – or tries to arrange – for his fellow residents. He never talks of 'helping' (*apoiar*), but of 'doing favours'. 'Doing favours' is directed towards fellow slum dwellers: providing free identity-cards, writing a petition for a new bridge, organising a party for Mother's Day. It includes both collective projects for the community and favours for individuals. Most of Zezinho's activities comprise both 'doing politics' and

'doing favours', as he tries to derive resources from influential people in order to be able to pass these on as favours to his fellow slum-dwellers.

When Zezinho granted favours to the whole community, he referred to it as trazer melhoria, or bringing improvement, to the community. This task he firmly linked up to his presidency of the Residents' Union. He argued:

> I am president of the Residents' Union, *bringing improvement* to the people of Chão de Estrelas and the surrounding area. This is the work of the Residents' Union, by way of its president, who is me, Zezinho da Cruz. It is the Union, fighting, that managed to *bring improvement* for the neighbourhood: pavements, drainage, basic sewage, public lighting, recycling. In order to work for the people, the people also need to participate. The community has to be present and participate in order to *bring improvement* and benefits. I cannot manage to *bring improvement* to the people on my own. With my board members and together with the people I will *bring improvement* to the people.

Other differences

Good speech

As stated in the previous chapter, when slum dwellers express their need for good community leaders, they refer to *falar bem*, good speech, as an essential talent. Not being able to speak well – as a kind of cultural capital – is viewed as being low-class, coming from the slum or the countryside. In order to be a good leader who is able to establish connections to people outside the slum, community leaders need to be skilled talkers.

However, of the three community leaders I have introduced, only Creuza had this talent. She possessed the gift of "rebel" speech with which she could fiercely address her audience – both fellow slum dwellers and representatives of the authorities – using fiery and lucid language. Still, fellow slum dwellers criticised her for not being eloquent, for not using educated language.

The speeches of Ovídio, in contrast, were very incoherent. He jumped from one topic to another, mumbled and stuttered. When he was enthusiastic or upset – which he almost always was – he did not finish his sentences. Some slum dwellers joked about his speech, imitating his agitated talking interspersed with frequent guttural sounds. Nevertheless, people enjoyed Ovídio's speeches, as their inherent enthusiasm was contagious and he accompanied his words with lots of gestures and facial expressions. Moreover, Ovídio had a talent for recounting savoury anecdotes, through which he laughed heartily before arriving at the punch line. He actively involved his audience in his stories, asking people if they still remembered or could complete his tales.

Ovídio was aware of his lack of eloquence and coherence. He even took some lessons in Portuguese, to learn to speak well 'because we still do not know, do we?' At one meeting, after a very eloquent speech by another community leader with whom he strongly disagreed, Ovídio argued to those present that they should not only give ears

to the beauty of a speech, but pay attention to the history and achievements of the person speaking. He argued that many community leaders merely had *lábia*, the gift of the gab.

Like Ovídio, Zezinho was not blessed with this gift. In addition, whereas Ovídio could at least capture people's attention with enthusiasm, jokes and interaction, Zezinho's speeches were considered without qualities, underpinning his image of naïveté. He always failed to connect different parts of his story, repeated things many times, and sometimes forgot what he was about to say. Fellow slum dwellers laughed about his ways of expressing himself.

'Zezinho learnt from João Manoel,' Hildo said, 'And he also learnt to speak badly. Was he not from the countryside? Just like Zezinho, who also speaks badly. When he drives around in a *carro de som*[14], he speaks so badly.' He added, laughing: 'He is president of the Resident's Union and he talks very badly!'

Raquel pointed out linguistic mistakes that Zezinho, according to her, always made when talking. She concluded: 'He is a *matuto* (country bumpkin).' She stated that she advised Zezinho to take a speaking course. 'Creuza knows how to speak well,' she said, 'When she passes with a carro de som, you hear that she knows how to speak, but Zezinho…'

Zezinho is aware of his lack of good speech and is not ashamed of it. 'I speak erroneously,' he said. After meeting the wife of Joaquim Francisco, ex-governor of the State of Pernambuco, he delightedly stated: 'She does not know how to speak well, just like me. She is from the countryside.' Yet he tried to give good speeches, sometimes writing down full sentences beforehand and using formal-sounding expressions. Not only that, he affected a voice that sounded like a reverend's or an actor's in a Shakespearean play, saying things like 'We want to make an important notice to all male and female residents of Chão de Estrelas'. As I see it, slum dwellers sought community leaders who were able to connect to outsiders. For establishing connections, community leaders needed to be good speakers, since speech, as a form of Bourdieuan cultural capital, was considered important in order to communicate with middle- and upper-class people. Community leaders, though imperfectly, try to fulfil this need.

Laying claim to achievements and dealing with governmental politics

As explained in chapter 2, it is important for community leaders to lay claim to achievements. Strong competition exists between community leaders as they try to claim responsibility for the same projects and *obras*. Besides, claims to achievements also come from outside the slum, from politicians and officials who claim to be responsible for certain *obras* and benefits of governmental programmes.

Ovídio, Creuza and Zezinho developed different ways of laying claim to achievements through dealing with governmental or NGO programmes. Zezinho found

a "niche" in his willingness to carry out the practical issues involved in external programmes of the government or NGOs. He was eager to engage in these – like the milk and food distribution – when they needed a local coordinator or a distribution point. The activities involved added to his prestige in the community. People said that they got their milk and flour 'from Zezinho'. In addition, Zezinho participated in governmental politics through the Comul and later – despite his dislike of PT programmes – accepted a position as a *delegado* in OP.

Ovídio, in contrast, is cynical about governmental and NGO programmes. Instead, he set up his own programmes or at least had his own plans ready and wanted a say in an existing programme before signing on to it. In this way, Ovídio could easily lay claim to achievements, as he often was the only coordinator involved. This resonates with the acting solo which is so characteristic of his operational style. Reflecting on laying claim to *obras*, he scornfully remarked about *obras* of the municipality that nobody had requested them, but that, as soon as they were finished, everybody would claim: 'I asked for it. Thanks to me it was carried out.'

Creuza, like Ovídio, does not want to play the role of a programme's drudge. She refused to do the hard work involved in doing this and had less time than Zezinho due to her work as a health agent. Unlike Ovídio, Creuza did not set up many programmes on her own, but joined existing ones. She participated in both the Comul and OP and is active in many other programmes, often related to health. As she has a gift of good speech, she can – more easily than Ovídio or Zezinho – present herself in a way as to lay claim to achievements.

Zezinho, however, accepts his position of a drudge. It is often hard work, with a lot of red tape, but Zezinho rejoices in his role of a distributor of goods. He also likes the connections with highly positioned outsiders that he established through these programmes. Although the programmes were external initiatives, he lay claim to the benefits involved as he was considered to have "drawn" these into the community. Fellow slum dwellers value Zezinho's efforts and acknowledged that he had important connections through these programmes. They praised him for the hard work of cutting through the red tape and receiving many people at his place when goods are distributed. Yet, some contended that Zezinho was abused in his position as a drudge, arguing: 'He is being squeezed like an orange.'

Community leaders and their fellow slum dwellers

Ovídio and his fellow slum dwellers

In regards to people who gather around community leaders, I explained in the previous chapter that the groups formed are of a precarious, tenuous and dynamic nature. An "inner-circle" (Auyero 2001), assuming a high extent of cohesion and loyalty over time,

cannot be distinguished as people move in and out of constellations around community leaders or relate to different leaders, simultaneously or in succession over time. However, a general framework can be discerned about the kind of people who turn to and cooperate with a specific community leader, and their needs and aspirations.

Although Ovídio was considered an important community leader with a long history, he was not elevated above the masses. People approached him in the street, asking if he already had solved some problem. They smiled when he passed in a hurry and sometimes made jokes about his agitation, his limp or his small stature. Ovídio laughed with them, giving expression to his being "first among equals". Some women acted in a mothering way, approaching him as a cute, little man who made too big a fuss of everything. A slum dweller remarked about Ovídio: 'He is a relic here in the community, because he is a rare person. He has plans. He looks at this community as if it were his own country.' One aspect that set Ovídio apart from other community leaders was the exceptional confidence people had in his business sense. People expected that, as he had already achieved so much, he would probably succeed in achieving more.

Ovídio gathers people who have some idea of improving the community – often in regards to ecology and solidarity – and of the importance of community history. People who engage in consciousness-raising activities, such as through cultural expression, would often cooperate with Ovídio. While Ovídio already knew some of these people from Cabo Gato, others joined him more recently.

Among the very few slum dwellers who adhered to a kind of political ideology, the leftists especially admired Ovídio for his achievements as a popular leader. Furthermore, people related to Ovídio for having so many connections to outsiders through whom material and intangible resources could be accessed. Finally, as Ovídio frequently came up with ideas for income generation, people turned to him in the hope of acquiring employment.

Creuza and her fellow slum dwellers

Creuza works mostly with women. Through her activities in the fields of health and gender Creuza had managed to establish some supporters in the neighbourhood: mostly women who formed a group around her, albeit evanescent and tenuous, to whom she turned for support and occasional mobilisations. Creuza's connection to Bina was crucial for maintaining this support. Bina was a fellow health agent who lived at the end of Creuza's street in the Jacarezinho. More importantly, she was president of the local *Clube de Mães*, the Mother's Club, of which Creuza was also a board member. This NGO, despite a current lack of meetings and activities, could claim the highest membership rate of the whole area[15], most of its members living in the poorest parts of the community. Creuza turned to these members, all women, when organising some event,

gender-related or otherwise. She addressed the *crentes* with evangelical sayings and greetings, calling them *irmãs* (sisters). She had the children of these women often play with her granddaughter in her roofed front yard. Creuza carefully maintained her friendship with Bina, paying her frequent visits during which they sat together in front of the latter's house. Creuza's position as a leader in the community was for the most part based on women. Even women who were not involved in any community activities knew Creuza as she had approached them on issues of health, family planning and nursing babies.

During most of my stay in Chão de Estrelas, Creuza was regularly accompanied by her younger neighbour Angêlica. Also a health agent, she joined Creuza whenever possible and spoke well of her. As an agent, she was responsible for the patients in the part of Chão de Estrelas where she and Creuza lived. The fact that many people from this particular area supported Creuza in meetings and mobilisations was definitely also due to Angêlica, who, so to speak, was Creuza's sidekick. However, in 2006, Angêlica took a job in another neighbourhood, and was thereby unable to continue her activities with Creuza, who blamed her for her distance.

Zezinho and his fellow slum dwellers

Zezinho cooperates closely with his fellow board members of the Residents' Union. However, every few years, he changes the composition of the board. Those who do not participate – and some hardly ever do – and those who, according to Zezinho, do not care about the community, are removed. 'I, as the president,' he said, 'sometimes change people, because some of the board do not care. And an association only evolves when everybody cares. When the association evolves, the neighbourhood evolves.' Photographs from the past show that, through the years, the people engaged in his activities with the Residents' Union greatly varied.

People who gather around Zezinho are usually those who like to party, taking part in his activities and festivities. An exception are some crentes who participate, but express their disapproval of partying. While he knew some of his entourage from the riverbank slum where he lived before coming to Chão de Estrelas, others he met more recently.

Community leaders and their projects

Introduction

This section presents three cases of community leaders' projects. They illustrate the operational styles of the leaders and how they articulate and consolidate different needs

and aspirations of their fellow slum dwellers. The first case, on Zezinho, displays the tensions a community leader faces between making a living and working unconditionally for the community. This entails finding a balance between self-interest and community interest. Skimming off benefits of a food distribution programme which caters to slum dwellers' need for food, Zezinho makes a living with community work, while trying to steer clear of accusations of being self-interested. The second case introduces Ovídio's urban agriculture project. It describes how Ovídio, centring upon the themes of environmental issues, income generation and being a united community, set out to articulate and consolidate material and intangible needs, and the utopian aspirations of fellow slum dwellers. I point out the "practical inconclusiveness"[16] present in Ovídio's dealings which, besides emphasising the importance of intangible resources and utopian aspirations, embodied an attempt to safeguard and enhance connectivity of him and his fellow slum dwellers. The third case introduces Creuza and her successful efforts to acquire an office. I explain the importance of the office for the 'organisation-scape' (Yanow 1996) of community leaders. After following Creuza on this quest, in which her canny operational style and competition with other community leaders becomes apparent, I show how Creuza articulated the needs and aspirations of her fellow slum dwellers by creating opportunities for connections and recognition. I end each case study with its own conclusions.

Zezinho's food distribution programme: making a living with community work

Food distribution

At 8.00 am on a Saturday, a long cue of people stood waiting in front of Zezinho's house. Most people remained in the shade along the house, as the sun was already strong. It was the day of the food delivery of the programme that Zezinho coordinated under the banner of *Fome Zero* (Zero Hunger), the overarching federal programme that president Lula launched in order to free the poor from hunger. The first food delivery had taken place eight months before. Zezinho had distributed hundreds of sacks of sugar and manioc flour. He also had beans, but these were rotten. Rumours had it that the products were contraband that the federal police confiscated and redistributed to those in need. This Saturday was the second distribution and it was believed that many were to follow. Zezinho's Resident's Union had been selected as a distribution point. It never became clear to me why and how Zezinho was chosen. He never reflected upon this himself, and I think that his willingness to function as a drudge was perhaps a main reason why the programme's organisers chose him. Besides, Zezinho had experience with this work. Years before he regularly coordinated similar food deliveries of expired products provided by a large Brazilian chain of supermarkets. When this programme stopped,

Zezinho kept his contacts there. While the current programme was not actually connected to the old one, many people in Chão de Estrelas saw it as a continuation. Zezinho also coordinated a milk distribution programme for young children in the neighbourhood, under the banner of Fome Zero. Many people regarded the food programme as a logical extension of the milk programme. They referred to the products as 'Zezinho's milk' and 'Zezinho's flour'.

On that Saturday, Zezinho had registered everybody who wanted to apply for food in advance and gave them a ticket. He charged R$3, including a free card for a bingo game he organised. At other times Zezinho had helped with distribution, but today he left it to the other board members of the Residents' Union. Two of them sat behind a desk on the porch of Zezinho's house. A boy at the gate let seven people in at a time. This was not easy, as many were pushing to get in quickly. Elderly people were allowed to enter immediately and rest inside on a wooden bench. Inside, people handed in their ticket to the daughter of a board member, who paid close attention to who entered and who left with what products. Those who did not bring a ticket had to show their identity card at the desk and were checked on a list. Then they were allowed into the meeting room, where another board member, and later Zezinho's half-brother Alcides, gave each a two kilo bag of sugar and a five kilo sack of manioc flour. This was a hard job, because, apart from the heavy lifting, one was subject to the complaints of people who thought the line did not go fast enough or wanted more. A woman who was among the first had her bags brought home by her son. She remained seated next to Zezinho's door with a sad face. Her son, returning, tried to get in again several times, but was sent away each time by the girl who took the tickets. After forty-five minutes of trying, she let him pass and he received another share of food. His mother smiled happily as they left with their goods.

When the majority of registered persons received their foodstuffs, many sacks still remained. A woman from one of the poorest parts of the neighbourhood called Zezinho and quietly proposed something. Zezinho replied with approval. A little later she returned with a group of neighbours who, at showing their identity cards, were allowed to take food. The price, Zezinho said, was now R$2, as the additional R$1 had been for a bingo game that had already finished. At the desk the board members jotted down the names and put the money in a drawer. Some who had registered in advance were still around and complained that they had paid more. The girl who took the tickets immediately reacted: 'Do you want your money back? Alright. Give me the food and you get your money back!' The grumblers opted to leave with their goods. The crowd was gone, but people trickled in until 5 pm. At the end of the day, only few sacks remained.

Skimming off benefits

One night, a week before, Zezinho and I had sat on the porch of his house. As we drank beer from jelly bowls, I asked him if the food programme turned a profit for him. He replied matter-of-factly, while opening another bottle of beer: 'If it did not turn a profit, I would not do it.'

Zezinho skimmed off some of the benefits of the programme. First of all, he kept some of the food. His wife had requested three bags each of sugar and flour. All board members and others who helped were also given some bags.

Secondly, Zezinho made money through the programme. He informed me that he had to pay R$140 to hire a truck, in addition to some transport costs and a R$10 reward for each of the boys who helped loading and unloading. He had also paid for photocopies of people's registration tickets.

He explained how he set the prices: 'It is always 2 or 3. It depends on the goods. In another neighbourhood a guy charges R$5, but he has many goods. If the goods value R$30, will he charge R$2? No, he charges R$5.' Moreover, Zezinho noted that if there are many goods, the truck has to drive twice, which is more expensive.

Zezinho sold some of the remaining goods, while the rest he gave away to people who could not afford to pay. With a thousand participants, I roughly calculated that the project would make him at least R$500. Zezinho confirmed this and added that he paid part of the profit to each board member who helped.

In conclusion: operating between different dimensions

People criticised Zezinho and his food programme for different reasons. There were those who complained about the quality of the goods, moaning that there had not been beans and that the quality of the flour was poor. At the same time, there were people who complained that Zezinho made considerable money off of a project that was for the benefit of the community and should have been free. As many said, 'It is only for Zezinho's pocket.'

Their reactions to the programme were thus ambivalent. Zezinho was not eulogised for initiating the programme, although people mentioned that he "drew" the programme to their community. Yet people expressed a mixture of both criticism and understanding about Zezinho's profiting. It is exactly this mixture that, I contend, shows how people make use of different and contradicting registers when approaching and judging community leaders.

For instance, Hildo accused Zezinho of being self-interested at the cost of the community. Making an eating gesture, bringing his hand to his mouth, he said: 'He eats. He charges R$2 to pay for the truck, the driver and the bags. But he does not spend all this. So, a community leader could lower the price, could he not? But Zezinho does not

do so.' When Hildo made *farofa*[17], he argued that he did not want to use the manioc flour that Zezinho had distributed as it was coarse and of bad quality. But three days later, Hildo was less censorious. He stated that Zezinho could not be blamed for the low quality of the food: 'He cannot be blamed. He receives it and passes it on.'

In spite of their criticism, Hildo and most others who complained kept on coming for the food. They were eager to keep informed about the programme and repeatedly asked around if registration for a new load was already possible. Talking to some women who had received food from the programme, one grumbled about Zezinho: 'When we came to register, he talked about beans, sugar, flour. When we came, there was only sugar and flour.' She added that the waiting time between paying and receiving the goods was very long and that in other places people received more for the same price. An adolescent girl joined in, shouting, 'Look, this should be delivered for free, because it is from the government, from Fome Zero! The government delivers it for free. And Zezinho charges money. A thief, he is a thief! If somebody denounces him, he will be fucked up! That is for sure.'

I asked: 'Zezinho is a community leader, is he not? Does he do things for you, does he grant you favours?' The girl angrily retorted: 'I know that for me he never did anything!' The other women, while taking food, agreed that Zezinho never did anything for them either, just as no other leader had. A local candy seller felt it was against the rules that Zezinho charged money: 'Probably, when the people from the programme find out, they will cancel it.'

'So you think it is bad to pay for the food?' I asked.

'No,' she said, 'because Zezinho puts his house at disposal. Everybody enters and makes the place dirty.' She asked rhetorically: 'And could he not make money with it? Does he not provide work to his neighbours who do the writing and assisting? And he pays them. Will he pay this from his own money? Of course not!'

She was convinced that Zezinho gained money with the programme because he sold products that came for free from Fome Zero. She argued: 'If he did not make an income with this, he would already have stopped with these follies.' She added that, however, everybody always wanted things for free. People had *olho grande* (a big eye), meaning that they always wanted more.

I asked her: 'Do you think it is a good thing that he provides this favour to the community?' 'It is not a favour,' she replied, 'It would have been a favour if he gave it for free, not making any money.' Apart from the money made, she said that Zezinho coordinated the programme because he was a community leader. 'I know him already for a long time,' she said, 'and also his wife Marilene.' She added that Zezinho was no good for his wife, 'because he does not work.'

Zezinho had to find a balance between opposing dimensions. Slum dwellers blended praise, critique and acceptance about what he was doing in the programme. People criticised his activities, yet they came for food. People acknowledged that he had

to make money, yet criticised him for this. They blamed Zezinho for the bad quality of his products, yet they understood that he could not be blamed for this. The women I spoke to in the street argued that Zezinho had never done anything for them, yet they received food from the programme. The candy seller argued that Zezinho worked hard in the programme, yet criticised him for not working.

These contradictory reactions of praise, criticism, understanding and incomprehension display the different dimensions between which Zezinho had to operate, simultaneously working for the community and making a living. I confronted Zezinho, asking what he thought of people who criticised him for keeping part of the money. He responded: 'These people are the same as those who immediately come to get the food. So…' He did not finish his sentence, but made a gesture, moving a finger to one ear and removing another finger from his other ear, indicating that he did not pay attention to what they said. He continued: 'They want everything for free. The community has a big eye. They buy their things for high prices in the supermarket, but in the programme they want everything for free.' He argued that he worked for the money he made. The programme 'turns a profit', but, he argued, the goods are still cheaper than in a shop. In this way, he stated: 'It does not harm anybody'. He added: 'Even if I give it for free, people will talk. They will always talk. I could give it for free. But when I,' he emphasised "I", 'am in need, nobody…' Although not finishing his sentence, the message was clear: nobody would look after him in time of need. Resentfully, he concluded: 'The people want to be helped, but they do not want to help.'

Ovídio's urban agriculture project

The project

This case study presents a community urban agriculture project (*horta comunitária*) coordinated by Ovídio. The project centred upon themes of environmental issues, income generation and an emphasis on being a united community. With the project, Ovídio set out to articulate and consolidate the needs and aspirations of slum dwellers who participated. Furthermore, Ovídio's quest for resources, for which he turned to officials from governmental programmes, NGO workers and politicians, shows how Ovídio gave shape to, what I first considered, a practical inconclusiveness, a disability or unwillingness to arrive at results. Yet, besides emphasising the importance of intangible resources and utopian aspirations next to material resources, this inconclusiveness, I argue, embodied a conclusive attempt to safeguard and enhance connectivity for him and his fellow slum dwellers.

The idea of the project – carried out under the banner of Ovídio's NGO Wake Up People – was to grow vegetables and fruits in order to provide participants with a cheap and healthy contribution to their daily diet. In the spirit of solidarity, the surplus crops

would be sold to neighbours at lower-than-market prices. Additionally, economic advancement was also intended as the project would produce and use its own organic compost and sell the surplus. Initially, profit was to be used to buy necessary materials, but in the long term the project was hoped to become a viable source of income for its participants. Finally, Ovídio claimed that he had arranged support from public bodies in the form of cestas básicas – basic food packages that on many occasions were handed out to the poor.

Beyond the material needs of food produce and income, Ovídio had utopian visions for the project. According to him, the work, carried out on collective plots adjacent to individual ones, would enhance the spirit of solidarity. Furthermore, the project would show others what people of the slum were up to and anticipated a rosy future as long as the project succeeded. Not only that, he contended that the project would benefit the environment, since plants produce clean air in a polluted city. Ovídio argued that the care of plants would set an example for the care of nature and human beings for one another more generally.

The project emerged in the slum, and was an extension of years of thinking, organising consciousness-raising activities and cooperating with similar projects in other neighbourhoods related to vegetable produce and waste recycling. Its main articulator was Ovídio, while other slum dwellers were also involved. Many years before, Ovídio had set up a similar project which had not been successful, due, according to Ovídio, to participants' lack of solidarity.

At its peak, fourteen slum dwellers participated in the newer project. Some joined all of the meetings, workshops and agricultural activities, while others remained more on the sidelines, like one man who in practice only looked after the dog that guarded a collective plot. Some already grew vegetables next to their houses when they joined, while most of the older people remembered agricultural activities from their rural past.

Reasons for participating in the project: different needs and aspirations

Participants joined the project with different needs and aspirations. In part, these needs were of a material character, like food production, an income and *cestas básicas*. In addition, Ovídio granted small favours to some, like singling out the eggs sold by one to visiting officials, or giving out small sums which he had derived from sales of manure samples. A few participants were only in it for the money and the *cestas básicas*. When it became clear soon enough that the project could not provide for these needs in the short term, they quit. While they left, others joined.

Besides such material needs, a range of diverse aspirations motivated people to join. Participants mentioned aspirations of an intangible and sometimes utopian character, like 'doing something for the community', for instance by selling vegetables at low prices to poorer neighbours. They reflected on issues of solidarity, social change, a love

of nature expressed through caring for plants, and environmental ideologies. Others emphasised the importance of educating people. Some, who had a knowledge of agriculture, took the opportunity to be recognised as capable craftsmen. Marta, a young woman who participated, wanted to become a community leader herself and set out to learn from Ovídio. Another man who was mentally challenged was invited by Ovídio to join and greatly enjoyed the appreciation he received for his work on the project. A final motive to join, for some, was loyalty to Ovídio, built upon gratefulness and admiration for his achievements in the past.

Ovídio was the undisputed leader of the project, which was referred to as 'Ovídio's project'. He took decisions alone, visited outsiders on his own, and only informed the other participants as he pleased or when they "demanded" explanations. They mostly consented to Ovídio's coordination of the project. They allowed and even encouraged him to articulate and consolidate their needs and aspirations and use his connections to outsiders in order to keep the project going. Simultaneously, the project had its conflicts and participants had diverging expectations. Some wanted to make money quickly by making and selling compost, while others wanted to set up an environmentally sound community project. Participants frequently accused Ovídio of unaccountability and negligence in keeping them posted.

Pursuing resources and practical inconclusiveness

Since material resources are scarce in a slum, Ovídio employed his connections with people from the outside for things like seeds, tools and money. The project was a clear case of how he established and maintained connections around his thematic interest, as most of the people he turned to worked or were interested in environmentalism and in urban agriculture in particular.

Ovídio tried to link up with existing governmental programmes on different levels. He tried to register his project in an urban agriculture programme of the Governmental Agrarian Research Institute. He also linked up with the federal Fome Zero programme through people he knew from the Municipal Department of Economic Development. Other connections included the municipal plant nursery, the Municipal Departments of Environmental Issues, Health and Education and officials of a regional programme of the Federal Ministry of Agricultural Development. Apart from governmental programmes, he connected with individuals from different NGOs that dealt with urban agriculture, environmentalism and recycling.

Ovídio acquired gardening tools from Fome Zero, plastic tubs from an NGO and, within the slum, two collective plots on the terrains of the Resident's Association and the local health post. He managed to sell compost to the Municipal Department of Environmental Issues – although rumours had it that they never paid – to a district office of the Health Department and an army base. In addition, the Health Department

handed out cestas básicas to the participants as a Christmas present.

Apart from this material help, the majority of assistance promised was of an intangible, immaterial, nature. Moreover, most promises for resources remained undelivered and the majority of Ovídio's visits and negotiations did not result in substantial gains. Most commonly, they resulted in promises of *apoio*, *capacitação* and *assessoria*, which literally boil down to 'helping', 'enabling' and 'advising', of which the exact meaning remains vague. Ovídio clarified that *capacitação* had to do with training and workshops. I was initially concerned about these vague promises, as I thought the project could never materialise. At the time, production only took place in some individual plots, while the soil of the collective plot, even after the participants had cleaned and ploughed it, appeared too poor and remained unused. When I expressed my concerns about spending too much time arranging for capacitação without acquiring what I saw as substantive resources, Ovídio replied that he needed *capacitação* because he first wanted to professionalise the participants. He arranged courses and lectures that a few participants joined, but most of the promises for *capacitação* never materialised.

I followed Ovídio's search for another material resource: construction material for walling a collective plot in order to avoid theft of crops or tools. He received help from a long-time friend, Inácio, who was an ex-councillor and currently worked in a regional programme of the Federal Department of Agrarian Development. He pointed Ovídio to a load of plaster blocks for constructing the wall. These blocks were in the stores of CONAB (*COmpanhia Nacional de Abastecimento*), the National Supply Company, where Inácio knew people. I accompanied Ovídio to the CONAB headquarters, where he looked for a high level official who was mentioned to him by Inácio. Entering her office, Ovídio did not introduce himself, but first asked her if she remembered what Inácio had told her. She remembered and listened with interest to Ovídio. She instructed a subordinate to show us the plaster blocks. Back in the office, the subordinate realised that he had not measured the blocks, so he could not calculate how many Ovídio would need. The high level official jotted down the perimeter of the plot and height of the wall, and commanded the subordinate to measure and calculate everything later. She promised to phone Ovídio the next day and have the plaster delivered to Chão de Estrelas by truck.

On our way back, Ovídio started to fantasise happily about the joy of building the wall with fellow slum dwellers and sharing a good meal afterwards. I felt very uncomfortable with the result of the negotiations, since I had been keen on acquiring the material. To me, the meeting had been inconclusive, as no delivery date had been fixed and the quantity of material to be delivered had not been determined. I was surprised with Ovídio's easy acceptance of the promises made, although I did not dampen his spirits by pointing this out to him.

The official never called, Ovídio never called her and the blocks never arrived. A month later I confronted Ovídio about the missing blocks. At first Ovídio did not react

to my complaint. Finally, he replied muttering that this was the way it always went. He did not seem to be sad at all.

Ovídio engaged in many negotiations of this kind: issues discussed but never given any follow-up, business talked about but never settled on, and promises made but never fulfilled. How is one to understand Ovídio's practical inconclusiveness in these recurrent ritualistic encounters? Inácio, reflecting on the case, stated that a promise made is certainly not a promise fulfilled. When something is promised, he argued, one still had to work hard to make the other deliver. According to him, Ovídio had had to visit CONAB several other times in order to make officials keep their word. However, Ovídio did not do so on this occasion, and did not seem to be worried about the resources that he had failed to acquire. A few days later I learnt that Ovídio had, over the past month, expressed his need of a truck to different people at various institutions, such as the Governmental Agrarian Research Institute, the municipality and an army base where he sold compost. He visited all of these places and talked to many people, but did not manage to arrange for a truck.

In conclusion: material, intangible, and utopian needs and aspirations

I wondered why Ovídio did not try harder to obtain the plaster blocks and the truck and begin producing on the collective plot. Apparently, he was not so much concerned with the acquisition of materials, but with something else. After some time, I realised that in order to estimate the significance of his activities, it was necessary to refrain from looking at them through a utilitarian or economistic lens. This mistake has too often been made in anthropological analyses. Already in 1922, Bronislaw Malinowski showed this pitfall in his book *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, when he discussed the "unnecessary" labour of Trobriand men. Nevertheless, anthropologists ever since have time and again been ensnared by the idea of the resource maximizing individual (Graeber 2001).

Notwithstanding the material needs for food production, income and cestas básicas which were certainly important in Ovídio's project, his practices were equally centred upon intangible and utopian aspirations that called upon ideologies of solidarity and the environment. He enticed participants, engaging them in reflections on solidarity and social change. Moreover, by searching for material and intangible resources – whether or not they were acquired – Ovídio created opportunities for establishing and maintaining connections to outsiders. Think only of the search for a truck that he expressed in different locations: although he achieved nothing tangible, he managed to connect with many different people. By telling the official at CONAB and many others about the project, he gained recognition for himself, his fellow slum dwellers and their activities. Meanwhile, he proudly told participants about his meetings with outsiders, emphasising his good contacts. Furthermore, none of the participants who had stayed after the initial sifting complained about the lack of material resources. Some grumbled

that Ovídio did not achieve what he had promised and others accused him of unaccountability, but none quit. Moreover, they believed the project existed. According to them, the project was not waiting to "materialise". It was already part of their lives.

After some time, the project gradually petered out, although Creuza continued with it for a while after Ovídio set his eyes on other projects. Though it did not ultimately generate viable sources of income, it had temporarily provided participants with a project that catered to their needs and aspirations, as they elaborated on solidarity and its limits, worked for a better environment, pondered on social change and were recognised as good craftsmen and valuable participants. The project had provided a vision for envisaging a better – greener, healthier, more just – life. Furthermore, it had been part of the slum dwellers' endeavours to connect with the world that existed outside the slum.

Creuza's office: organisation-scapes, connectivity and recognition

Zezinho and Ovídio have an office, Creuza has none

'One needs an office,' Creuza said. 'If you want to put up activities, you need an office, do you not?' The office (*sede*) was of great value to community leaders. Here I will analyse the importance of a tangible and visible headquarters to an organisation. I show how the office has, apart from a practical function, also a symbolic dimension. In addition, I disclose how the office is important for community leaders and other slum dwellers in terms of being connected and recognised as persons.

When I first met Zezinho, Rildo had just constructed the office of the Residents' Union, adjoining Zezinho´s house under the same roof. Zezinho proudly showed me around, while enthusiastically telling me how many people would fit in and that he needed big ventilators and chairs to put next to the wooden benches he had. Later, he regularly asked me to take photographs of the office when it was busy, often when people were queued up in front and Zezinho among them, like in the food distribution programme. The office had two signs outside: a red one displaying 'Residents' Union' painted in yellow and another stating that the organisation was part of the milk distribution programme. As Zezinho's house was on the corner of two busy streets, the site of the office was ideal: easy to see and frequently passed. Apart from its use for meetings, deliveries of goods and consulting hours, the office is mostly used as an extension of Zezinho's house where Marilene hangs the laundry, their sons study for school and listen to the radio, and Zezinho throws parties.

Zezinho's office

A year after I first visited the office, Zezinho had arranged twenty second-hand plastic chairs inside. In addition, he acquired three old but firm desks, a filing cabinet and an antique, defective typewriter. He and his fellow board members proudly had me take pictures of their new acquisitions. The filing cabinet was very convenient, according to them, for storing the many documents that they were dealing with, like files from the milk distribution programme, copies of petitions to governmental bodies and other request forms. Still later, Zezinho bought five more desks that were, according to him, for computers. However, no computer ever arrived, the filing cabinet remained unused and the typewriter stood in a corner gathering dust.

Still, I would argue that these items were important. These artefacts were symbols of administration and represented an organisation. They made the site different from other rooms in other houses. A room with chairs, desks, a filing cabinet, a typewriter and a nameplate outside was unmistakably an office. Moreover, these artefacts signalled an active and viable organisation. The posters that Zezinho put on the walls – of the milk distribution programme and of the swimming pool to which he organised picnic trips – added up to the image of an enterprising organisation. This in turn implied that here, an active and successful community leader was at work. The office forms an 'assemblage of

sign-equipment' (Goffman 1959:23), forming a part of the leaders' performative setting. This became very clear when I introduced Zezinho to a Brazilian friend who passed by his house. Zezinho sat lazily on his porch, wearing only shorts and cleaning his teeth with a toothpick. My friend looked at the office, noticed the nameplate and said matter-of-factly: 'Are you a community leader?' He had recognised Zezinho's position through the artefacts that made up the office. The office did not only have a practical value – as a site where activities could be organised – but also a symbolic one – representing a viable organisation with a good leader at its head. The office was well-known and a point of reference in the neighbourhood. Even Creuza, despite her many grievances, admitted that Zezinho had a very nice office.

Ovídio also had an office, the headquarters of Wake Up People. When, in 1988, the *Conjunto Residencial Ovídio Ferreira de Paula* was constructed through his efforts – the part of the neighbourhood that carried his name – he reserved one house as an office. Later, his oldest son and daughter-in-law moved into it, leaving only one room for the office. This room was filled with some chairs, a bookcase packed with donated, rather weathered, books, ranging from Paolo Freire to old government declarations, and some materials related to waste recycling like sheets of hand-made paper hung on a line. In the room Ovídio stored posters, leaflets and mind maps of past projects. The symbol of Wake Up People was painted on the wall outside, a fist rising out of the community. When I wanted to do an official interview with a tape-recorder, Ovídio directed me into the office to tell me the story of the community and his life.

In addition, Ovídio had a fondness for structuring his activities in groups, which he called commissions and linked to Wake Up People. He often referred to meetings as seminars and invented slogans which he repeated many times. In general, he liked to provide an "official sound" to his activities, which endowed him with a certain prestige. He kept an archive with many documents, like newspaper cuttings and programmes of events. The latter always included a list of persons, public bodies and NGOs that took part.

Ovídio had me take a picture of the office, as it was, according to him, one of the "highlights" of the community. The location was not as good as Zezinho's and less known, also because Ovídio did not arrange many activities in the rather small office. He sometimes organised ceremonies and festivities outside, in front, like the anniversary of the community. In addition, he sometimes theatrically claimed that the streets of the community were his office, recalling the street meetings he organised in the past. He still occasionally held street meetings in different parts of the community, during which he underscored his history as its founder.

The office, the building with a nameplate and objects inside of it, is part of the 'organisation-scape', defined by Dvora Yanow as the 'agency of buildings and built spaces, including their siting, landscaping, materials, decor, furnishings' that represent meaning as a symbolic object (1996:157). Yanow studies how symbolic objects

communicate policy meanings, both implicit and explicit in policy language, mission statements and their implementation. Her focus differs from mine, as she looks at deliberately built and designed, well-equipped governmental community offices, while I look at relatively ill-equipped offices of organisations whose construction and activities were often the result of contingent processes. Still, I consider Yanow's theorising on artefacts as symbols of organisation useful here. Whereas she attributes agency to artefacts, I view their agency only in terms of how they are perceived by people. Additionally, whereas Yanow extends the concept of artefacts to language and acts, I limit my focus – for reasons of clarity – to tangible objects. In the case of the office, the building, nameplate, filing cabinet and typewriter, together with the document that proved registration as a juridical person, its letterhead, posters, stamps and a carro de som inviting people to meetings, communicated the message of a successful, active and viable organisation, and thereby a successful community leader. Slum dwellers talk about the 'office of Ovídio' or the 'office of Zezinho' rather than 'the office of Wake Up People' or the 'office of the Residents' Union', respectively. As such, the tangible construction of the office is interwoven with the figure of who is in charge of it; as if the building radiates upon the community leader who takes office in it.

To summarise, the importance of the office has practical and symbolic dimensions and, as the image of a successful community leader, is entwined with leadership performance. Moreover, the office stands for a degree of connectivity to people from both inside and outside of the slum. In the view of outsiders, community leaders are seen as presidents of grassroots organisations and are presumed to represent the voice of the community (see chapter 2). This view, erroneous as it may be, underscores the symbolic importance of offices. Hence, by acknowledging that the office is inseparable from the existence of an active organisation, outsiders conceive of the office as a tangible and visible entry point to the community. Furthermore, for slum dwellers, being active in a grassroots organisation implies connections to both fellow slum dwellers and outsiders.

Community leaders are aware of the importance of organisations. The projects which they set up on behalf of their organisations serve – next to the benefits acquired – as showcases of their work. Leaders often introduced themselves to fellow slum dwellers and outsiders with reference to the organisation in which they held a board position, preferably that of president.[18]

To some it may be surprising that, although dealing with grassroots organisations in the slum, I do not pay much attention to the general history of these organisations. In Recife, many were established in the last years of the military regime through a blend of grassroots mobilisation and governmental policy, both looking – for different reasons – for popular participation and re-democratisation (e.g. Gohn 2001, Etapas 1989, Fernandes 2004). Studies of this history often deal with empowerment and mobilisation of slum dwellers, point out risks of political cooptation, analyse strengths and

weaknesses of existing popular participation or set an agenda for improvement of the latter. However, a historical-political analysis of grassroots organisations is beyond the scope of my study. Envisioning organisation as 'a verb rather than a noun' (Law 1994:249), I am concerned with showing how community leaders set up and reproduce organisations in order to carry out activities, perform leadership and open up possibilities to connect to other people.

In contrast with Zezinho and Ovídio, Creuza did not have an office. She often arranged meetings in a room behind the health post with a door connecting it to the adjacent Centre. It was mainly used by people from both the Centre and the health post for workshops, courses and physical exercises for children and adolescents. The room was well-equipped with chairs, ventilators, cabinets and a small kitchen. Although Creuza often organised meetings here and was on the board of the health post, she could not call this her office as it belonged to the municipality and was used by the Centre, the health post and others. Ovídio regularly organised meetings here, too. He frequently referred to his contribution in establishing both the Centre and the health post. In this way he laid claim to the room. Although he would have never said so, I suspect the issue of Creuza not having her own office played a role in Ovídio's eagerness to use the room.

Here, I show how Creuza, through her canny operational style, managed to acquire her own office, or better, almost her own office. She created an organisation of her own and connected with others, presenting herself as president of the 'Community Association of Chão de Estrelas'.

Creuza's "new" organisation

Creuza started with the revitalisation of a NGO, without an office, that was founded in 1996 and had been inactive in recent years. The NGO was called the Folkloric Association (*Associação Folclórica*) Danadinha na Roça.[19] Creuza re-established the board. She gathered a motley crew of friends, pensioners and the unemployed who had time to attend meetings and would not dispute her leadership, making Angêlica vice-president and herself president.

She approached Célio, the president of the Residents' Association. The Residents' Association, established, according to historical sources by interference of the state, in the beginning of the 1980s (Cabral 2004), had been practically inactive for years. Célio was elected president, mainly, others said, because nobody else wanted to be, since the Residents' Association was greatly indebted to the municipality. Rumours had it that it was an extension of the municipality because its debt made it financially dependent. Apart from Célio, it was unclear who was on its board. Célio had a job outside the neighbourhood and was hardly ever at the office. Under his presidency, the Residents' Association did not engage in activities. Nobody referred to the building as the "office

of Célio" but always as the Residents' Association. The Residents' Association had a big office. It consisted of a large room with many chairs with writing desks attached, a blackboard and shelves against the walls, a hall with a large meeting table, a kitchen, toilets and a big closet. Its organisation-scape had become rather messy of late. The chairs were standing in disorder, the shelves were haphazardly filled with weathered and mouldy paperwork, and leftovers of programmes – like banners and worn-out posters – covered large parts of the walls. Outside, on the once white-chalked walls that surrounded the building, the name of the organisation was painted in red, next to the dented iron gate. The building had an extension, roofed and floored, without walls, surrounded by a yard. In recent times, the place had merely been used for small-scale activities: Ovídio used part of the building's yard for his urban agriculture project, sometimes people threw birthday parties, and adolescents sat chatting here. For a short period, a literacy course for elderly women took place in the office, organised by another NGO. Finally, as described before, soup was distributed daily to the poor.

Creuza argued that she did not want to be part of the board of the Residents' Association, because it was inactive. However, she wanted to use the office for her own organisation. She convinced Célio to have her recently re-established Folkloric Association use the office, arguing that it would result in a symbiosis between the organisations, wherein the Residents' Association's prestige would be enhanced since its building would again be actively used for community matters. She argued that this was good for Célio who had not done anything so far. She suggested to him that they sign all of the documents in both of their names, putting Célio first because of the history of the Residents' Association. However, if they requested money from public bodies, companies or other organisations, Creuza's name would be placed first, since the Residents' Association was widely known to have debts. Creuza argued that they should keep matters separate in their joint venture in order to avoid confusion: she would attend to people who approached her, and Célio would help those who approached him. This agreement certainly worked in favour of Creuza as she was better known as a leader, was present in the neighbourhood far more often and had more time to listen to people.

Changing a folkloric association into a community association

Before long, Creuza changed the name of the Folcloric Association by adding the word 'community'. It was now the Community Folkloric Association (*Associação Comunitária Folclórica*) Danadinha na Roça. Later, Creuza substituted Danadinha na Roça with the name of the community, thus creating the Community Folkloric Association of Chão de Estrelas.

Creuza told me that she wanted a community organisation. She argued that 'community' covered more issues than 'folkloric' and that only using 'folkloric' would

lead to less outside support, as people would think they were only involved in organising São João and the like. Instead, she wanted to work in a field broader than cultural expression. Increasingly, she left out the adjective 'folkloric' in talking about the association, introducing it as the Community Association of Chão de Estrelas. Creuza had invented a name, created an organisation for the benefit of the community and arranged an office in the inactive Residents' Association.

Constructing a successful association

In the past the Folkloric Association organised dances and other kinds of cultural festivities for São João and carnival. Although in the beginning ideas had been exchanged about how Creuza's association could work on folkloric themes like music, dances, plays and clownery, Creuza set out her main objectives for the organisation at the first board meeting. She was well aware of the symbolic value of grassroots organisations for establishing connections with outsiders and argued that the board members had to work hard in order to be noticed by public bodies. She emphasised: 'We have to spread our name in order to have the public bodies perceive of us. First it will be difficult, but once we have been noticed, money will come'. At meetings it was important to see people and be seen. She mentioned the example of another organisation she knew that had managed to get subsidies in this way. Her board members enthusiastically repeated her ideas and confirmed that they should leave their name in all places and do everything for free at the beginning in order to spread their reputation. A board member responded happily that they would have to be everywhere and suggested that if he knew of a children's party he would go there and say: 'Hey, you need to get a clown at Danadinha'. At that point Creuza brusquely interrupted that they should not go and find people, but instead leave their name and become known so that people would come to look for them. The man corrected himself and repeated Creuza's words.

Creuza started to connect the name of the organisation to activities she was already involved with. She incorporated the soup project as a core activity of her association and she related it to her work at the health post. When her colleagues at the health post needed financial resources, Creuza proposed to send a request for support to a public body in the name of her association, 'because it is more feasible with the name of the organisation on it than with our [personal] names.' When her colleagues agreed, she continued: 'Look, I will talk to Célio. I am going to put the Residents' Association on it as well.' She grabbed a piece of paper and pretended that it was the request, saying: 'So I put here Residents' Association and here Community Association'. She corrected herself: 'But the Community Association first.' She pointed her finger at the upper left corner of the paper and emphasised: 'The Community Association always in the first place.'

At a meeting in the office of the Residents' Association the benefits of Creuza's achievements became clear. She introduced her association to a present municipal official. She admitted that the office in fact belonged to the Residents' Association and continued: 'But we operate in it. Like one association within the other. It may happen that the Residents' Association dies and the Community Association stays here, because, to be honest, the Residents' Association is very much out-of-date. It exists, but only in name.' She concluded, pointing around the messy office: 'You could say that there is nothing here, that the Residents' Association does not do anything.'

Creuza put up posters in the office. These posters were – like the ones Zezinho had in his office – the obvious symbols of a successful organisation. They advertised all kinds of free activities organised by the joint venture of Residents' Association and Community Association. Besides the soup distribution and the urban agriculture project Creuza had taken over from Ovídio, the posters advertised activities for São João and carnival and courses in embroidery, professionalisation, general knowledge, literacy and *capoeira*. Creuza admitted that the first two were not yet active, and the course of general knowledge had not materialised, although a time schedule was announced on the posters. The other two, literacy and *capoeira*, consisted of the young man who sometimes hung around in the office with a group of adolescents. Creuza also added the group of adolescents that her colleagues at the health post coordinated as another activity. She emphasised to her board members the importance of the posters: 'Because people who enter here, go directly to the posters.' She walked to one of the bright coloured announcements, pretended to read the words for the first time and continued: 'They immediately want to know what is going on here, which courses.'

Just as Zezinho had chairs, desks, a filing cabinet and a typewriter, Creuza fetishised the furniture and materials in her office. One of the first things she did after gaining access to the office was clean the meeting table and put chairs around it. When others used the building, she prohibited them to take away the chairs around the table. She frequently insisted that some of the furniture did not actually belong to the Residents' Association, but to the Folkloric Association and thus to her Community Association.

Burying the hatchet at the Christmas party

One of the first events Creuza organised at the office was a Christmas party for community leaders and other active residents. Creuza came up with the theme of the night: fraternisation (*confraternização*), in the name of reconciliation among the leaders. She discussed the theme with Célio, who agreed. Creuza tactically related the theme in preparatory meetings with Célio to their relationship, noting that they should 'respect one another' and treat each other as equals. In Célio's absence she explained to her board members that she had learnt that it was better to avoid arguing and quarrelling and would find her way with Célio.

Most of the invitees attended the Christmas party, an emotional event where people talked about burying the hatchet. Creuza, opening the night, suggested that those present stop competing once and for all and cooperate instead. She proudly stated that she organised the event together with 'Célio, the president of the Residents' Association' and added: 'and I am president of the Community Association, which functions here in the same office. Thank God it works fine.'

The fraternisation party

Connectivity and recognition

When Creuza managed to lay her hands on an office, other community leaders reacted negatively. When she included a case of legalising property rights in the activities of her association, Ovídio became angry with her. The case was about a few dozen families living in small booths which had been designed as a marketplace. The families did not have deeds to the land or the houses and did not pay real estate taxes. When suddenly charged for taxes, they sought Creuza's help, whom they knew in her capacity as a health agent.[20] Creuza promised to take care of the problem through her new association. Ovídio took offence and argued that Creuza should deal with issues like this through the Health Group of the health post. Angrily he grumbled: 'Now, she could

have done it with the Health Group. Because she works in the area with health and land property. This is all related to health. But now she is doing it in the name of her association'. He claimed that her association – which he considered to be only for folkloric purposes – did not have anything to do with issues of land rights, while the Health Group did. After quarrelling with Ovídio, Creuza decided on a new route. She would work on the issue with the Comul, where she, although no longer *titular* at the time, still held a position on the board.

The disagreement between Creuza and Ovídio, I argue, did not make sense when viewed through their interests in health and folklore. Although provoked, I kept my mouth shut during discussions whether land rights were more related to health or to folklore. The conflict made far more sense when understood in terms of issues of prestige, recognition as a leader, and connectivity. Creuza wanted the land issue to become a big case for her association, as it would enhance the image of an active organisation with a successful and well-connected leader. In the case of success, Creuza could lay claim to the achievement. In the case of failure, her attempt would still be lauded. Opposing Creuza, Ovídio wanted the issue to be part of the Health Group in which he, next to Creuza's directorship, was a board member. Eventually, Creuza categorised it as an issue for the Comul and Ovídio preferred this to granting it to Creuza's new association. In this way, Creuza did not play into Ovídio's hands – who never mingled with the Comul – and kept her say in the matter. Still, she avoided the risk of competing with Ovídio who regarded her association with suspicion. The possible critical reactions of fellow Comul members may have also played a role, as the link between the legalisation case and Comul responsibility was hard to deny.

Connectivity and recognition were at stake not only for Creuza, but also for the other participants in the re-established association. Creuza had already emphasised the importance of making the association known to outsiders. Furthermore, when Creuza initiated a discussion about the association's core issues, the participants mentioned all kinds of cultural expression they might engage in. Several of them laid their reputations on the line. One man was a grey-haired musician in his fifties whose glory days had long passed, and had moved down in the world. He owned a ramshackle recording studio where, as I witnessed, he was not able to use much equipment simultaneously as it would blow the fuses. He repaired and sold second-hand furniture for a living. Nevertheless, he claimed to be one of the first residents of the area and talked about the cultural festivities he had organised for many years. He continued about his renown as a singer, guitar player and percussionist and dropped the names of famous musicians he had performed with. During Carnival, he boasted, people from all over the city wanted him to join their bands.

Another woman was supposed to give the embroidery course. She presented herself as highly qualified for this. A couple of men, long unemployed, offered to clean the office and water the plants. They were frequently around, sweeping the floor, and

providing information about the association's activities or Creuza's whereabouts to anyone who asked. They became, in a way, the guardians of the office. Participants felt they were engaged in important matters, as they discussed issues like community events and electoral politics during meetings. The participants of the association, as I see it, sought both recognition for who they were as individuals, and connections with fellow slum dwellers and outsiders. A board member emphasised the importance of recognising the association as a whole when he argued that it was good to re-establish the old organisation because of its well-known history: 'The association has a history. Many people already know it. It will be difficult to let them know a new organisation. But the association already has a history of activities.'

In conclusion: epilogue on the office

I do not know if Creuza's association is still active or if it was ever a viable organisation. However, my argument does not lie in telling the success story of a community leader skyrocketing herself and her community through the vehicle of a grand "oiled machine" type of grassroots organisation. Neither do I want to focus on the organisational strengths and weaknesses of the association.

Instead, I understand Creuza's efforts to strategically manoeuvre herself towards having an office as a quest to be recognised and well-connected. She acquired a proper office as a symbolic artefact, which communicated the image of a viable organisation with a successful leader. This enhanced her prestige as a community leader and created opportunities for her and her fellow slum dwellers to establish connections and be recognised along with their needs and aspirations. Creuza had given shape to slum politics.

Notes

[1] Note that at that time anyone who did not agree with the dictatorship was denounced as 'leftist'.

[2] I refer to "the government" without further elaboration. During the military dictatorship the government was highly centralised. Decentralised governmental bodies were also centrally directed. For the sake of clarity, I will not go into details and will refer simply to "the government".

[3] Up to the present, land titling has never been a major issue in Chão de Estrelas. Probably this will continue to be the case until real estate developers, with the advent of urban growth, gain interest in the site.

[4] This map is based on *Carta de Nucleação Centro* (FIDEM 2000) and adapted by Roberto Silva de Souza for the thesis of Augusto Cabral (2004).

[5] PFL = *Partido da Frente Liberal* [Party of the Liberal Front]

[6] I know that the persons in this book would love to have their pictures in it.

[7] *Crente* literally means believer, but is only used to indicate those who adhere to evangelist or Protestant beliefs.

[8] Popular festival, originally for Saint John (São João), on the night of the 23rd of June.

[9] In fact there are two health posts in Chão de Estrelas, an old one and a new one. The old one was known as *posto médico* (health post) and the new one – recently founded – as 'Irmã Terezinha'. Creuza's name and fame were linked up to the first health post.

[10] Being *nervoso* (nervous) is a common complaint and diagnosis among the poor in Brazil. See Scheper-Hughes (1992) and Duarte (1986) on this so-called "physical-moral disturbance".

[11] See chapter 8 on the ambiguous relations between slum dwellers and the police

[12] Game in which children have to hit a tied up bag of candy with a stick while blindfolded.

[13] *Amigo Secréto*: game in which you anonymously buy somebody a gift

[14] A car topped with speakers for casting messages and music, usually at a very loud volume.

[15] This became clear time and again at OP meetings, where every group's vote was "weighed" according to the number of members present.

[16] My thanks to an anonymous American Ethnologist-reviewer for this term, who commented upon an early version of this text.

[17] *Farofa*: a mixture of manioc flour, salt and water. It exists in many varieties. In restaurants *farofa* is often made of toasted manioc flour mixed with onions, spices and small chips of dried meat (*charque*, jerky) or bacon. In Chão de Estrelas people usually did not toast the flour, but merely mixed it with hot water and salt, resulting in a kind of porridge.

[18] I am aware of the resemblance with MONGOism, the usually negatively labelled phenomenon in which everybody wants 'My Own NGO' in order to raise funding and create salaried jobs for the director and his relatives and friends. However, as I am not concerned here with integrity of NGO-members, but rather with describing the activities of community leaders and other slum dwellers, I do not delve into MONGOism or comparable theories.

[19] *Danadinha na Roça* literally means "the little damned girl in the countryside" and basically refers to a naughty country girl. It is quite common for organisations or projects that work with cultural expression to carry names that relate to the countryside, since according to tradition many forms of cultural expression emerged there.

[20] This was not a very dramatic event. Of course, it was another blow to those who lived in one of the poorest parts of the area, but cases like this happened more often and were always resolved in some way, often by simply passing into oblivion.

4

The economy of the margins: scarce employment, connections and social use of money

I am impressed by their fortitude, vitality, resilience and ability to cope with problems which would paralyse many middle-class individuals.
- Oscar Lewis, 1965

Living in the margins

A morning with Raquel en Hildo

At the hottest time of day, the end of the morning, Hildo and Raquel were in Raquel's mother's house. *Dona* Benedita, Raquel's mother, lived next door to them, and their houses were connected through a back passage. Hildo, a forty years old *moreno*, was preparing lunch. The smell of fresh coriander penetrated the air, punctuated by the rhythm of his knife on the carving board. Hildo, wearing only shorts, also cut carrots, onions, and sweet peppers. He stirred the old and greasy pots on the cooker in which black beans and rice were boiling. It was quite remarkable that Hildo prepared food, as this was generally considered a woman's task. Only single men had to prepare their own food, that is, if they did not eat with their mother. Hildo learnt how to cook when he had a permanent job in the canteen of a slaughterhouse. Since 2001, he received an allowance of one minimum wage, as he had been declared unfit to work due to mental health problems after his brother, one of his nine siblings, though another had died as an infant, was killed in a fight.

Raquel, three years younger than her husband, sat on one of the wooden chairs, doing homework for a course on nursing. Her skin was darker than Hildo's. Her frizzy hair was held in place loosely with gel and a rubber band. In contrast to Hildo, she could read and write. While doing her homework, she talked all the time, with a slight lisp as she was not wearing her dental plate. At the same time, she repeatedly sent the dogs out of the house and kept an eye on their seven year old adopted son playing outside with his kite. When Hildo walked out to get some things in their own house, she moved to the cooker and stirred the pots. When stirring, one could see her arms bedecked with the colourful bracelets of the Holy Virgin which, she was convinced, brought her good luck. However, in terms of employment they had brought her little

luck. Raquel had never found a job. Currently, she was studying to become a nurse and maintained contacts with the owner of a nearby private health post, hoping he could offer her a job.

Eighty-six year old Benedita sat – as always at this time of the day – in the old ragged armchair with one armrest left, the only comfortable chair in the house. The last few months, her health had been very poor. She suffered from diabetes and other age related complaints. As usual, I was the only one who paid attention to her stories which most of the time were about other people's horrible accidents, mortal illnesses and other gory accounts of the mutilations, deformations, and sometimes supernatural events that had been part of her life. Because of her work in a textile factory, she was the beneficiary of a minimum wage pension which she shared with Raquel and Hildo.

Between the houses was an annexe from Raquel and Hildo's house where their oldest son, nineteen-year-old BJ, and his wife Roberta, ten years his senior, lived. BJ and Roberta, although managing their own household, also often joined in the larger family meals. Thus, the different generations of the family were very much together. Benedita had had nine children, of whom the four who were still alive regularly passed by. BJ often complained to me about his grandmother, his mother, and aunt always interfering with his business.

It was harder for BJ to find a permanent job than it had been for his father, since employment opportunities had diminished with changes in the economy. As a solution, he started his own business as a mineral water vendor. Roberta, who had enjoyed a good education outside the slum, worked as a hygiene inspector for the municipality.

Raquel and Hildo also had adopted a boy who was twelve years younger than BJ. Raquel told me that the biological mother had dropped the child at her door. She considered him 'a gift of God' and said that she could not do anything else but accept him.

In the last few years Hildo and Raquel prepared their food in Benedita's place. Their own cooker was ramshackle and they often ran out of gas. Besides, everyday Raquel looked after her mother for half of the day. The other half day, when Raquel was away for her course, Raquel's sister who lived nearby took care of Benedita.

Today they had run out of pasta. Hildo asked me whether I liked farofa instead. When I replied positively, he asked Raquel to make it. She protested that she did not know how, but with the guidance of Hildo and her mother she managed. She said that she had never learnt how to cook, as Hildo liked it a lot and always took over when she started cooking.

Hildo, who prepared food and used medicines to suppress his mental problems, was considered a fool by his fellow slum dwellers. They did not use this term in a negative way, but more as if it was an objective feature of Hildo's personality. Although considered a fool, Hildo could certainly not be considered a *gigolô*, as I explain later in this chapter.

Living the economy in its margins: outline of the chapter

The previous chapters have shown that slum politics is grounded in slum dwellers' particular needs and aspirations, which emerge in the precarious and provisional life in the slum. In this chapter, I analyse the marginalised situation of slum dwellers through detailed studies of how they organise their lives. The chapter focuses on their economic needs and aspirations, and the ways they understand and live in the current economy. The life histories, I present here, provide windows onto the economic dynamics of living in the slum, the slum itself being a sphere where economic crises hit hardest and economic growth arrives in a decelerated and decreased form. These life histories display the uncertain and exploited situation of the slum dwellers, saturated with transactions that are simultaneously petty and of vital importance. As a result of their marginalisation, I argue, slum dwellers live the economy in ways which differ from modern, rationalist, understandings of the economy, in which capitalist notions of individualised growth, profit, and progress prevail. Notions like economy, employment, money, family, social contacts, and the future are perceived differently in the slum. Instead, slum dwellers rely more on connections – with family, neighbours, and outsiders – than on individual career trajectories, they are more concerned with surviving than with making progress (cf Goldstein 2003). In these life histories, economic changes over time and differences between generations come to the fore. To make sense of the ways in which slum dwellers organise their lives, I relate their stories to processes in the economy at large and the effects those have on lives of slum dwellers, with regard to issues of employment, social security, and gender. Additionally, I touch upon the role the drugs trade plays in the economy of the slum.

The chapter ends with specific attention to *conhecimento*, connections, social embeddedness, and the use of money to concretise social relations. These are central to how slum dweller manage their economies. As such, this chapter presents the economy of the slum as an economy based on a heterogeneous modernity providing a space for both modern and non-modern needs and aspirations. Before presenting the life histories, I introduce some reflections on the methodology used for this chapter.

Life histories and the economy in the slum

Coming to grips with the economic dimensions of life in the slum calls for qualitative long term fieldwork. Even though slum dwellers in Recife are not at all shy to talk about their income, conducting surveys of jobs and salaries does not produce much insight into the connections and transactions people engage in to shape their lives. Studying how slum dwellers live the economy, I contend, calls for a need to pay attention to practices that are usually silenced, hidden, or neglected (cf Gibson-Graham 2005,

Escobar 1998). The economy of the slum is highly fragmented and dynamic. Only a small percentage of slum dwellers are permanently employed, many rely on temporary jobs or are self employed with fluctuating incomes. Many maintain all kinds of sidelines and fringe benefits. Moreover, many live without actually making money but eking out a living through non-monetary transactions with family members, neighbours, or others, sometimes as simple as helping others in exchange for food or exchanging gifts of unequal value. In addition, practices like growing vegetables and fruits, having livestock, sharing products, claiming mental illnesses in order to gain free public transport, and sending children to school so they may have the free meals provided are important parts of the economic organisation of slum dwellers' lives.

In the life histories I present, I show the relationship between people's practices and larger economic processes, with regard to employment, social security, and gender. I do not reduce slum dwellers' stories to mere illustrations of larger economic theorisations, but document the, often murky, dynamics of these stories, containing hard-to-belief episodes and incongruities. The life histories I present do not consist of smoothly streamlined ethnographies, but rather unadorned descriptions of people's everyday practices (cf Lewis 1959, 1965). Doing so, I argue, they provide good insight into how slum dwellers organise their lives in past and present circumstances, and cope with predicaments they face. The chapter does not provide a complete analysis of all economic practices in the slum or all financial flows going in and out of it. Instead, it accounts particular ways of understanding and living the economy which cannot be understood from the perspectives of prevailing economic analyses.

Live life, thrive and survive

Four different stories

This chapter presents four different life histories. First, I continue with the story of Hildo and Raquel. While Hildo receives an allowance which he supplements with odd jobs, Raquel is smart and streetwise in finding solutions to their limited money supply, a risk exacerbated by their easy spending. Next, I introduce the story of BJ and Roberta. They have a relatively high income, from BJ's work as a water vendor and Roberta's job for the municipality, but spend it easily. I return to BJ and Roberta and their expenses at the end of the chapter as a good example of, what I see as, the social use of money. The third story is of *dona* Maria, a sixty-five-year-old lady who lives on a small widow's allowance. She lives very thriftily, although she does not economise on presents for family and friends. In the fourth story, I introduce the life of fifty-eight-year-old *dona* Mercês, who combined many different small-scale activities in order to survive. Currently, she is a candy seller and hairdresser, and financially supported by her daughters. She is known to give away from the little she has and does volunteer work as

a *rezadeira*, praying for people's curing.

Each life history is, of course, unique in itself. At the same time, many elements in the different stories are common to all. What always struck me, even after hearing so many stories, was the factual way people recalled how they coped with misery, makeshift solutions, and constant risks of breakdown. Slum dwellers did not see these as exceptional suffering, for them these were the regular facts of life. The struggle to survive always demonstrated the myriad economic activities, often precarious and short-lived, which people engaged in during their lives.

Hildo and Raquel: living from relief and being streetwise

Before he worked in the canteen of a slaughterhouse, Hildo's experience with cooking started when he had his own little business as a vendor of *tapioca* (cassava root) dough. After that, he found employment in a nearby Coca-Cola warehouse. Finally, in the slaughterhouse he worked with a *carteira assinada* which enabled him to apply for relief after he was declared unfit to work. *Carteira assinada* means "signed card" and refers to an official work card. On a work card, the employer registers date of hiring, salary, and function. The document guarantees the worker's institutional rights to minimum wage, paid holidays, days off, an additional month's salary per year – called the thirteenth month – and social security for the employee and his family in case of illness, disability, death, or imprisonment. In addition, through the work card, female workers are granted maternity leave, day-care for their children, and breaks to breastfeed. At sixty-five and sixty respectively, men and women can retire and receive a pension if they have completed fifteen years of registered work. They can retire earlier if they can prove thirty or thirty-five years of registered work.[1] Employer and employee contribute approximately 12% and 8% respectively of the total wage (Lovell 2000, Goldstein 2003, Ministério da Previdência Social 2007).

Hildo never recovered from the shock of his brother being shot dead. The only way for him not to become "nervous"[2] – as he called it – was by taking a mix of prescribed medicines. His allowance, of one minimum wage, was at constant risk of being withdrawn, as doctors carried out regular check-ups with paradoxical results. Once a doctor had declared him fit again, resulting in discontinuation of relief. Hildo and Raquel re-applied and worked through an enormous amount of red tape in order to regain the relief. When relief was cut, they suffered a severe lack of money and turned to their family members, most of them living in Chão de Estrelas and an adjacent neighbourhood, to chip in for groceries.

Aside from his relief, Hildo made some money as a garbage collector, a sideline job that he had been doing for much of his life. With his handcart, he fetched construction debris from people who were rebuilding and brought it to a scrap yard. People paid him for taking away their waste and the scrap yard paid him for the metals he delivered. The

families where he picked up scrap generally were better-off families, partly in richer neighbourhoods, partly in slums. Sometimes people requested his help in other jobs as well, such as cleaning the area around the house, or weeding and pruning the garden. In this way, fifteen years ago, he had established a valuable connection with an elderly lady who regularly provided him with chores and offered some financial help when needed, for example to fix his cart when it broke down. Hildo argued that she acted out of a kind of charity, as she was evangelical. He also borrowed and received money from other people whom he knew through these odd jobs.

Unlike her husband and mother – Benedita worked for many years in a huge textile factory with a work card – Raquel never had a job in her life, except for some months when she sold newspapers at the traffic lights. She told me that she was fired because the company had a new owner who was gay and wanted to work with men only. However, Raquel contributed to the family income in a way I label as streetwise. Like many others, she arranged a bus pass for 'mentally deficient' people that allowed her to travel for free. This card is usually issued after a medical diagnosis. Some years ago Raquel had suffered from panic attacks and gained the card. At check-ups at the doctor's she claimed that she still felt ill and kept the card. She even acquired a card with a right to a companion, as such allowing a relative or friend to join her for free. As Hildo, due to his own mental problems, also had such a card, the family spent little on public transport. Likewise, Raquel arranged inscription for a daily litre of milk for her adopted son in Zezinho's programme, although the boy was actually too old to take part.

She was a good friend of Zezinho, whom she already knew before the resettlement to Chão de Estrelas, and often attended his meetings. Raquel always found a listening ear to her problems and plans in Zezinho. She was less connected to the other leaders. She participated in some activities of Ovídio, where she enjoyed the nostalgic stories about the past, although often disagreeing with the versions Ovídio told. She did also sometimes join Creuza in activities related to health care.

The nursing course Raquel followed included a practical period. Every working day, Raquel had classes at school and a practical in one of the city's hospitals. Combined with travelling she spent on average ten hours a day on this. It was a paid course, but she thought it was worth the investment. She argued that she was sure of getting a job as soon as she finished. She concluded with a beaming face: 'Just imagine. I will have a job!' She did voluntary work in her house weighing babies and toddlers for a Catholic programme concerned with malnutrition. After my fieldwork, in 2008, I learnt that she got a job as a health agent in Chão de Estrelas.

Raquel and Hildo had relatively high expenses. Hildo's medicines were covered by social security, but Benedita also frequently needed medicines, another major expense. In addition, stemming from his time at the slaughterhouse canteen, Hildo preferred good food. He did not like low quality groceries. He and Raquel bought most products

at the local supermarket, many times on credit[3], as Hildo thought these groceries superior to these of the marketplace which they never visited. However, as these products are more expensive, they spent a relatively large amount of their budget on food. Finally, they readily purchased "luxury" items like a DVD-player and a television – which they paid for in monthly allotments – and used plenty of electricity, resulting in high bills.

BJ and Roberta: good income and high expenses

BJ's official name was Hildo, like his father, but he was mainly known by his nickname. It had been very hard for him to find employment after finishing secondary school. Finally, he had approached a truck driver who delivered mineral water at shops in the neighbourhood and started working as a mobile water vendor. He stored the weekly deliveries of plastic twenty litre bottles, in his parent's house and transported them to people's houses on a carrier bike. Sometimes, he borrowed another bike from a friend with a tape player and loudspeakers on it, which he used for publicity, riding around while his messages blasted from the speakers.

BJ and Roberta had a relatively good income for slum dwellers. BJ and I calculated that he made an average of one minimum wage per month. Roberta gained R$450 with a permanent job, with a work card, as hygiene inspector for the municipality. She visited houses and checked for mosquitoes, rats, and other health dangers. Roberta comes from a relatively better-off family: 'not rich, but bem de vida', meaning "well in life" or "better-off".

BJ and Roberta had met the previous year, when they were both in therapy, recovering from mental health problems in a governmental institution. BJ had tried to commit suicide by overdosing on his father's medicines when he was sixteen. In the institution, he underwent therapy for depression. When Roberta and BJ met, BJ was still living with the mother of his first son, though they broke up soon afterwards. Shortly after, Roberta became pregnant with BJ's child. Roberta's family broke contact, according to BJ, because they did not want her to marry a poor guy. Only one uncle – the poorest member of the family who lives in an adjacent neighbourhood – stayed in contact with Roberta. BJ and Roberta started to live together in Chão de Estrelas. Like most couples in Chão de Estrelas they did not marry, but do refer to each other as husband and wife. As Raquel lucidly explained, from the moment of pregnancy onwards you become man and wife. Besides, she argued, a poor slum dweller cannot afford the costs of an official marriage.

While BJ and Roberta had a reasonable income compared to other slum dwellers, their expenses were also relatively high. Their highest costs – extremely high when compared to other slum dwellers – were their telephone bills. This was due both to BJ's work and their habit of using the phone frequently. People would phone BJ's house for

water while BJ was out with his carrier bike. Roberta, who was at home due to her leave, would answer the phone and call BJ on his cell phone to pass on the message. Calling from landline to cell phone is expensive in Brazil, especially during the day. BJ would call me many times on my cell phone, often just to know where I was or to make sure I had not forgotten about an appointment. When I was in Holland, he continued calling me once in a while. The monthly bills of his residential phone were always over R$140 and once reached R$270. In addition, he spent much money using his cell phone, frequently buying new credit. BJ and Roberta shared electricity and water connections with Raquel and Hildo and split the bills. Roberta had a workers' pass from her work, which enabled her to travel for half fares, reducing the cost of public transport considerably. Finally, their expenses on food were not high: they ate the "regular" food: basically beans, rice, and pasta with a bit of salad and meat. In addition, they frequently ate with Hildo, Raquel and Benedita.

Selling water

One morning, BJ had something to show me in his house. Squeezing myself into the narrow alley, avoiding the mud with my flip-flops and dodging two skimpy dirty dogs I

arrived at the one-and-a-half meter high hole in the wall that served as the entrance to the house. The only room was crammed with a double bed, a cupboard, and BJ's newest acquisition: a cradle covered with blue sheets and a blanket for his soon to be born son. BJ and pregnant Roberta proudly looked at me as they stood next to the cradle. At that time I did not realise that the birth of their son would soon form a key event in my understanding of how they organised their life.

Maria: living thriftily from a widow's allowance

It is a five minute walk from BJ's place to Maria's home. She, sixty-five years old, has a relatively white skin and grey hair that used to be fair, hence her nickname *galega*, used to indicate somebody with light hair and a light skin. In the morning, when it is still cool, she would sweep the floors of her house. Meanwhile, the old CD-player played her favourite tune reminding her of her time as a domestic worker.

Quando eu chego em casa	*When I arrive home*
Com um sorriso, ela me espera com carinho	*Smiling, she awaits me with affection*
Pergunta se já pode pôr a mesa	*She asks if she can already lay the table*
Que o jantar está quentinho	*That dinner is ready (hot)*
Passa para mim todos recados que atendeu na minha ausência	*She gives me all the messages that she received during my absence*
Na hora da novela, respeito o gosto dela	*At the hour of the soap series, I respect her taste*
e assisto sem querer com paciência	*and, without wanting it, I watch patiently*
Antes de dormir entro em meu quarto	*I enter my bedroom before sleeping*
E aquela cama tão cheirosa	*That bed smelling so good*
Foi ela quem brigou para fazer minha noite mais gostosa	*It was she who worked hard to make my night more comfortable*
Cuida bem de mim e é por isso que eu não sinto solidão	*She takes good care of me and that is why I do not feel alone*
A gente nunca briga, ela é uma boa amiga	*We never fight, she is a good friend*
E eu pra ela sou um bom patrão	*And I want to be a good boss for her*
Doméstica	*Domestic worker*
Tenho muito que te agradecer	*I have so much to thank you for*
Doméstica	*Domestic worker*
O Brasil inteiro ama você	*The whole of Brazil loves you*

(song by Tayrone Cigano)

Maria was born in 1941 in São Vicente Férrer, a little village in the countryside at the border between the states of Pernambuco and Paraíba. She grew up on a farm where her father grew coffee and sugarcane. Everybody had to work hard. She used to pick coffee and cut sugar cane. Scars from sharp cane leaves on her arms and the leathery skin from permanent sunburn stand testament to this labour. She never went to school and was illiterate.

She married in the village and had two sons. When she was twenty-five years old, the family moved to Recife. A rapid process of industrialisation, largely based on import-substitution, resulted in increased employment opportunities in the cities, while droughts struck the rural areas. Between the 1950s and 1970s, many people migrated from rural areas to Recife to find a job in a factory or construction company (De Melo 1978).[4]

Maria's husband went to Recife first, assisted by a cousin who already had migrated and helped him to find a house and work. He found permanent employment as a construction worker with a work card, and the family moved to a rented house on one of the hillside slums of the city. Before long they bought a house on another hill. Here Maria had a front window shop, where she sold beer, cachaça, and candy.

As the house was not well located – they had no water connection and had to descend the steep hillside to fetch water – they decided to move to another place. They built a shack in the slum of Cabo Gato, next to the shack of Ovídio, with whom she became good friends. Here, they lived with their four children, all sons. At this time Maria became a housewife.

Maria's husband also had three children with a lover. He registered them in Maria's name in order to be able to gain an extra family allowance from the construction company, without Maria knowing it. Shortly after moving to Cabo Gato, her husband left Maria and his family and moved in with his lover. After some time, another man moved in with Maria and became her second husband. She had two daughters with him.

When in the beginning of the 1980s the struggle for resettlement started in Cabo Gato, Maria actively joined in the activities led by Ovídio. While her second husband preferred a financial compensation above a new house, Maria did not agree: 'Many men wanted financial compensation, for doing I do not know what with the money. But the women wanted houses' (see chapter 1). She managed to get a house in Chão de Estrelas which was registered in her name. Her husband still preferred money and tried to sell the house. One day Maria was at home alone when potential buyers arrived. She had sent them away, exclaiming: 'Is there any sign saying "for sale" here? No? That is because the house is not for sale!'

One night, in 1983, her second husband disappeared. He said that he had to work the night shift, gathered some clothes in a plastic bag and went away, never to return again. At the company she discovered that her husband had resigned and had taken all

the money he was entitled to. Maria searched everywhere for him. Like her first husband, her second husband had a lover. Maria went three times to her house, but her husband was not there. She put his picture on lampposts and trees in the city centre and announced his vanishing in a television programme about "dead and disappeared". When, twenty-three years later, I asked her whether she really would have liked him to come back to her, she replied: 'I would have liked it if he wanted to keep the house. If he had not changed his mind, I would not have liked it.'

When Maria acquired her house in Chão de Estrelas, her sons had all married and moved out. She remained with her two daughters – a toddler and a baby – and without any income. She started as a domestic worker. 'I washed clothes, cleaned.' She did this work in nearby more affluent slums. Her neighbours helped her, as she left the girls with them when she went to work. At night she always came to sleep at home. For six years, she woke up before sunrise, did chores in her own house and went to work in the houses of others. Maria summarised this period by plainly stating: 'I suffered a lot.'

Then her father sold part of his land and bought eight houses in a slum in Rio de Janeiro: one house for him and each of his children. Maria went to live in the house that she got from her father, with her two daughters, leaving her oldest son in charge of her house in Chão de Estrelas. She lived in Rio for two-and-a-half years, working as a domestic worker again. One night Maria talked to me about her stay in Rio de Janeiro. She compared Rio with Recife and mentioned that she liked Recife because of its beaches while asking: 'In Rio, they do not have any beaches, do they?' It is telling of her life there that she apparently never had made the less than ten kilometres to Rio's world famous beaches.

In Rio she had a fling, became pregnant and gave birth to a third daughter. She does not talk about this child, only saying that she had it 'with another' and left it with the father. Since the humidity in Rio made her second daughter constantly ill, Maria decided to return to Recife. A sister still takes care of her house in Rio.

Back in Recife she worked for eight years in a local school. Here she was in charge of lunch for the children and held the position of janitor. This job was, as often happened in governmental institutions like schools, related to the electoral political situation: after eight years – 'two elections' as Maria called it – the political party in charge lost the elections and she was replaced by another janitor. In these years she had put her daughters in the nearby nuns' school that educated poor children for free. She became acquainted with the nuns and started working at the school as a janitor and in the kitchen.

While she lived in Chão de Estrelas, her first husband died. He was electrocuted at his work when fixing electricity. As she was still registered as his legal spouse, Maria received a widow's allowance. First, she had to share this with the under-aged children he had with his lover, but when they became eighteen, she received the full amount of one minimum wage. This is still her only income today, apart from some petty revenues

she receives from participating in consciousness raising theatre plays with Ovídio. She joined in many of Ovídio's activities, such as the urban agriculture project presented in chapter 3. She was less connected to Creuza and Zezinho. She only cooperated with Creuza, whom she already knew before the resettlement, if in a joint project with Ovídio, while with Zezinho she only participated in receiving food from his programme.

Although I knew Maria as somebody with a good sense of humour, some people thought she was grumpy, because she did not mingle much with street life anymore and could be ill-tempered if she disliked things. This was also related to her lifestyle, which was perceived of by some as stingy. She lived a thrifty life, consciously economising on many things, in contrast to Hildo, Raquel, BJ, and Roberta. She walked forty five minutes to the market place in order to buy products cheaper than in the neighbourhood itself. While living in her house for three months – in my last period of fieldwork when my wife remained in the Netherlands – I was surprised at how she managed to survive from an allowance of only one minimum wage and in the mean time put money aside for her yearly trip to a place of pilgrimage in the countryside, from which she would always return with presents for family and friends. She also had her house painted every year. How could she save money from her little income?

When I moved into Maria's house, I stayed in the room that until recently had belonged to her second daughter who had married and had her own house. The first thing Maria told me was that I had to buy a new bulb for my room: 'And buy one of those fluorescent lights, because these use less.' Fluorescent lights were about six times more expensive than a regular bulb, but used much less electricity. Maria had fluorescent lights in her house in all places where she often used light. She knew how to economise on things. She told me: 'Here, everything is economised and controlled… Here we economise on water and electricity.' She did not watch television during the day, as she thought this too expensive. Her electricity bills were relatively low: they always remained under R$15 a month. She also economised on water: she never let it run if not using and did not flush the toilet after peeing. In this way, her water use remained under a certain quota that enabled her to subscribe for a reduced tariff for low-income people at R$8 a month. She bought her gas bottles at the cheapest provider, even if this meant that she had to walk several streets to ask for a delivery – instead of turning to the slightly more expensive vendors who passed through the streets every day. Her highest monthly expense was her phone connection. She made less than ten calls a month – of which two or three were to her sister in Rio de Janeiro – but the subscription of R$40 meant a total bill of over R$45.

She also sought after the best deals in food. One day, when she was preparing lunch in the kitchen, she called me over, nearly whispering as if she wanted to share a secret. While cutting the tomatoes, onions and coriander, she said: 'Come here. I will tell you how we do it.' She pointed at the vegetables. 'I want to tell you because you are like a

son to me. Every month I buy groceries. I buy groceries for R$100. I take R$100 and go to the market.' As if revealing a hidden knowledge, she told me that she bought stock at the market. 'I buy R$1 of coriander, five, six, seven kilos of yam. I buy everything.' At another market she bought chicken and beef, which was up to thirty percent cheaper than in Chão de Estrelas. She bought medicines at a cheap pharmacy close to the market. Here she spent R$20 a month for ointment for a wound on her leg that never seemed to heal and pills against high pressure and dizziness.[5]

At the local supermarket, where Hildo and Raquel bought almost everything, she bought only few products: 'Very little. Maize flour, beans, these things. Other things are very expensive there. At the market I buy a kilo of tomatoes for twenty centavos or for ten centavos. Look at how much you spend at the local supermarket!' She nodded her head towards the tomatoes that I had bought there – much too expensive according to her. I mumbled that I had indeed spent much more. At the market it was also possible to hire a carrier with a wheelbarrow. However, Maria had an old trolley and asked her grandson or me to join her when she went to the market. She gave her grandson some small change for this help. To economise even more on groceries, she cultivated some vegetables in her garden.

Maria did not, in contrast to Mercês, receive any financial help from her children. On some occasions she grumbled about this – to me, never to them – while on other occasions she argued that she did not need help.

During the year, Maria saved money for different larger expenses. In 2005 she bought a new bed and a sofa, which cost her R$900. She had saved this money in her bank account. Unlike Hildo and Raquel, who paid their television and DVD-player in instalments, Maria preferred to pay at once. Otherwise the interest made it more expensive in the end. She also saved to have her house painted every year. Finally, she saved money for her annual pilgrimage to Juazeiro do Norte, joining thousands of pilgrims 'to make my vows', as she had it. In Juazeiro, she always brought products that were cheaper than in Recife, like pans and kitchen tools. In addition, she bought many presents for her children, grandchildren, and close friends: hats, hammocks, tobacco, towels, tablecloths, clothes, and pottery. I never joined her in her journey to Juazeiro, but went with her on another pilgrimage to a nearby town. Here too, she bought presents for kin and close friends.

Maria's life history resonates with other stories I was told during my stay in Brazil: it was nowadays harder to find employment than it was during the high waves of migration to the city. Both Maria's ex-husbands had had a permanent job[6] with a company, providing a more or less stable income for the family. However, Maria's children grew up in a different situation. De-industrialisation had destroyed many employment opportunities in Recife, and some of its remaining industries had moved to other states due to more attractive tax arrangements. Further, the 1980s were years of crisis as the military regime also left the country bankrupt. As a result, permanent job

opportunities became scarcer and many, by necessity, took refuge to setting up their own petty businesses. Maria's oldest son, who had looked after her house when she was in Rio, moved to another neighbourhood where he worked as a self-employed electrician. Maria commented: 'He is the only one who has the same profession as his father'. As a sideline, he made a karaoke system and hired himself out for parties. His son, a young adult at the time, had a hard time finding work. Finally, he ended up working without a work card in a depot for soft drinks at the other end of the city, where he did night shifts lugging crates and boxes.

Another of Maria's sons lived in an adjacent neighbourhood and worked as a guard for a security company for residential and business areas and industrial estates. His work – one day on, one day off – took place at different locations in town. He left or arrived home at daybreak. He was the only one of Maria's children who had a permanent job with a work card. When he needed extra money, he started a second job during his day off, this one without work card.

One son moved to another part of the Metropolitan Area and did not maintain much contact with his mother. The son who lived closest by had a shack in the labyrinthine riverside part of Chão de Estrelas. He hardly ever visited his mother, only when he needed money, and Maria never visited him. He was an alcoholic who sometimes had a temporary job as a mason, spending his wage immediately on drinks. His wife and mother of their two children was a non-live-in domestic worker in one of the rich neighbourhoods of the city.

Maria's oldest daughter lived in Chão de Estrelas and had temporary jobs first at a cloth shop in a mall and then at an optician in the city centre. She lost the first job after the shop closed and the second due to her pregnancy. After that, she began as a receptionist in a company which gave warranty services for domestic appliances. She married the son of a neighbour. He slowly worked himself up in a Volkswagen company, working very long days combined with night courses. He was one of a few in Chão de Estrelas with a permanent job with a relatively high salary, though this, however, meant he had to get up at 05.30 a.m. and arrived home after midnight.

Maria's second daughter, born in 1981, worked in the kitchen of a motel[7] at one of the city's main traffic arteries, mostly on the night shift. She earned one minimum wage. In 2005, she married a man from an adjacent neighbourhood, who was a self-made electrician. He worked for a company doing work outsourced by other companies. He had work for at maximum a week per month and his wage was low and completely unpredictable. They had constructed their house behind Maria's on the same plot.

Mercês: generosity and combining small-scale activities in order to survive

Mercês was a cheerful talkative *morena* in her late fifties, slender with greying frizzy hair. The mother of five grown-up daughters all from the same father, whose long term

lover she was, she was one of the many women in Chão de Estrelas who were heads of the household. Her house had many pictures of her daughters and grandchildren, but not of 'the father of my daughters', as she would refer to him.

Mercês sold candy that she kept in glass pots in her living room. The gate and door were always open. During the day many people entered for different reasons: to have a chat, to borrow an umbrella when it rained, or – mostly children – to buy candy or popcorn. When family members or neighbours visited her, Mercês offered them something to eat and drink. She was well-known for being generous and always ready to help others. A fellow slum dweller said: 'From the little she has, she still gives to others.' Another added: 'She gives to whom needs, because she knows what it is like to be hungry.' Indeed, her life history stands testament to this.

She was born in Aliança, a village in the countryside of Pernambuco. She cannot tell exactly when, as she had been registered only much later, but it must have been around 1948. Her father was a foreman on a cane sugar mill and her mother was a housewife. When Mercês was six years old, a woman took her away from her parents. She told me about this episode of her life: 'When I was six years old, my father was ill. Then a lady arrived. As a matter of fact, she has now died already. So she asked my dad if I could stay some days with her. My mother said that she would not have it, as nobody is a *filha da cachorra* (daughter of a bitch) just to be given away to nobody. So my father said: "I am not giving her away." She requested that I would stay with her to play with her son. Then [my father said]: "I will let you." Ironically, my father died two weeks later.' As soon as this woman found out that Mercês' father died, she left at night and travelled to Recife, taking Mercês with her without informing the girl's family. Mercês continued: 'She travelled to here, to Recife. That is when my torture started, because she was a very nervous person. Her husband was a mechanic, but completely unemployed. She beat me a lot. I suffered a lot. And when she could not hit me … she ordered her husband to hit me. Because when she took me away from my father's house she only had one son, but every year she got a child and when she was nervous she beat the children, me most of all. She took me away from my parents' house to play with her children, but it was not only playing with them.' The woman made Mercês call her *madrinha* (godmother) and forced her to do many chores, like buying groceries at the market place. She remembered: 'When the vendor gave me lean meat, she beat me and sent me back to him.' She had to fetch water for the family, as they did not have residential water connections. 'I started to carry water at 04.30 am until 7.00 am. I was so small that I could not carry the tin, so I bowed down to put the tin on my head'. She pointed at the top of her head and said: 'There did not grow any hair here, because of the tin that I carried'. She was beaten when she returned late with the water or fell asleep when doing the dishes at night.

Mercês' brother arrived in Recife, found her and wanted to take her back, but the "*madrinha*" did not allow her to return to her parents. The landlady of the place where

they stayed noticed that Mercês was treated very badly, and warned the police. The police took the "*madrinha's*" husband – who was considered head of the family – into custody. Mercês was examined and, after finding marks of abuse on her body, the man was condemned to prison.

After a month in a temporary shelter, Mercês, at the age of thirteen, was brought to a family of a judge who adopted her. Here she was treated reasonably. Unfortunately, this period did not last long as she was sent to work in the house of another couple. Here, the man beat her with a wooden joist if she did not work well. In a factual way, Mercês told me of the many difficulties of her life there: 'I was humiliated. She made me do the chores, called me *negra* (Negro), *pobre* (pauper), things like that. I got quite upset. I started to have problems with my nerves and almost died. There were days I sat looking at the sky and cried. I missed my family.' She started to forget things due to her nerve problems – which caused her more beatings. Eventually she was sent to a doctor who diagnosed a lack of vitamin B12.

She moved to another family where she did the same work for four years. For all these years she had not been allowed to buy clothes or shoes. 'I did not have the right to buy shoes. They said that there did not exist shoes for my feet.' Mercês, who only had flip-flops, dearly wanted shoes and bought them in secret: 'When I got my first salary, the first thing I did with my money was buying shoes.'

When Mercês was eighteen years she had built up some connections that helped her further in life. She had remained in contact with the domestic worker of the judge's family. She arranged a job for her as a salaried domestic worker. However, the family that would employ her at first hesitated, fearing her last employer who did not want to let her go. Mercês discussed the matter with the judge who backed her up. Mercês told the lady of the new house: 'I have already talked to [the judge] and he said that I am a well mannered person and that I can do with my life whatever I like.' After the judge's recommendation, the family agreed and Mercês started to work in their kitchen. She liked the work which was well-paid.

When staying with this family Mercês started to date a man from a better-off neighbourhood. It was the start of a long lasting relationship in which he would become the father of her five daughters. She never married him and according to stories he lived with another woman and had several other lovers like Mercês over the whole town. Meanwhile, this man remained the only man she had a relationship with. They quarrelled various times which always resulted in not seeing each other for some time. However, in the times that they were together, he always chipped in with some money.

After a year of paid work, she went to look for her family in Aliança. However, while carrying the savings from her wage and additional money from her boyfriend, she was robbed by the woman who had offered her a ride. After finally arriving in Aliança, she found her mother again after thirteen years. After a short stay, she returned to the city. Here, she gave birth to her first daughter. When the baby was four months old, she

moved to stay with her mother again until her daughter reached the age of two. Mercês helped her mother with chores both at home and outside.

Back in Recife, she returned to her employer. After giving birth to a second daughter, she wanted to go to Aliança again. However, her employer did not want to let her go. Mercês went anyway and as a consequence lost her job and dwelling in Recife. Later, returning to the city, she rented a shack in a slum that was prone to flooding. 'When it rained, you know, we had water to halfway the shin. This was no place to stay with two girls, with this "pork" mud that entered everywhere. The girls were ill.' This period was so difficult that Mercês completely lost hope and tried to commit suicide twice by jumping in front of cars. She cried when recalling this part of her life. At this time, she made an income working in different houses as a domestic worker, washing, ironing and pressing clothes. She also sold maize and *tapioca* (cassava root) snacks in the streets.

Mercês emphasised that she always came home to sleep, be it late at night, to be with her daughters. But during the day she could not look after them, because of her work. She said: 'I went to work and left the two of them locked up.' Luckily, she had a neighbour who helped her: 'She never let my daughters go to sleep hungry. Every day she made lunch, she sent lunch for the girls in a bowl. She sent lunch and dinner. I will never be able to pay what this creature has done for me.'

Shortly after an invasion had taken place at the other side of the river, Mercês managed to buy a vacant plot with her savings. This new occupation would later be part of the resettlement scheme that resulted in Chão de Estrelas. With the help of nuns who gave her coconut palm leaves and wood she managed to construct an empanada: a frame of wooden stacks covered with cloths and a roof made of palm leaves. She preferred living here rather than paying more than half of her income on rent. At the time, she said: 'I will make my own little corner. I will make a shack, be it with coconut palm leaves, and will crush myself inside with my two daughters, because now my money is just enough to pay rent. I lived there for two years only surrounded by pieces of cloth and the door was a bed frame. It was just like an Indian's cabin. There I lived for free the whole year through. Two years like that, without a door.'

She told about how she managed to live through the rain season: 'When it rained, I stayed awake the whole night with them sleeping. I sat at the middle of the mattress and put them on my lap, I put a head on each leg of mine. You know how the rain is in winter and the water hitting down, hitting and flushing above me. The next day I took the mattress dripping with that kind of spume and put it to dry if there was sun.' She told that she sometimes stayed awake all night, holding up an umbrella in order keep the rain from falling on her and her daughters, and scared away snakes that came with the floods.

While slowly improving the shack, she had two more girls and one miscarriage. In order to sustain her family she went to sell coco and cashew nut snacks on the beach.

She also still sold maize and washed and pressed clothes of different families. As other sidelines, she started to cut people's hair and sold homemade syrup and jam. 'When we did not have anything to eat, I went to the mud flats at the sea side to fish. I fished seafood.'

Finally, after eight years in the river bank slum, Mercês joined the resettlement scheme, moving to her current house in Chão de Estrelas (see chapter 1). She did not actively participate in the struggle for resettlement. She remembered: 'Whomever said that he wanted the money, they gave the money. I did not want it, because if I would take the money and spend it, what could I do afterwards? So I thought: I will only leave from here with a house. In fact it was an exchange of a shack for a house.'

In her house in Chão de Estrelas life became less difficult. Soon her daughters started to have an income, helping their mother financially and doing chores. Mercês started to sell candy in a small booth at her house. Later, when she had the house renovated by her son-in-law, she started to sell candy from her living room. She still cut hair, although many times she did it for free for people who were poorer than she was and could not afford to pay for it. Recently, she started to follow a free adult literacy course which had already enabled her to write her name.

Mercês' daughters moved out to other places in the city. Her oldest daughter worked in a local nursery school. Her husband was a self-employed builder. The next two daughters were still unmarried and live-in domestic workers in better-off neighbourhoods. The fourth daughter was a housewife, married to a man who lived from odd jobs, working in *serviços gerais* (general services; more details below), as a waiter and as a construction worker. The youngest daughter was a housewife too, married to a man who worked as a guard for a security company. The two oldest of her five grandchildren also worked. The oldest, an eighteen year old girl, combined studying and assisting her mother at the nursery school. The second, a seventeen year old girl, was a self-employed hairdresser and manicurist, visiting clients at home. She started studying again to become a telephone marketer. The whole family frequently came over on Sundays and Mercês would prepare an extensive lunch.

Mercês took pride in the fact that she never had to beg for things in her life. She said, referring to her stories about the past: 'I do not like to remember this. It is hard to look around and not have anything to give to your daughters. To those who are used to beg it would be all right, but I do not have this habit. I have always worked, from the age of six.' She stated that she gave glory to God every day, because of the life she had now. She happily concluded: 'And I have never given up helping my neighbour when he needed it.' Mercês emphasised that she never, not even in times of great misery, refrained from helping her neighbours. Now, when her fortunes had gotten better, economically speaking, she was known for being very generous towards others. She raised chickens and often gave away the eggs. From the little money that she had, she gave a monthly contribution of R$6 to a local children's hospital, because, she argued,

the children needed this. In addition, she worked as a rezadeira, a faith healer. She prayed for the recovery of neighbours who were ill. She did not want to be paid for this. Besides, a slum dweller argued: 'How will they pay her? These people are poorer than she is!'

Mercês was one of the many women in Chão de Estrelas who, during her life, combined many different small-scale activities in order to survive. Currently, she made little profit from selling candy. One month, a regular month according to her, she had bought candy for R$40 and received R$46 from its sale. Apart from selling little – there were many candy booths in the area and even one in her street – she gave away much candy and also sold "on one's name", which mostly resulted in not receiving payment at all.

On average, she had R$75 a month for her expenses which, according to her, was enough. Most of this money she got from her daughters who regularly gave her some. Apart from food, regular expenses were electricity and water. She economised on water and electricity. The monthly electricity bill varied between R$10 and R$15. The water bill stuck to the special reduced tariff of R$8 a month. She bought most of her food at the marketplace, more than a half an hour walk away.

Her phone bill was zero, for the reason that the phone company never changed her old connection with which she could receive calls for free without subscription. She only had to pay for calls she made, but the rare occasions that she made a call, she did so from her oldest daughter's place, who lived in the same street.

Mercês did not receive any relief. She knew she could apply to a family grant, because she had no income. However, she did not want to face the difficult and dense bureaucracy and had decided that she did not need the money anyway. Mercês' pride and refusal of financial need also extended to other practices, like refusing the monthly food assistance from the school where she took a literacy course. Likewise, she stated that she did not need any help from community leaders. Apart from joining in Zezinho's food distribution, she never turned to them.

The economy: perspective from the margins

Linking up life histories, employment opportunities and the larger economy

These life histories provide perspectives on larger economic processes and events. It is my contention that these processes and events cannot be understood without analysing their reverberation in the lives of common people. Larger economic processes are integral to how slum dwellers organise the economic aspects of their lives. Here I go on to ask, what do slum dwellers' stories disclose about processes that affect the margins of the economy? How does the economic order relate with slum dwellers who operate in its margins?

I distinguish between three different categories of employment analysed in this section. The boundaries between these categories cannot be understood as rigid and impermeable, as they often overlap and people often fit in different categories at the same time. The first category is employment on the payroll of a company or the government. This can be accompanied by a work card or not. The second category is self-employment, of a whole variety of small and large businesses. This category is about people with a relatively stable business and a more or less fixed income. However, most of the self-employed in slums lack payrolls, social security, and inclusion in the tax system. Although it is possible to register a self-employed enterprise, most slum dwellers do not so, as it means a lot of bureaucratic interference, confusion, and taxation. It is important to note that slum dwellers do not distinguish between being employed – in the sense of being on a payroll – and being self-employed. To them, both indicate employment. The distinction, which I make here for the sake of my analysis, does not resonate with slum dwellers' way of experiencing the economy. Knowing this, it becomes clear that the distinction made in much literature between the normal and the "informal economy" does not have meaning from the perspective of slum dwellers. I argue that referring to unregistered enterprises as the "informal economy" exhibits an externalist and elitist perspective in which certain economic practices are viewed as deviant from the "formal" norm. The perspective I present, on the contrary, is not concerned with whether or not these enterprises have registration or tax rolls (cf Fernández-Kelly & Shefner 2006). These practices are part of how people eke out a living, without safety net or rights to a pension. However, as the consequences of being on a payroll, having a work card, and being part of a social security system do certainly translate into the allowances some slum dwellers receive, I stick to my analytical distinction between being employed and being self-employed.

The third category consists of the unemployed. For slum dwellers, being unemployed meant not having a reliable income. In the slum, being labelled as unemployed does not mean one does nothing to make a living. Being considered unemployed can be of a transitory nature, as many of the unemployed engage in temporary odd jobs. Moreover, if the odd jobs add up to a reasonable income, slum dwellers start describing themselves as employed. As I dealt with the blurred boundaries between being employed and unemployed, I discovered that the best way to ask people about their income was to ask about their ways of *sustentar a família*, which means supporting the family. The expression refers to all possible income-generating activities, and provided me with more detailed answers than when I asked about a person's *emprego* (paid work), *trabalho* (work) or *renda* (income).

Returning to the life stories, Benedita and both of Maria's husbands had permanent jobs with work cards. A shift gradually took place in the next generation with regard to employment. Throughout the last quarter of a century, economic opportunities deteriorated in Recife. This was mainly due to increasing de-industrialisation, partly as a

result of the end of import substitution policies in the 1980s (Guimarães 2002, de Andrade 1979). The military regime left the country bankrupt and crisis reigned for a long time. In 1993, the introduction of the Plano Real and the new currency by Fernando Henrique Cardoso spurred a short economic recovery. According to surveys, this also led to temporarily improved economic opportunities among Brazil's poor (FGV 2006), but in the stories of the residents of Chão de Estrelas I found no trace of this. The second half of the 1990s again showed deteriorating employment opportunities across the country, especially in the large cities (FGV 2006). According to my findings, since the 1980s fewer and fewer slum dwellers have been able to find a permanent job.

In contrast with the older generation, the generation of Hildo, Raquel, Mercês' children and in-laws and the children and in-laws from Maria's first marriage found it much harder to find a stable job with a work card. Only Hildo and one of Maria's sons found permanent employment, while the others did not. For the generation that had even more recently entered the job market, like BJ and Maria's daughters and grandson, it is very difficult to find permanent jobs. Currently, while employment rates have decreased in general, among youth they have diminished dramatically (Pochmann 2001). For most youth, permanent jobs with a work card have become something of the past. They complained that the first job is very hard to find. Although once employment is found, the chances of remaining in a job are relatively high, the first job has become a kind of illusion. Besides, it has turned into a buzz-word in political campaigns of candidates who promise to improve first job opportunities.[8]

Most residents of Chão de Estrelas had originally liked the area because of the proximity of the Beberibe river and the presence of industries nearby. They used the river for washing – women worked as laundresses – and food – men gathered fish and crabs from the mangrove. These functions of the river declined in proportion to the intensification of living in the area and the resulting pollution. The local industries remained the main employer. Many people I knew in Chão de Estrelas, mostly men, had in the past worked in the Coca-Cola warehouse or a huge slaughterhouse, both located in adjacent neighbourhoods. The latter, however, which had been in operation since 1919, closed down in 1976. The Coca-Cola warehouse also closed for many years, but in 2006 re-opened her gates on the same spot. However this was a rare positive improvement in local employment in recent years, as in general employment opportunities had declined severely. For many years, another source of income had been a water purification plant across the river, dating from 1870. In the beginning of the 1980s the plant had been inactive for five years (Cabral 2004). Currently, its status is unclear, although plans exist to rehabilitate it under the banner of a slum upgrading project. In addition, a huge leather factory, just outside Chão de Estrelas, had also offered many jobs, but was abandoned years ago. The huge textile factory, where Benedita and many other slum dwellers found work, closed its gates in 1992, after years of weak performance.

Some slum dwellers worked in businesses in Chão de Estrelas. Most of the larger shops, like the supermarket, butchery, bakeries, lotteries and some bigger bars, were owned by people from other neighbourhoods. Their customers came from Chão de Estrelas. Some people explained to me that in order to start a business, one needs money in hand to buy stock. For this reason many businesses had owners from outside, as in Chão de Estrelas itself hardly anyone had the capital to start a business. These businesses tended to engage people from outside the neighbourhood as well, due to the personal contacts of the owners.

When I was there, those who had a work card or had a permanent job without the card, were mostly employed outside the neighbourhood in low-paid jobs. They were base level workers, some reaching the level of foreman or its equivalent, a job in charge of other workers. They worked in trade companies, services, or the manufacturing industry. Some were salespersons in shops, police officers, military men, low level officials or office assistants, while others were waiters, cooks, receptionists, lift operators, bus drivers or conductors. Others yet had jobs as cleaners, street-sweepers or janitors in hospitals, companies, schools, condominiums or government buildings. A related – rather undefined – category of work was that of serviços gerais – like the son-in-law of Mercês. Literally meaning "general services", in practice it boils down to doing all kinds of tasks, varying from posting a letter to making coffee to cleaning or weeding the garden of a condominium, office or company.

The security business, employing a son of Maria and a son-in-law of Mercês, was perhaps the only upcoming sector that provided increasing job opportunities for slum dwellers. Men were guards of condominiums, offices or business areas. The fear of crime among urban middle-class people had increased. As a consequence, guards were necessary to protect the rich from the criminal slum dwellers (cf Caldeira 2000). These jobs, low-paid and not without risks of violence, were a clear instance of the poor protecting the rich from the poor.

Wages of most of the permanent jobs of slum dwellers were up to three times the minimum. Only a small minority of slum dwellers earned more, examples are teachers at secondary schools or those with high-level jobs in commerce.

More on self-employment

Rildo, Zezinho's brother, was a self-made builder, electrician and plumber and was never without work. Since his arrival in Chão de Estrelas in 2000 he added extensions to, renovated and built complete houses, regularly assisted by a young man from the neighbourhood. All of his work was done in Chão de Estrelas and adjacent neighbourhoods. My landlady ordered Rildo to fix a leakage on the roof and to repair the water pump when it broke down. He constructed the house of Maria's daughter, at the back of her own house. People said they liked him because he worked well and was

reliable.

Many people in Chão de Estrelas are currently self-employed. As a result of the difficulty of finding employment, people have increasingly started working for themselves: like Hildo as a garbage collector, BJ as a water vendor, the oldest son of Maria as an electrician, the son-in-law of Mercês as a builder and her granddaughter as a hairdresser and manicurist. Especially during the 1980s, the crisis years, self-employment became very popular, while employment opportunities in general deteriorated, as such keeping pace with worldwide tendencies (Davis 2006).[9] Many started work for themselves, while others – like the man who helped Rildo – worked for others. Most worked in the slum itself, while some, like Hildo, went to better-off neighbourhoods.

Self-employment included a wide array of different kinds of work.[10] Chão de Estrelas had construction workers running their own business, nurseries and primary schools offering an alternative to the – often low-quality – public schools, for those who could afford it. There were also groceries, bars, a butchery, a copy shop, video game rooms, several front window shops, booths and street vendors selling candy, fruit, soft drinks and snacks, iron mongers, bicycle repair men, barber shops, a construction warehouse and, more recently, DVD-rentals, internet cafés and street vendors of copied CDs. Other people worked in the "party business": making cakes, candy and snacks for anniversaries, weddings and baptisms. Every Thursday, a clothes market was held in the main street, but most of the vendors, who belong to a trade union, came from other neighbourhoods. Some small businesses were of a temporary character, while others had been there for decades, sometimes with changing ownership. In the slum, these people – a minority – were considered to have employment, although without contracts or work cards. I would estimate that roughly one third of the population is more or less without a regular source of income through work. Some of them live in utter poverty, not earning enough to buy enough food.

Income generation also occurs by renting out rooms, shacks or houses. Several houses in the slum are rented out by owners, of whom some live in the community itself. Others rent out rooms or floors of their own house or an additional house or shack which they built on their plot. During land occupations people sometimes acquired several plots that they rented out or sold to others.

A profitable kind of self-employment was found in the transport sector. Slum dwellers were taxi-drivers, some with their own cars, while others rented. The vans that crossed the city had been a lucrative business for slum dwellers for many years. However, when the government forbade so-called "alternative transport" in 2004, many van drivers and conductors lost their income. Some of them moved to cargo transport or transport for organisations or group outings. Others managed to get a job in the regulated bus companies, while still others sold their vans and started working in another sector.

Forms of self-employment of a more or less permanent character provided an income for a minority of slum dwellers. A majority looked for less permanent sources of income. The majority of men made a living with *bico* or *biscate*, meaning 'odd jobs'. These men were known to do 'everything that appears', mostly related to renovation and construction of houses or repairs of vehicles and electric appliances. People living from *bico* were, by themselves and other slum dwellers, usually considered unemployed. However, as I have argued, the line between self-employment and *bico* was hard to draw and depended much on personal success and the general economic situation. A slum dweller described it accurately, saying of a successful builder: 'It is *bico* [but] he is always working. He hardly ever stays unemployed.' In addition, work was found in *viração*. According to some this meant the same as *bico* or biscate, but others explained it as doing a second job in addition to your actual job – a kind of moonlighting.[11] Maria's son who worked for a security company engaged in *viração* while working in a second job on his off-days. Whether one was self-employed or making a living with *bico*, people highly depended on doing good quality work on the one hand and on the establishment and maintenance of connections on the other, as I show later.

Most women who made an income did so as domestic workers. This was generally referred to as work *em casa de família*, "in a family's house", and was explained as doing *faxina*, "clean-up". However, it involved much more, as these women carried out domestic services that varied from cooking, cleaning, washing and shopping to being a nanny. Some of the women worked for middle-class families in the wealthy neighbourhoods, but many cleaned and washed in the houses of other slum dwellers who could afford to pay for these services. Some women were live-in domestic workers, a common practice in which the domestic worker becomes part of the same household. Strictly speaking, a *faxineira* is a non-live-in domestic worker and an *empregada doméstica* is a live-in domestic worker, but in practice the terms are mixed up. In the past, the proximity of the river was an advantage to the women who worked as laundresses for other families. Of late, women have found new employment opportunities as door-to-door sellers of products for the growing beauty industry.

Another category of work that provided many women with an income was sex work. It was hard to find out much about this, as people only refer to it in general terms, admitting that it is common. The term prostitution was never used. Instead people spoke of *garotas de programa* (programme girls) who were *fazendo programa* (doing programme).[12]

In contrast with the homogeneous view many people have of slums as places of general misery, slums are highly diversified with regard to the economic situations of their residents. This was also the case in Chão de Estrelas. I encountered both people who earned six minimum wages and those who earned nothing at all. I knew of households that had two-and-a-half minimum wages per capita and households that

had a tenth of that.

As people looked back over the twenty-five year history of the neighbourhood, a paradox was present in their stories. They said that life conditions had improved as the neighbourhood had progressed considerably since its founding. Simultaneously, they argued that life conditions had degraded as there was less work. Both assertions were true. Regarding the first, Chão de Estrelas had improved in terms of basic infrastructure, services and the general economic conditions of its residents. As in most slums that improved slowly but surely with time, a process of slum development had taken place. This was partly caused by the departure of its poorest residents who could not afford the rent or bills any longer. Meanwhile, the second assertion is also accurate, as employment opportunities, as far as I could see, had declined when compared with earlier decades. Still, relatively more work took place within the slum itself than before. As an example, wealthier slum dwellers – with well-paid permanent jobs outside the slum – were willing to pay more for products sold in the neighbourhood instead of going to marketplaces far away. This created room for others to open shops and booths selling groceries and the like. Another example can be found in the frequent renovation or extension of houses. People who could afford it made use of their connections and hired self-employed, fellow slum dwellers. This was how Rildo made an income.

Allowances

Receiving relief or a pension was quite common among slum dwellers born before 1965. Benedita received a pension from her work in the textile factory. Maria received a widow's allowance from her first husband. Hildo was one of the youngest to live on a disability allowance. Many older slum dwellers enjoyed a pension from their past work. This was disbursed by the Instituto Nacional do Seguro Social (INSS; National Institute of Social Security). This institute, often referred to as Previdência Social, which literally means "social foresight", was the public authority in charge of the payment of pensions and allowances. The younger generations would never be able to have a pension or an allowance, as they were unemployed or self-employed and did not contribute to the social security system.

Additionally, in recent years, more and more slum dwellers were on the dole, and stipends paid by social relief programmes increased enormously. These programmes were, under the banner of the PT incumbency, introduced as part of so-called income-transfer policies with the aim of ameliorating the situation of the poor. An important element of president Lula's governmental welfare programme Fome Zero (Zero Hunger) was the Bolsa Família (Family Stipend)[13], formed in 2003. The programme paid families with low incomes a stipend for each child under the age of fifteen – up to a maximum of three children – with the conditions that the children were vaccinated and attended school. In 2006 the stipend was R$15 per child for families that earned less than

R$100 per capita. Families that earned less than R$50 per capita received an additional fixed benefit of R$50, so the total could add up to R$95. Pregnant women could already apply for a stipend for their unborn child (Ministério do Desenvolvimento Social e Combate à Fome 2006). The programme was one of the key issues in Lula's 2002 campaign and was a vote-winning showpiece, especially among the poor, in the elections of 2006. It had considerable consequences for the economic situations of slum dwellers. In general, together with increases in the minimum wage under Lula's presidency, the income of the poor increased (cf FGV 2006, Soares et all. 2006). In addition, Bolsa Família included free food for children that went to school, not only helping decrease hunger, but also resulting in decreased expenses for food.

Notwithstanding the effects of the programme, many residents of Chão de Estrelas who were eligible for Bolsa Família did not receive it. An important reason was the dense bureaucracy that needed to be faced first. Many slum dwellers did not know the procedures, and even if they knew, they could not prove that their income was low enough. Furthermore, a quota limited the number of allowances each municipality could hand out. It was striking that nobody – neither slum dwellers nor officials – seemed to know the exact workings of the programme and the amount of money involved. A slum dweller told me that he received a little amount of money for one child, but believed that, after filling in some extra forms, he would receive a total of R$260 a month for his four children. Amounts of money like this were, according to the official standards, completely impossible. Yet I know a woman with two children who received a monthly sum of R$270 from the Bolsa Família. Strange but true: she showed me the receipts of the money transfers. Bolsa Família had a clear-cut effect on people's incomes and the way they experienced the economy. Next to flows of cash, it created a myth about vast resources that could be derived through incomprehensible procedures and contacts with outsiders like officials.

Hence, to generalise, workers and ex-workers can apply for pensions and allowances, while the unemployed can apply for social relief. Looking at the capital flowing into the slums, the decreasing number of registered jobs and the money from relief exceeding pensions and allowances from social security, drastic changes may be at hand in the near future. An official concisely summarised: 'Less work, less employment, but more stipends.' A situation might emerge in which the state's welfare system trumps the job market in regards to the economic dynamics of the slum. The state, which for a long time guaranteed the right to employment, will then only be able to guarantee rights to social welfare.

General expenses

The economic dimensions of life in the slum are not about increasing wealth, but about surviving. Most slum dwellers need little money to survive, but many connections.

Many do not pay rent, because they received a house in the resettlement scheme, bought it from the former owners or built a shack themselves. For those with a rented house, floor or room, rent is the principal cost. For those not paying rent, electricity, telephone, transport and medicines are the main expenses. Although public health care provided some services and medication, many medicines were not reimbursed or ran out of stock in the public section, forcing people to buy them in pharmacies.

Some of the residents of Chão de Estrelas, the poorest who lived in shacks with illegal connection to the water and electricity system, did not pay water and electricity bills. Nobody in Chão de Estrelas pays real estate taxes, as these are not applicable to the resettlement scheme or the officially "non-existent" self-built shacks. Although education is public and free, the cost of pens, pencils and notebooks makes it a relatively high expense for some. Food is also a general expense, but most people do not mention it when reflecting on their expenses. Food expenses are taken for granted and not clearly defined.

Matrifocality, embarrassed gigolos and feminisation of labour

People's life histories involved various differences among men and women, their ways of organising their lives and their work opportunities. Before going into these differences, it is necessary to understand more about gender divisions in Brazil. On the whole, women have a more important role in organising the family than men. They are far more involved in raising children and have a stronger connection to the house, while men are more active in public space. This might be thought of as traditional and old-fashioned, and indeed processes of women's emancipation and changing gender roles had and continue to have effects across Brazil. However, the "old-fashioned" gender division is still commonplace in Chão de Estrelas. Men can be found in the street, talking and drinking with each other, while women stay close to the house or go shopping, always surrounded by their children. I never met the wives of some married men who I came to know quite well in Chão de Estrelas. On the occasions we met, in the street or in bars, they were without their spouses (cf Alvito 2001). The view that women take more care of the family and that the house is their territory was strengthened by the fact that the titles of houses in the resettlement scheme had been put in the names of the women (see chapter 1). Indeed, women were more receptive to the idea of obtaining a house instead of financial compensation, like the case of Maria. Several women argued that they opted for the house, because without it they would have had no other place to go with their children.

Women were thus the pivot of the household. They stayed with their children when men – on their own or for a lover – left them. Chão de Estrelas counted many female-headed households, often with children from different partners, like Maria. One woman, living in a shack with two children, told me that she had promised herself not

to fall in love again after the father of her first child had left her. Unfortunately, she said, laughing, she fell in love again and had a second child with a man who had also left. In many cases, men moved in for a certain period and then moved out again. Their stays often resulted in one or more children. When men left their families, some moved in with another partner, some went to live on their own and many moved back – temporarily – to their mother's place. This gender division has women staying in the house and men philandering and moving among different houses, a division that resonates with other studies in Latin America, e.g. Lewis on Mexicans (1959) and Puerto Ricans (1965) and, more recently, Alvito (2001) and Goldstein (2003) on Brazilians in Rio de Janeiro. The gender division is one of matrifocality, in which the woman plays the leading role in and is the most stable member of the household. However, she is not necessarily 'the economic mainstay' of the household or family, 'but she probably exercises authority in how the money coming into the domestic establishment will be used' (Solien 1965:1544). Additionally, this does not mean that men, in the role of husband-father, are absent. They can be 'consistently present' in matrifocal families (ibid), but women are the pivot.[14] Women could provide me with more details than men about the economy of the household. They were more aware of the income and expenses of their husbands and themselves. Some couples kept their earnings separate while others shared them. In both cases, in many households common expenses were divided between husband and wife. Maria's oldest daughter paid food and clothing, while her husband paid electricity and water bills, as well as the costs for the car and motorcycle. Her other daughter told me that she and her husband made another division: she paid for everything that involved the bank – bills and allotments for items bought on credit – and he paid for the groceries. Most of the time, although spouses divided responsibilities, the women carried the main responsibility. Another slum dweller, with a wife and two children, is a good example of this. He divided expenses with his wife and knew exactly what to buy each month for his family. However, when he ran short of money, his wife was the rock of the family budget: 'in case I do not have the money, I ask her for it.'

Zezinho's case was similar. Marilene's role was pivotal as she organised the household and knew how much was spent on what. Zezinho and Marilene separated their budgets and expenses. In general, Marilene bought things that were necessary for the family and the house, like food, cleaning products, chairs and a sofa, while Zezinho bought items he used alone, like a sound system that his sons were not allowed to touch. Marilene knew the details of Zezinho's expenses, while he did not know about hers.

Women often complained that their men did not want to work and spent too much money on partying. Men could be often found drinking, at a booth or in the street.[15] Some spend little money on drinking, while others spend a lot. Women also drank, but not as much as men and mainly only on special occasions. When women drank, it was

at parties in somebody's house or at the bar of a female friend, but never in the street or at a booth. Besides, drinking men were considered normal – although often judged negatively by women – while women who drank were considered improper and referred to as 'women of low culture'.

In particular, unemployed men drank. They had time to hang out until late and sleep in the mornings. When I once asked Zezinho why a friend of his did not join his parties, while he had always been present before, he replied: 'He is working now. He has a job.' The paradox is that those who can less afford to drink – the unemployed – spend more on it. Drinking is considered a feature of masculinity. Another feature is working or, better yet, being able to look after one's family. Thus the absence of one masculine feature– being able to look after one's family – is often compensated by another– drinking.

Indeed, being employed was considered an important feature of masculinity. As one man explained: 'I am a good man. I maintain my family. My wife should not complain about me.' For a man with a family, to be unemployed meant that he was not able to look after them. An unemployed man could not sustentar a família. The notion of a *pai de família*, literally, father of a family, had a strong moral connotation: it implied a man who made a living in an honest way, did not drink or fight and took care of his family. It was an honour to be a *pai de família*. On the contrary, a man with a family who was not able to support his family, was deemed to have failed. The situation was even worse when such a man was being supported by his wife. This kind of man was generally known as a *gigolô* and was considered a shame. The term, meaning a man who lives at the expense of his wife, does not have the same meaning as the English word "gigolo", which refers to a paid male companion. When I discussed the matter with Zezinho's wife Marilene, she remembered the movie 'American Gigolo', featuring Richard Gere as a male prostitute. When she recalled the story line, I asked her why the main character was called a *gigolô*. She thought for a while and responded, laughing in surprise: 'I do not know. He was not maintained by his wife!'

According to Marilene it was a shame for a man if his wife supported the family. However, she added, 'there are men who feel the shame and there are men who do not care.' She complained that Zezinho did not care and drank all the money he made.

I replied: 'At least he has his own money to spend. He does not spend your money.'

Marilene replied in annoyance: 'He does not?! Does he not eat here? He uses soap. It was I who bought it. I buy soap, toothpaste.'

Later, Zezinho confided in me: 'If I could, I would work and leave my wife at home washing, doing the dishes and preparing food. I do not like it that women have to work.'

I said: 'But then you need employment.'

Zezinho responded bluntly: 'That is why I said, "if I could".'

Of course, different perspectives existed on this issue. One afternoon in Mercês'

kitchen I asked about the issue of the *gigolô*: 'If a woman supports the family, how about the man?'

Mercês' seventeen-year-old granddaughter responded, laughing: 'They call him a *gigolô*'. Mercês started laughing too. She and her granddaughter agreed that this was a common phenomenon in the neighbourhood. However, Mercês said, in most cases both man and woman work.

I asked: 'But is it a shame for the man if his woman supports the family?'

Mercês immediately and firmly responded: 'It is!'

Her granddaughter, after some thinking, disagreed: 'No. Right, for a *machista* man it is, is it not?' She added that she did not agree with her grandmother, because it could be very hard for a man to find a job. Only if a man stayed unemployed for a very long time, she argued, would it be a shame.

BJ told me that he would not feel ashamed of being supported by Roberta if he did not have work: 'Because in Brazil getting employment is hard.' He added that people would surely talk about it, but that he would not care. He had experienced being a *gigolô* when he had been unemployed for some time while Roberta worked, before he started to sell water.

At the same time, Maria spoke very negatively about her son and son-in-law, who were both largely supported by their wives. She complained about her son-in-law, frowning disapprovingly: 'It is she who supports the family. He only works one day!' When I asked whether her son-in-law felt ashamed about it, she said firmly: 'He does. Now he does. Because I complain a lot to him!'

On the basis of observations and conversations during my research, I have the impression that, in the last thirty years, an increasing feminisation of labour has taken place in Brazil. Women have increasingly become the economic mainstay of the household. De-industrialisation, leading to deteriorating job opportunities in general, has probably made it more difficult for men to sustain their families. In the meantime, employment for women has improved due to the relative growth of the service sector, which traditionally employed many women (Lovell 2000). Maria's daughters who worked in a shop and in a motel, and Mercês' daughter who worked in a private nursery, are examples of this. In addition, the deteriorating economic situation of the 1980s is said to have led to the need for extra income, which forced many women into the labour market. This feminisation of labour should also be seen against the background of decreased numbers of children due to family planning, resulting in a situation where women have more time for paid work. Surveys show that, in Brazil, women from the lower classes in particular have increased their participation rate in the labour market. They work mainly in low-paid jobs (Lovell 2000 on São Paulo).

A local hairdresser argued that it had become easier for a woman to find work than for a man. For men everything was full, he stated, even with a diploma. He asked: 'Have you ever taken the first bus from the bus station? It is filled with mostly women, a lot of

them work in commerce.' He continued: 'First, most men did not like it. They thought that women would do the same thing that they always did: partying.' He continued: 'Now they are used to it.' He considered the "risk" that women would start partying with the money they made to be small: 'If you have a busy job, it will not come to much partying.'

Although the majority of working women in Chão de Estrelas were still employed as domestic workers, a growing number were working in commerce. Apart from those who took the bus to work in other parts of the city, the local businesses of Chão de Estrelas primarily offered work to women. Female workers could be found at the local supermarket's cash register, at the candy store and at the bakeries. Women were in charge or even owners of several bars. The local construction warehouse had a female salesperson and the copy-shop was owned by a woman. The latter's daughter, working in the shop, told me that her mother had started the business when her father passed away, in order to sustain the family. Like her, most women in local businesses were widowed or divorced: they would start a small business, selling food, drinks or other products after losing their husbands to death or divorce. Most women who worked in local shops had no husbands. The young were still single, while the older ones were divorcees or widows (cf Lovell 2000 on São Paulo).

Asking around Chão de Estrelas about why more and more women were working, I found that, in general, women were considered more reliable and, in commerce, more attractive to customers than men. In addition, slum dwellers told me, women spent more time at home than men, so it was easier for them to run a home-based business like a front window shop or a video game room. According to some, an additional reason was that women's salaries were lower so it was cheaper to hire them.

When I discussed the feminisation of labour with Zezinho, he explained that in commerce women were preferable because they did not get involved in 'assaults, robbery or scandals', like men did. According to him, men say one thing but do another: 'A man is like that. Even when he knows that it is wrong, he sometimes does it.' He argued that men were less reliable because they drink. Suddenly, his face beamed as he thought of another reason why women were preferable: 'Also because of the attraction, the appearance! A woman attracts customers!'

The drugs-based economy

I have not yet touched on an important element of the economy as it is lived in the slum: the drug trade. I have not conducted detailed research into this field, but it cannot be left unmentioned because of the financial flows it generated and the attraction it held for many young slum dwellers.

Chão de Estrelas had several *bocas de fumo*, literally meaning "mouths of smoke". These were drug selling points offering marijuana, cocaine, and a chemical product

called *loló*. According to some, crack was also sold, but this was debatable as crack killed consumers rather quickly, which would lead to a drop in future sales. Rumours had it that the availability of crack had increased. *Tráfico* (drug traffic) mainly took place in the poorest part of the neighbourhood, the labyrinthine alleyways on the river- and canal-side. It was a men's business, although I heard stories of women who were actively involved. Some of the dealers were from Chão de Estrelas, while others came from adjacent slums. Trade was prosperous. It was hard to estimate how much money was going through, but slum dwellers agreed that it had to be a lot. One of the local community leaders estimated that sixty percent of the money that flowed into the community was related to drug traffic. He added that this money, however, did not circulate in the slum. The situation was certainly different from the one described by Marcos Alvito (2001) in his study of a slum in Rio, where drug trade was very important to the local economy. There, the local economy collapsed after a police invasion caused a decrease in the drug traffic. In other slums in Recife, the drug trade left a bigger footprint, as more luxurious businesses of cell phones and motorcycle repair shops prospered with dealers' money.

According to local community leaders and other slum dwellers, the only money from the drug trade that circulated in Chão de Estrelas were the gratuities paid to the *aviões*. These, literally meaning "airplanes", were the young boys who "flew" for deliveries or warnings when the police arrived. Some clarified that the actual owners of the *boca de fumo* did not live here, but in middle class areas. Those who took care of the *bocas* were limited in spending their money (cf Goldstein 2003 for a similar situation in Rio de Janeiro). Their superiors did not allow them to buy a better house in the neighbourhood, let alone in another neighbourhood, as they were forced to live and trade in the poorest parts of the slum for a set period. However, some of them renovated their houses in the slum, and one even had an indoor swimming pool built. Other expensive commodities, like motorcycles, cars, cell phones and clothes, were not bought in the slums – for the simple reason that there were no shops that sold them.[16] As such, money from drugs went in and out of the neighbourhood without remaining there. The people who profited from the traffic were few, a very small percentage of the population. The *aviões* made some money with it, but their effect on the total economy of the slum was small, merely making a considerable contribution to local candy shops and video game rooms.

The birth of a son: connections, gift giving and social use of money

BJ and Roberta's son

To live in an economy in the margins, establishing and maintaining connections is extremely important. This is illustrated in the following case study, which starts on a

night when BJ was calling my name in distress. 'Martinho! Martinho!' He stood at the gate. He often stopped by, but this time he was upset. Hastily, he told me that Roberta was in labour and needed to go to the hospital immediately. He asked me if he could still make use of my offer of money for a taxi. I had made him this offer some days before, for when the then eight months pregnant Roberta gave birth to her first child. I knew that BJ had money for costs like these. His water business was going well and Roberta kept her salary during pregnancy leave, as she had a work card. Still, I had wanted to express my friendship for him through this gesture of providing some money. I had been reluctant to give him the money up front, as I knew from experience that he would spend it before Roberta needed to go to hospital. That is why I said that he knew where to find me when necessary. Now, quicker than expected, it was necessary.

The events that occurred around the birth of BJ and Roberta's son provide insight into several dimensions of how they organised their lives, as well as into the dynamics of living in the slum economy. I flesh out these events with the stories of BJ and Roberta, Hildo and Raquel, Maria and Mercês, in order to arrive at an understanding of the importance of connections, the practice of gift giving and the social use of money. I analyze these through theories on money, exchange and the value of social contacts.

To return to the story, Roberta was planning to go to a private hospital, covered by her health insurance from work. This was exceptional, as most slum dwellers had to rely on – lower-quality – public health care. I told BJ I would give him the money. He went home and returned in an hour with Roberta who, judging from the strained expression on her face and her irregular breathing, was in pain.

I only had R$10 for them. As a matter of fact, I also had notes of R$50 in my room, but these were all but impossible to change at night. BJ replied that R$10 was fine and that he had some money to contribute for a taxi. I fetched the money from my room and joined them. In the street, BJ told me that they had changed their minds and would go by bus. This meant that they would have to take two buses and travel for at least an hour. I disagreed with this idea as Roberta was in pain. I argued: 'In the taxi you will pay R$15 at the most. I have ten here and you have five. In the bus you will spend the same money.' BJ responded that Roberta had a worker's bus pass, so she could travel for half fare. Roberta suggested that they could take a bus in another neighbourhood that would go directly. However, this would involve a half an hour walk to the bus stop. I knew that, while earning a reasonably decent income, BJ and Roberta needed to economise on many things as their general expenses were very high. They preferred a thirty-minute walk followed by an uncomfortable bus ride to paying an extra R$2 for a taxi, even though Roberta was in pain.[17] I found an additional R$1 coin in my pocket and said that I would give it to them as well, but that they really needed to take a taxi. Roberta smiled and said amiably that they did not need the extra real. However, they agreed to take a taxi.

We started the ten-minute walk to the taxi stand at the polyclinic. Roberta, having difficulty walking, asked BJ if he had the phone number of a driver so that he could order a taxi to come over. He did not, and neither did I. Realising that Roberta would probably not even make it to the taxis, I asked BJ whether he knew somebody who owned a car. He thought for a while and remembered his ex-neighbour: 'He has a car. That is better because then we only pay gasoline.'

BJ and Roberta knew this neighbour from the time they had lived in a rented house nearby. Due to problems paying the rent, they had moved into the extension of Raquel and Hildo's house. BJ went to talk to his former neighbour and soon returned, his face beaming. Relieved, he said that his former neighbour had immediately agreed to go. He only needed to put on a shirt. Contently, he continued: 'he did not even talk about the gasoline'. I said that in case he needed to pay for the gasoline, I would give him the money tomorrow. He put his arm around my shoulders and said: 'Thanks Martinho, now I know that you really are a good friend of mine.' Soon the ex-neighbour and his wife arrived with the car, taking BJ and Roberta to hospital.

They returned the same night after a short check-up. They did not have to pay for the gasoline. Since I was leaving the city for a while, I gave BJ money for a taxi for when Roberta had to return to the hospital. Almost four weeks later, a happy BJ phoned me with the message that his son was born by caesarean section. He had not needed my money for a taxi as his uncle – who lived close by and owned a very old car – had driven them to the hospital the day before. After proudly providing me with details about his son, he asked if I wanted to visit Roberta in hospital. When I said I did, he offered to pay my bus fare: 'If you do not have it, no problem, I will pay for you.' I said that it would not be necessary, as I could afford the fare. In the afternoon we took the bus together with Raquel, her youngest son and the latter's godmother. BJ again offered to pay for my fare with Roberta's worker's pass, but I refused and paid for myself. He paid his fare with the pass.

During the bus trip, BJ's money was stolen, a total of R$15 (see chapter 8). He angrily grumbled: 'Man, that was the money for the taxi.' After visiting Roberta and her newborn son in the hospital, BJ took me aside and said softly: 'I will appeal to our friendship again, for money for the taxi.' I gave him the money. He walked to the taxi drivers and negotiated with them. He returned and said that they charged R$20, but he managed to lower the price to R$18. However, he did not take a taxi, and instead remained at the hospital, sleeping in a chair in Roberta's room.

Roberta was discharged three days later. In the afternoon I spoke to BJ when he delivered water to my place. I asked if he had arranged for a taxi. He responded that he had not, because his uncle had been willing to drive them home. Gratefully, he stated: 'I had not thought that he would go, but he said he would.' His family turned out to be an important source of assistance.

He added that he had spent the money I had given him on medicines for Roberta.

He had been to several pharmacies in different neighbourhoods to compare prices. He said that in one pharmacy the medicines cost R$14 per package, and he needed three. In the end he found generic versions elsewhere for R$4,50 per package. He exclaimed happily: 'Look how much I economised! Almost R$10 per piece!'

Some days later I was at Benedita's place. BJ's uncle – the one with the car – dropped by for a moment to check on how his mother was doing. His sister, an aunt of BJ's, was present, and said to me that it was very nice of her brother to drive BJ to hospital. 'That car is really a blessing. If he did not have it…'

Connections, conhecimento and courses

Although BJ and Roberta suffered from a chronic lack of money, and transport was among the highest expenses for slum dwellers, they managed to find transport to and from the hospital. Moreover, they did not have to pay for it. This was possible thanks to connections they established and maintained, which provided them with a certain level of support. In the series of events that took place around the birth of their son, BJ's family played an important role. His uncle helped by driving twice, both taking them to and fetching them from the hospital. In general, the extended family was the primary source of assistance for slum dwellers. Secondary sources were godparents and close friends. However, more transient or tenuous contacts could also be called upon, like BJ's former neighbour who drove them to the hospital. I became part of BJ's connections as well and provided him with assistance. However, none of these forms of support were taken for granted. As became clear from his own reactions – 'I had not thought that he would go' – and the reflections of his aunt, this kind of support could not be counted upon as a matter of course.

For BJ, maintaining connections was vital not only in critical events like the birth of his son, but for his survival in general.. This became clear when we discussed his water business. I told him that recently the front window shop in my street had started selling water as well, even of the same brand as his. He responded, suspiciously: 'Ah, the same water, hm. Are you saying that you will buy water there?'

To my answer that I would not, he looked at me searchingly. I tried to convince him: 'They do not deliver it to the door. I would need to get it myself.' He got in a bad mood, kept his head down and muttered: 'Ah, you see.'

I continued: 'And their price is much higher. They charge R$2 and you only charge R$1,80.' He remained sulky. I felt I had upset him with my remark. I thought of another way to convince him that I would still buy his water and I said: 'I will not go and buy their water. I am your friend.' BJ looked up at me, smiled, stood up and touched my shoulder with his hand in a friendly gesture. He seemed happy and at ease again.

For BJ, like for others engaged in self-employment or odd jobs, knowing people or, better still, having friends, was important for his business. Providing the best service or

selling water for the lowest price did not suffice. He tried to establish and maintain close and friendly connections with his customers. I heard slum dwellers say countless times that they preferred a shop or a seller because the owner was their friend. Connections were important for organising their lives.

Connections with community leaders were also especially important, since these had *conhecimento* on how to deal with many different people, especially outsiders with possibly inexhaustible resources. The role community leaders played in this varied among slum dwellers. Whereas Maria claimed that she owed her house to Ovídio, BJ and Roberta said they owed a daily litre of milk to Zezinho. When their son was born, Zezinho could not file any new registrations in the milk distribution programme. However, Zezinho agreed to continue the registration of the son BJ had with his ex-girlfriend, living on the other side of the city, while BJ kept the milk for his current family.

One important connection that BJ had established in recent months was with the truck driver who delivered his bottles with water. He got on very well with him, a cheerful man in his forties who drove probably one of the most ramshackle trucks in Recife. At each delivery, BJ and the driver made jokes all the time, the usual rough jokes men make to one other, consisting mainly of some variety of hinting at the other's homosexuality. When the driver told me that he wanted to join me in Holland, BJ quickly rejoined: 'He only wants to go to prostitute himself.'

The day Roberta was discharged, BJ said that he still had some financial problems due to the extra costs of having a child and having had his money stolen on the bus. He told me that the truck driver had helped him: 'He gave me credit. I pay when I have recovered.' He said he was thankful to the driver for his assistance.

Through the driver, BJ established other connections that could be of use to him in future: he came to know the manager of the water source, who was the godfather of the truck driver's daughter. Once in a while BJ visited the source, where he hung around, made jokes with the workers and tried to obtain favours for himself, like a company T-shirt and stickers for his carrier bike. Here, the truck driver introduced him to the manager. One day, when BJ was around, the manager needed a private delivery at his own place and BJ and the truck driver offered their help. Carefully, they loaded the manager's pick-up with water and delivered it to his house. This occurred while Roberta was still in hospital after giving birth. The driver had, before returning to the source, dropped BJ off at the hospital. Shortly after, BJ attended the graduation of the driver's daughter, where he met the manager, her godfather, again. Although I do not know if his contact with the manager has brought BJ many benefits thus far, I do know that he was one of the few water vendors that the manager knew personally, as he mostly only had contacts with the truck drivers and the workers of the source. This connection, although perhaps still dormant, could be of use to BJ in the future. BJ, aware of this, was very pleased when the manager asked for his phone number, in case he needed him for

other work.

The importance of connections became apparent at several junctures in slum dwellers' life histories. Mercês had been highly dependent on her former neighbour, who had looked after her daughters while she was working. Maria received similar assistance from her neighbours. Another occasion was when Mercês' daughters wanted to buy a new television for their mother. They could not afford to pay the total price in cash and did not have a credit card that would enable them to pay in instalments. The oldest two daughters called upon a friend in Chão de Estrelas who was bem de vida and had a card. This friend did not hesitate to buy the television with her credit card and the daughters repaid her in instalments. Somewhat later, the oldest daughter had her own card made with the friend's sister-in-law, a fellow slum dweller who held a good position in a large supermarket that handed out cards. Obtaining credit cards is always a hazy process wherein according to official rules, slum dwellers can rarely get access to cards, as they do not meet the requirement of a fixed and relatively high income. However, many slum dwellers have cards, be it with very limited credit. The daughter's relationship with the friend's sister-in-law also resulted in getting a card. Over thirty years ago, Janice Perlman referred to similar favours exchanged between slum dwellers in Rio de Janeiro, calling them 'a minimal, community sponsored, social security and family welfare system' (1976:196). Although I think this is too romantically put, practices of assistance among neighbours and family members are certainly present (Fontes & Eichner 2004, see also Leeds 1971).

Connections with people from the outside comprise a special category. These individuals regularly have access to resources not available in the slum. Contacts with these people, directly or through others, are expressed by and measured with the term *conhecimento*. As explained in chapter 2, this is a personalised savoir-faire about which people to approach for what, and in what way. Mercês emphasised the importance of *conhecimento* in her life history when she obtained her first paid job thanks to the recommendations of her ex-employer, the judge. More recently, she had benefited from *conhecimento* again. When her daughters had grown up she needed surgery to have her uterus and ovaries removed. For years she tried to acquire help in vain, as was the case with many who depended on public health care. She had been examined several times, always with the diagnosis that she required surgery. However, the waiting time for the operation was so long that the examination results expired time and again and new examinations were needed. Mercês commented that she thought: 'It will go on like this until I die.' At the time, one of her daughters worked as a domestic worker. Her employer was a woman who worked in a hospital. She knew Mercês, because the latter had worked for her neighbours. When Mercês' daughter told her about her mother's problem, she quickly arranged for the surgery. Mercês said to me: 'Have you thought about that? For me it would have taken months and months to achieve this and she achieved it in only one week. Because she had *conhecimento*.' Her operation was done for

free, and two weeks after her daughter's conversation with her boss, Mercês was back home again. She had thus benefited greatly from the right connections to people outside the slum when in need, first of a good job and later of surgery. In order to find work, slum dwellers made use of *conhecimento*. For a job, they depended on recommendations by family or friends who worked in a company or knew a possible employer elsewhere (cf Goldstein 2003).

Besides making use of connections, many slum dwellers took free or even paid for courses – apart from general schooling – that were provided by the government or NGOs for improving their chances on the job market. Raquel took a course to become a nurse and participants in Ovídio's urban agriculture project took courses about plants and planting (see chapter 3). There were all kinds of so-called professionalisation courses. For youth there were specially designed courses for first jobs. Mercês' granddaughter, who wanted to be a telephone marketer, explained to me the importance of taking the right courses in order to find a job. Then she changed her mind and said: 'However, what is most important is to know a person. Here in Brazil it is like that. *Conhecimento* is very important.' She explained that someone 'inside a company' can tell you about vacancies and recommend you. She concluded: '*Conhecimento* is most important. With *conhecimento* it does not matter much which courses you took… You need a person that fits you in.'

Raquel could sometimes be very enthusiastic about her improved chances to get a job after completing her current course. However, at another moment she told me that she had done four courses before, which had not helped her. Hildo, joining our discussion, argued: 'You need to know somebody.' Raquel continued that she might get a job as a nurse, not because of the course, but because she knew a man who owned a private health post. In addition, she argued that the lady Hildo often did work for could also be a useful connection, as she had a sister who worked for the municipality. Raquel stated: 'I left my curriculum vitae with her. Do you understand? She says that now I just have to wait to be called… If one person leaves, I will be called to work there.' Hildo added: 'That is the way it goes. You need to know a person inside. Everything goes like that.'

Similar conversations took place when I discussed the issue with others, like BJ and the truck driver. After emphasising the importance of courses for some time – although admitting that they never profited from them in terms of employment – they changed their minds and concluded that *conhecimento* was far more important. Although the effectiveness of taking courses was disputed, through doing courses slum dwellers undoubtedly established new connections to which they could appeal in times of need. As such, courses were helpful after all. Yet for slum dwellers, personalised "know-how" was more important than knowledge and skills.

Connections needed to be maintained. In other words, contacts had to be kept alive. BJ invested much time in establishing and maintaining connections needed for his business. He greeted people on the street, talked, made jokes, laughed with them, and told them to call him if they needed water. Often, at the end of the afternoon, he sat at a booth at a busy street corner, talking and joking with other people. He also provided favours to customers, helping them when needed or giving small presents. He tried to maintain good relations with his customers. Even when a customer he hardly knew passed away, he joined the family at the funeral.

Relationships – often referred to as friendship – were expressed in doing each other favours. These favours ranged from providing the other with a service to keeping the other company. Giving each other goods and money, or at least expressing the willingness to do so, was commonplace. Men invited each other for a drink or offered cigarettes, women invited others to stay for lunch, people shared some of their groceries and gave each other petty amounts of money. The goods involved in these transactions were not valuable in monetary terms and sums of money were small, but they had an important social dimension.

In the last few years, through visits and little gifts, mostly things that he had probably got for free, BJ had shaped his connection to me. When he was in therapy, he made small pieces of soap, as part of his treatment, which he gave to me and my wife. In addition, I received a set of glasses with Bacardi advertisements. Regularly, I joined him at a booth that sold banana smoothies and snacks. A kind of pattern had evolved here: if we had taken smoothies – total costs above R$2 – I paid the bill; if we only had snacks – total costs below R$1 – he paid the bill. As such, we exchanged gifts.

Like many other gift exchanges, these displayed a kind of unequal reciprocity. In other words, the goods or money exchanged were of fundamentally unequal value. When we went to visit Roberta in hospital, I had given BJ R$10 for a taxi in advance. In the bus, he offered to pay a bus fare, which with the workers' pass cost R$0, 70. This was a common thing. People 'returned' gifts with other gifts, often completely not of the same weight or value. If one man paid a beer to another one, the other offered him a cigarette. Likewise, if somebody organised a party with free food and drinks, others chipped in with some food.

Connections with people outside the slum, often very unequal in terms of access to resources, were established and preserved in a similar way. Paying visits to the other was important. Hildo regularly visited the lady who gave him chores and financial assistance. Sometimes there was work for him too, though most of the time there was not. Raquel also paid visits to the owner of the health post, just to talk to him about his work or say hello.

Here as well, gift giving was part of preserving these social relationships. Again,

discrepancies in value were part of the exchanges involved. Mercês bought a present for her daughter's employer after the latter intervened to help her get an operation. She said that she had not known what to buy for somebody who, in her view, already had everything. Finally, she bought a set of glass bowls for dinner, commenting that 'a set of bowls is always convenient.' In this way Mercês showed gratitude and maintained an important connection.

People gave small gifts to my wife and me, especially in the beginning of my fieldwork: a publicity agenda, food, booklets about governmental programmes that people had received for free, clothes, and plastic jewellery. In this period, people we hardly knew visited our place and tried to establish contacts. This became less frequent later, but receiving little gifts and invitations for lunch, especially in my case when my wife was out – it was believed that I was unable to prepare lunch – were common. Regularly, people reminded me of a gift they gave me, asking if I still remembered or used it.

Slum dwellers often used money in a social way. By this, I mean that they employed money not for direct consumption but for establishing and maintaining connections with others. Although most lived in scarcity and had to economise on many things, they did not economise on establishing and maintaining connections with little gifts and favours. The presents that Maria bought for her family and friends and the ways in which Mercês took care of others indicate a certain way of spending money which I call a social use of money. Money was not used for hoarding, but for spending and enhancing connectivity. In general, in the slum, money was not only considered an end but also a means. It was invested in social relations. The high phone costs of BJ and Roberta and many other slum dwellers were good examples of this: paying for communication is part of a social use of money.

One typical practice that emphasised this social use of money, was buying *fiado*, buying on one's name. This was a kind of "IOU", buying on credit with perhaps only a name and debt on a piece of paper, different from the registered "buy now, pay later" arrangements that were common in large shops and had to be repaid in monthly instalments. Buying on one's name was a frequent practice in shops, bars, and booths in the slum.[18] However, most owners were opposed to this, as it often resulted in unpaid debts and loss of profit. They posted signboards that read: 'on one's name, only tomorrow', 'buying on one's name is much looked for, but will not be found here', or 'on one's name, only for persons older than 90 years accompanied by their grandparents'. In spite of these signs, many shops, bars and booths did actually sell with the "IOU's". Mercês sold much of her candy in this way, indeed resulting in many unsettled debts. BJ, who argued that he did not like the custom, nonetheless sold on one's name on request. For a long time I did not take part in this practice. Why would I as I could afford to pay and did not want to bother shop owners? One night I ordered some food and had forgotten my wallet at home. The owner of the booth told me to pay

the next day. The next morning I saw her and she reminded me that I owed her. That night I returned and paid her. Instead of one moment of contact – exchanging food for money – I now had had three moments of contact with the booth owner, thanks to buying on my name. As such, buying on one's name can be viewed as a far more social transaction than paying directly, thus, with far greater effect for people's mutual connections.

Conclusions

Economy of the margins

Having analysed how slum dwellers live the economy, I argue that the economy in the margins tends to have a dynamic of its own. Tentatively, I believe that a large part of the city's economy has increasingly become centred upon the slum. Within the slum, a particular economy operates, separate from the larger economy, with its own supply and demand and dynamics. I certainly do not claim that the economy in the slum is separated from the wider economy in terms of money, as the inflow from outside the slum – jobs, allowances, relief and drugs traffic – contributes the major part of money present in the slum. However, it seems that increasingly more people are making a living within the slum. The relative numbers that work within the slum have increased, as job opportunities outside the slum decline and improved opportunities in the slum emerge. Money circulates in the slum, from those who have more to spend to those who have less. Many people are active in those parts of the economy that the state and its tax system, urban managers, and economic planners often label 'informal' or 'illegal'. As such, while not in absolute financial terms but in terms of employment, a growing part of the city's economy has become directly dependent on the margins of the political and economic order and the demands it generates. However, it is important to remember that slum dwellers cannot be labelled as a proletarian labour class in a capitalist economic order, as many are unemployed and on the dole. In the slum, working class people were considered *bem de vida*, 'better-off', with the majority of slum dwellers labelled as *pobre* (poor) and *carente* (lacking, deprived, needy).

The dynamics of this economy of the margins, the site of 'the fastest growing, and most unprecedented, social class on earth' (Davis 2006:178), cannot be understood from dominant perspectives on the economy. They cannot be understood in terms related to or derived from the workings of the dominant capitalist order (Gibson-Graham 2006). Depicting slums merely as dwellings of a redundant labour force disgorged by the capitalist system runs the risk of overlooking the enormous capacity and dynamics of the economy of the slum. This economy, be it petty, precarious and provisional, can only be understood when taking into account the ways people organise their lives.

Understanding the economy of the margins

The life histories presented in this chapter show what it is like to live the economy in the margins. I have explored the ways in which slum dwellers establish and maintain connections and use their money and how they relate to the wider economy. I attempt to show that the economy in marginalised sites, such as slums, has its own dynamics, in contrast to prevailing perspectives of the economy which centre upon capitalist rationalities with notions of growth, profit, progress, and a modern conception of self-interested individuality. Instead, in the concrete practices of slum dwellers' ongoing endeavours to live life, thrive, and survive, a different kind of thinking and doing the economy emerges, centred upon particular needs and aspirations. Slum dwellers cannot be depicted as small-scale entrepreneurs accumulating money in an "informal" sector à la De Soto (2000). Instead, their ways of living the economy, I argue, make an alternative economic language imperative: a 'language of economic diversity [that] brings to light what exists in the shadows, disclosing the non-capitalist economic activity that is (everywhere) available to build upon, once we become able to name and see it' (Gibson-Graham 2005:134).

What drives the economy of the margins? In this site of heterogeneous modernity, certain needs and aspirations are emphasised. The need for an income is of primary importance and major driving force within the economy of the slum, as slum dwellers attempt to obtain viable ways of income generation that enable them to live without suffering too much. Slum dwellers both want employment and the ability to purchase commodities. When the Coca-Cola warehouse opened its doors again, this was warmly welcomed by many slum dwellers as it provided opportunities for employment. In addition, aspirations for consumption were constantly expressed, especially among the young, visible through the purchases of cell phones, clothes, CDs, and other commodities.

However, there were also needs and aspirations which did not ostensibly make sense if understood through capitalist notions of making money and striving for material well-being. When I asked several slum dwellers what they would do if they suddenly won a lot of money, they all responded in terms that pointed at the more social dimensions of money. Raquel replied that she would use all the money for setting up several projects of social work in the community. Maria focused more on herself: 'I would take a part for myself and give another part to the poorest.' Her nine-year-old granddaughter said: 'First, I would help my family.' She would have her parents' house patched up. She added that she would use another part of the money to have her family from São Paulo come over. What was left, she would use for herself.

The slum is saturated with actions and transactions, the import of which cannot be grasped when using prevailing economic perspectives. Think of housework, of mothers rearing many children, and of volunteers in different projects aimed at the benefit of the

community. Think of neighbours – like those of Maria and Mercês – taking care of each other's everyday problems and of owners of small shops – like Mercês – who do not make any profit. Think of all those involved in different cultural or religious expressions, like Mercês voluntarily praying for people's curing. Think of practices of gift-giving and use of money to concretise social relations. These practices are not market-oriented and do not coincide with notions of growth, profit, material progress, or any aspiration to purchasing commodities. Instead, they are based in establishing and maintaining connections to other people.

Other studies of marginal sites have pointed at the social use of money: money should be used in a social way, handing out or spending it on others. Keeping money for oneself or saving it for later makes one unpopular, while spending money on friends makes one respected (e.g. Whyte 1943). A view on money appears which is completely different from the view usually presented. In order to understand these differences, I return to Georg Simmel's classic treatises on money and its uses in the economy of the modern capitalist world (2004[1907]). For Simmel, money encouraged modern capitalist rationality. In the capitalist world, money represents the 'clearest embodiment of the formula of all being, according to which things receive their meaning through each other, and have their being determined by their mutual relations' (2004[1907]:128, 129). Although money has perhaps never reached its "totalitarian" status depicted by Simmel, this view has certainly dominated the ideas on how people live the economy until present. A century after Simmel's observations, Gibson-Graham point at the weaknesses and obscurities of this "capitalocentric" view on the world (2006). They advocate a vision on 'diverse economies' or 'community economies' in which practices are understood in a frame that allows for economic difference.

I do not depict the economy in the slum as a community economy (Gibson-Graham 2006), as it evokes a romantic vision which does not coincide with my findings in Chão de Estrelas where economic practices are not firmly based in a united community, and where conflicts and competition are common. Moreover, the slum economy is given shape by its marginalised position, not from a communitarian ethic. Yet, taking up the discourse of economic difference, I show how the economic practices of slum dwellers differ from the dominant Simmellian view of money in the capitalist economy. Simmel explains that money can compensate for the unevenness that exists in pre-capitalist systems of barter (2004[1907], Bloch & Parry 1989). However, for slum dwellers and others who live in the margins of the political and economic order, I argue, money exchange always implies a situation of unevenness. Their labour is exploited: they are low-paid and the surplus produced is appropriated by their employers. In terms of consumption, they have to pay more than they can reasonably afford. In their case, contrary to the equality expressed by money, the value of their labour value exceeds the value of their consumption, but this is not expressed in their salary. Additionally, the instability of money through inflation is most perceptible for them, as it may make the

difference between a good meal and an empty stomach. As such, for slum dwellers, money is intrinsically about unevenness, inequality, and instability.

I tend to agree with Oliven (1998) who points at a social dimension present in the way Brazilians in general, from all different social classes, use their money. Comparing money use in Brazil with that in the USA, he concludes that in Brazil a less "total" and less individual attitude exists towards money. While his general argument is not empirically well grounded, Oliven highlights how, in Brazil, money is always related to the rampant social and economic inequality in the country. This situation, I contend, is most intimately embodied by slum dwellers, whose understanding of money is associated with unevenness, inequality, and instability.

In addition, the ways in which slum dwellers use their money and exchange gifts, cannot be explained by the dominant dichotomy between commodity exchange as modern capitalist transaction and gift exchange as pre-modern transaction. Gregory, drawing upon Marx and Mauss, presents the debates about different kinds of transactions (1982). He argues that commodity exchange is based on an exchange of alienable objects between independent actors. This is from a capitalist perspective in which transactions cease to exist after the good has been purchased or sold, and social dimensions do not play a role. As such, the best transaction occurs with an anonymous other. Gregory opposes commodity exchange to gift giving, which is based on an exchange of inalienable objects between interdependent actors. In gift-giving, transactions continue beyond the actual exchange of goods. The practices of slum dwellers, even when dealing with commodities, approximate more to the latter, maintaining connections through exchanging unequal gifts and buying on one's name without paying. The inalienable character of the object – money or goods – and the interdependence of the actors involved in the transaction indicate that these transactions cannot be considered capitalist transactions. It is this kind of transactions that are part and parcel of the lives of slum dwellers. Whereas, in capitalist theory, transactions are solely centred upon a good purchased or sold, for slum dwellers the primary focus is the social relation, or better: the person involved in the transaction. For Simmel, money could be interchanged with any other amount of money without affecting its value (2004[1907]). This seems an undeniable truth. However – and this is a central point of understanding the economy of the slum and the way money is used in it – if I exchange an amount of money with an equal amount of money of my neighbour, the value of money has not been affected, but I have established or maintained a connections that enhances my chances to live life, thrive, and survive. In this respect, I hold a critical stance towards social programmes that aim at teaching the poor how to save money in projects of micro-credit, as these run a risk of undermining the effectiveness of connections among people and risk anti-social outcomes.

Practices of borrowing/keeping also run counter to a purely instrumental use of money. It is common practice to ask somebody whether one can borrow some money

with the purpose of keeping it. Slum dwellers ask each other or outsiders for – usually small amounts of – money *para emprestar*, to borrow. Subsequently, they never settle the debt. Nevertheless, the creditor can remind the debtor about his debt, for example when a conflict arises between them. Similarly, when the debtor needs another favour, he may remind the creditor that he is really still planning to return the money of the first loan as well.

This practice of borrowing/keeping resonates with the study on Papua and Melanesian languages referred to by Mauss, in which exists: 'only a single word to cover buy and sell, borrow and lend' (Holmes 1924:294 in Mauss 1970[1954]:31). Mauss' theorisation of gift exchange is highly illuminating with regard to practices of borrowing/keeping. Mauss suggests that, with gifts, 'It is wrong to speak … of alienation, for these things are loaned rather than sold and ceded' (1970[1954]:42). In borrowing/keeping practices, money becomes inalienable, as a kind of gift that may once – in the same form, or otherwise, with more or less value – be returned to the giver. As such, the practice surpasses the capitalist idea that transactions that involve money are 'impersonal, transitory, amoral and calculating' (Bloch & Parry 1989:9). Without elaborating further on rather functionalist debates about possible reciprocity in transactions of borrowing/keeping and the question whether money is a commodity or not, I want to conclude that, in these practices, the establishment and maintenance of connections is a central dimension, which exceeds the economic values involved.

On a more abstract level, the importance of the connection lies in the expectations inherent in the connection. It is my contention that the expectations of possibilities involved in a certain connection exceed the actual manifestation of the resources of that connection. In the case of slum dwellers, in their connections to fellow slum dwellers, but especially to community leaders and outsiders, the benefits possibly derived from a contact always surpass the resources in which this connection is expressed. In other words, the potential of the connection is larger than its actual manifestation. Moreover, for slum dwellers, the connection may draw the line between being recognised as a person and being abandoned. Raquel's connection to the man from the health post, Hildo's connection to the woman who arranged chores for him, BJ's connection to the manager of the water source: these hold a promise for the future in which they may be of help, creating access to possibilities beyond compare and move away from abandonment.

Notes

[1] The amount of years needed for pension is subject to change and interpretation, but these are the official numbers valid during my fieldwork.

[2] See note 9 in chapter 3.

[3] This was a registered kind of "buy now, pay later", different from buying on one's name as I explain later.

[4] The argument that the industry, due to capital-intensification of production processes, did not generate much extra employment in this period and that the increasing job opportunities came mainly from the tertiary sector (Assies 1992) makes sense, but cannot be supported with my research findings.

[5] Dizziness is a common complaint among slum dwellers. It is called *labirintite*, labyrinthitis, and is known as a balance disorder caused by inflammation of the inner ear.

[6] A permanent job, in Portuguese *emprego fixo*, is a job for a few years or undetermined period with a contract and a work card. In the context of a slum, it may also mean a job with a contract or a verbal agreement that the employee can remain working for a relatively long or undetermined period, with or without a work card. It is in contrast to temporary or odd jobs.

[7] Motel: place where people can rent rooms per hour, usually for making love

[8] Note that Portuguese has two words that can be translated by work: *emprego* and *trabalho.* The first means employment and is associated with permanent jobs with a work card. The latter, meaning 'work' is used in a broader sense that can also include 'chores' or all kinds of irregular self-employment.

[9] Of course, a rigid division between employment and self-employment does not exist. It is best to view these as two ends of a continuum (cf Davis 2006:178).

[10] I contend that self-employment rendered a good remedy against the alienation so highly present in many low-paid jobs. However, the argument is beyond the scope of this book.

[11] A difference between *viração* and moonlighting is that the latter refers to an extra job next to the registered one, without paying taxes on money earned with it, while in *viração* both jobs may be unregistered.

[12] Additionally, it is hard to make a distinction between sex work and "romantic" aspirations of female slum dwellers who try to start a relationship with richer men (cf Rebhun 1999).

[13] The programme of *Bolsa Escola* (School Stipend) was still often referred to, but is in fact a predecessor of and incorporated in *Bolsa Família* in 2003.

[14] Solien makes a difference between *consanguineal* households and *matrifocal* households; the former 'includes no regularly present male in the role of husband-father' while in the latter a husband-father might be present. In Chão de Estrelas many *consanguineal* – or female headed – households were present. However, when talking about gender division I turn to the broader term *matrifocality*.

[15] Except for most evangelical men who, according to their creed, were not supposed to drink.

[16] One might wonder why nobody in the community responded to the demand of these goods. I think the proximity of neighbourhoods that offered those goods might be a reason.

[17] I take into account too that they were not used to taking a taxi. Youthful inexperience also might be an additional factor.

[18] This practice can be seen as a point where gift exchange and commodity exchange intricately intersect (cf Bloch and Parry 1989).

5

Theoretically framing slum politics

…political in a way different from that of the elite
- Partha Chatterjee, 2004

Introduction

As the next three chapters deal with the elections, governmental interventions and issues of citizenship in the slum, this chapter explains how slum politics is entwined with, but different from, electoral and governmental politics. As most literature on these issues in Latin America draws on notions of clientelism, here I also explicitly discuss the limitations of a patron-client perspective for understanding slum politics.

Slum politics is different from a more descriptive notion of politics, which conjures up images of formal policies, policy makers, meetings, desks, budgets, political parties, and a state apparatus, often directly associated with emotive notions like "good governance" or "corruption". Slum politics, instead, includes the 'manifold forms of organising, whether they be individual or more collective' (Nuijten 2003:11), formal or informal. Hitherto, in previous chapters, I have defined slum politics, introduced the community leaders as its main articulators, and documented how the latter gave expression to it in their projects. Chapter 4 showed how certain needs and aspirations are present in the slum, forming the basis for slum politics. The current chapter sets out to further frame slum politics within the anthropological tradition of studying the politics and political organisation of those who live in the margins of the political order, in non-state and anti-state settings, and employ both "modern" and "traditional" ways of political organisation. The chapter builds upon discussions of the projects of community leaders as introduced in chapter 3, and the ways slum dwellers organised their lives as presented in chapter 4.

Taking up Partha Chatterjee's theorisation of the politics lived and practiced by the marginalised (2004), I come to argue that slum politics is shaped in the intersection between modern needs for progress and purchase of commodities, and, the intricate needs and aspirations which are directed towards projects of solidarity, care, and countering processes of abandonment. My notion of slum politics takes much inspiration from Chatterjee's ideas of popular politics and "political society" (2004). However, I problematise his depiction of such politics as reactive to or derived from governmental politics. More generally, I argue that existing studies fundamentally

misrecognise the nature of politics in the slum, treating it as synonymous to, or derived from, externalist conceptualisations like governmental and electoral politics, and clientelism.

Taking a closer look at slum politics

Slum politics and the anthropology of politics

Anthropology has a rich history of studying politics and political organisation. Evans-Pritchard's seminal monograph (1940), *The Nuer* began anthropology's concern with political organisation. While *The Nuer* and the work that immediately followed it were beholden to a structural functionalist approach, anthropologists soon began to depart from these perspectives, substituting the picture of political organisation as a 'still life' with that of a more 'bustling tableau' (Eriksen & Nielsen 2001:91). British anthropologists from the Manchester School in particular espoused a 'new' view on politics and political organisation that centred on the more dynamic and conflictive nature of politics. Max Gluckman, in his classic study "The Bridge" (1958[1940]), offered an analysis of contemporary political activity and illuminated the dynamics of social change, instead of presenting the logics of timeless political structures (Vincent 2002). Others, following Gluckman, studied the encounter between colonial powers and local rule and emphasised the dynamic and conflictive character of political organisation in Africa (Turner 1957, van Velsen 1964) and Asia (Leach 1954, Bailey 1960, 1969). In the 1970s, Talal Asad's scathing critique of anthropology's failure to tackle colonialism, and its own relationship to colonial regimes (1973), resulted in studies of postcolonial political organisation. In its wake, the encounter between modern and "traditional" or local forms of political organisation was studied, paying attention to emerging forms of nationalism in post-colonial societies (e.g. Anderson 1991). Meanwhile, Clifford Geertz emphasised the need to study the cultural dimensions of politics (1972).

In the 1980s and 1990s, Marxian thought was highly influential within anthropology. Anthropologists showed great interest in the politics of social movements that seemed to resist the workings of state and globalised policies (e.g. Alvarez, Dagnino & Escobar 1998). Simultaneously, anthropology studied specific groups that were politically excluded by the state and described the specific ways in which they resisted or protested from marginalised positions (e.g. Scott 1985, Tsing 1993), or coped with everyday violence (e.g. Scheper-Hughes 1992), even in political systems deemed "truly modern" (e.g. Bourgois 1995). Many studies of "marginalised people" are indebted to the work of the "subaltern studies group", a group that emerged in the 1980s, comprising mainly Indian academics who reworked Gramsci's (1971) writings on hegemony and the all-encompassing subordination of non-elite groups. The group insisted that scholarship needed to focus on giving a voice to the excluded in the

representation of history and contemporary processes. They criticised a compulsive clinging to European or colonialist frames of modernity in academic studies (Spivak 1988, Chatterjee 2004). In the last decade, Latin American counterparts (e.g. Restrepo & Escobar 2005, Ribeiro & Escobar 2006, Blaser *forthcoming*) also began to distance themselves from "western" understandings of the world. Instead they began to emphasise a different historical, epistemological– and even ontological (Blaser *forthcoming*) – base for understanding politics.

Meanwhile, anthropology moved away from focusing only on the territorial boundaries of a region or state to globalised and even virtual political processes (e.g. Escobar 2002). An emphasis on the legacy of European colonial power was gradually substituted for a focus on the political workings of globalised Empire, inspired by the work of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2000). Simultaneously, feminist studies criticised dominant masculine, or phallocentric, understandings of the economy and politics and underscored the presence of alternative values and processes (Tronto 1993, Gibson-Graham 2005, 2006). Within anthropology, these studies critiqued the dominant euro- and phallocentric logics intrinsic to the discipline, and its misunderstanding or complete ignorance of processes that are beyond these logics. In doing so, these studies opened up spaces for understanding local economies and politics through their own dynamics, bringing to light practices that are usually silenced, hidden, or neglected (cf Gibson-Graham 2005, Escobar 2001). Recently, scholarship has explored new topics, such as issues of sovereignty and modern government, reaching beyond universalist understandings of the state, and discusses how people who live in the margins relate to the political and economic order (Ferguson & Gupta 2002, Nuijten 2003, Das & Poole 2004, Hansen & Stepputat 2001, 2005, 2006).

In positioning slum politics in the margins of the political and economic order, I stay close to anthropology's tradition of studying modes of politics and political organisation which do not correspond with, or are not fully captured by, the dominant political system. Slum politics includes cultural performance and ritual, and 'the social and material practices of resource distribution that reinforce these' (Rap 2004:211, also Auyero 2001). Yet, there is more to slum politics than distribution or re-allocation of resources, be they social or material. Previous chapters showed how slum politics is grounded in particular intangible and utopian aspirations. Furthermore, slum politics is about a culture of social connections which emerges from the particular sociabilities of life in the slum. I do not mean by this only the cultural dimension of politics – in the sense of cults, customs and rituals –, but a culture of politics (cf Alvarez, Dagnino & Escobar 1998) whereby social connections are established around specific needs and aspirations.

Moreover, slum politics comprises collective endeavours, but is certainly not a homogeneous project in which all slum dwellers are involved. The needs, aspirations, and expectations expressed by different people, time and again result in conflicts

between different interests. Furthermore, conflicts arise between those involved in slum politics – the community leaders and other slum dwellers – on one hand, and those who live up to different understandings of politics – like officials and politicians – on the other.

Slum politics consists mostly of *impromptu* dealings with situations faced. Chapter 2 has already discussed the high rate of failure in the undertakings of community leaders. With reference to this, it is easy to argue that slum politics corresponds with de Certeau's understanding of *tactics* – the everyday opportunistic practices people use to create space on an *ad hoc* basis – rather than with the intended and structured design of *strategies* (1984). However, arguing that the urban poor only operate through tactics, while modern political order is founded in strategies, implies a condescending and elitist attitude towards the urban poor. Was Ovídio's practical inconclusiveness a manifestation of tactics which lacked strategy? Did Zezinho's attempts to enhance safety in the neighbourhood merely occur on an ad-hoc basis? Was Creuza's attempt to acquire an office a spontaneous act? Were there not plans, ideas, or designs behind these activities? I argue that there certainly were, as the community leaders and their fellow slum dwellers tried to gain access to material and intangible resources and construct utopias. I contend that slum politics comprises *both* tactics and strategies. Ideologies and principles – expressed for example in the topics around which community leaders time and again frame their projects – point at certain strategies and form an important motivation behind particular slum politics. At the same time, a certain "ad-hoc-ism" persists, due to the precarious and provisional conditions in which slum politics takes place.

Methodologically, my rather open ended definition of the concept means that it is hard to precisely locate slum politics. I do not espouse the notion of an "everyday politics", in which all practices can be seen as political, as this does not allow for any specification. Instead, it is important to distinguish which practices belong to slum politics and which do not. I argue that, through reflection, the anthropologist can decide upon inclusion or exclusion in a wide array of practices observed and as such define what slum politics is. Doing so, a particular practice may be considered the expression of a certain aspiration, even when informants do not label their practices in this way. Through adding up similar practices and analysing reflections of and directions taken by slum dwellers, slum politics is shaped along their needs and aspirations.

Fear of abandonment, recognition and connectivity

Chapter 1 contended that, in slum politics, there is a particular emphasis on needs and aspirations relating to a fear of abandonment. This idea of "being abandoned" was frequently expressed by slum dwellers. When I first came to Chão de Estrelas, residents described the area to me as 'abandoned'. During meetings, slum dwellers would accuse

the authorities of having 'abandoned' the community.

The polluting dimension of electoral politics relates to this fear of abandonment. Experiences of the broken promises of politicians are seen as acts of forsaking the urban poor. As Raquel wrote in her poem about a politician: 'he always forsakes us'. Furthermore, abandonment is not only viewed with regard to politicians, but also in relation to fellow slum dwellers. It also includes fellow slum dwellers' lack of initiative in doing something about problems (cf Perlman 1976). Being abandoned means being forsaken by everybody.

The poignant reality of abandonment was expressed in a joke a resident from Chão de Estrelas told me: 'When does a slum dweller know that he also is *gente* (people)?' The answer came: 'When he is on the toilet and somebody knocks the door, asking '*Tem gente*?' Figuratively '*Tem gente*?' means 'Anybody there?', but literally it means 'Are there any people?' Although the literal translation into English loses some of the humour of the joke, its message is clear nevertheless: slum dwellers are not considered people. They are not considered human beings. Through jokes like this, which can be seen as everyday acts of resistance (Scott 1990, Goldstein 2003) – slum dwellers strive to counter the processes of abandonment which degrade them to being nonpersons.

These attempts to act against abandonment are grouped around issues of "recognition" and "connectivity". Slum dwellers express the aspiration to be recognised as persons, as 'full human beings' (Boff & Boff 1987:8) with complex personhood which extends beyond categories of simplistic stigmatisation. Auyero rightly indicates that leaders not only provide goods and services to their "followers" but also cater to the latter's 'desires to be cared for and recognised' (Auyero 2001:181).

The case studies explored in chapter 3, Ovídio's urban agriculture project and Creuza's re-established association, demonstrated how slum dwellers participated in projects through which they expressed their aspirations and displayed their capacities and talents. Doing so, they engaged in an attempt to gain recognition. One important term used was being *considerado,* 'being considered',meaning being esteemed or valued for who one is, the opposite of being ignored. Slum dwellers argue that a certain person is *considerado*, meaning that he is well-known and taken seriously by others. Ovídio neglected an invitation for a wedding as he felt that he was not *considerado* by the bride's family. Likewise, a Brazilian singer emphasises his prestige when he sings to the girlfriend who left him: 'You know well that I am *considerado*'.[1] Attempts to be *considerado* call for recognition. For example, the sentiments of pride and aspirations towards prestige in the anthem that Ovídio had composed (see chapter 3) gave expression to the desire to be recognised as a community.

Connectivity is pivotal in this desired recognition. I use this term differently from Deleuze and Guattari (1988, see also Hansen & Verkaaik *forthcoming*) who emphasise its rhizomatic shape and dynamics. Instead, I see connectivity as based in face-to-face relations between persons which need to be maintained in intricate modalities. In a

political order which centres on the disconnection of slum dwellers, the latter constantly attempt to be connected in the best way possible, given the precarious nature of their position and the tenuous and unequal character of social relations. One can see the valuation and aspiration towards connectivity in slum dwellers' connections to community leaders and their high regard of these leaders' many contacts and intimate dealings with outsiders. For community leaders, connectivity is crucial as it enables them to create access to resources, gain prestige, and live up to the image of a good leader.

Slum politics: politics in a heterogeneous modernity

Modernity is often depicted as the inexorable end and culmination of history. Instead, Partha Chatterjee rightly points at the general misconception of modernity as omnipresent and all-encompassing (2004). In the social sciences, modernity tends to be seen as an 'essential, immutable, and uniform quality' of social life (Pigg 1996:192). As such, modernity is conceived as 'homogeneous empty time' (Chatterjee 2004:4), meaning that alternatives are deemed to belong to pre-modern times and comprise backward practices carried out by underdeveloped people (cf Pigg 1996, Mbembe 2001).

I attempt to go beyond these notions of a homogeneous singular modernity and into 'multiple modernities (Arce & Long 2000) or 'alternative modernities' which are not outside or untouched by modernity, but different from it (Escobar 2004, 2008). Chatterjee instructively coins the concept of a 'heterogeneous time of modernity', depicting "other" times not as a 'mere survivors from a pre-modern past' but as relatively 'new products of the encounter with modernity itself' (2004:7,8).

One risk of depicting slum politics as taking place in another time lies in understanding it as a residual category. My approach stresses that the heterogeneous time of modernity and slum politics are by no means residual categories, which are negatively given shape by defining what they are not. Instead, I positively define slum politics as what it *is*, grounded in needs and aspirations, and expressed in practices which aim to actualise these.

Slum politics is the product of encounters with modernity as they take place in slums, in sites considered emblematic for Brazil's uneven modernisation (Jaguaribe 2004). These are sites where promises of modernity have been only partially delivered, its benefits have been only scarcely distributed, and its losses have been made poignantly tangible. The needs and aspirations of slum dwellers are not only restricted to life in the slum. They are part and parcel of what keeps many people around the globe going. Needs for food, shelter, employment, and cell phones are common outside the slum as well. However, I argue, the intangible and utopian aspirations of slum dwellers, such as desires for solidarity and to act against abandonment, are not readily recognised by a neoliberal vision which heralds individuality and autonomy. These

needs and aspirations, disavowed in the modern political and economic order, are strongly emphasised in slums. Living in the precariousness and provisionality of the margins, I argue, entails a strong emphasis on the need for connectivity, recognition, and acting against the daily threat of abandonment.

Slum politics, governmental politics, electoral politics and clientelism

Misunderstanding politics of the slum

When reviewing anthropological publications on slums in Brazil, one major paradox is immediately apparent. Although anthropology's *raison d'etre* is providing perspectives that are grounded in thorough study of local notions, customs, and rationales, as soon as the politics of slum dwellers are studied, the analysis becomes based on externalist, middle- and upper-class, conceptualisations of politics, such as governmental and electoral politics and clientelism. In such an elitist or scholastic point of view (Bourdieu 1990, Auyero 2001), politics in the slum is narrowed down to participation of slum dwellers in governmental programmes or reacting against governmental interventions, involvement in electoral campaigns, and clientelist relations (Caldeira 1984, Gay 1994, Herkenhoff 1995, Magalhães 1998, Pandolfi & Grynszpan 2003). Although slum politics is entwined with governmental and electoral and clientelism – concepts I come to clarify later – I argue that it comprises of much more, and cannot be understood according to the logics inherent in these externalist conceptualisations. Notions like political parties, participation, political alliances, citizenship, democracy might seem commonplace in prevailing definitions of politics, but, I argue, are often reproduced by upper and middle class and not resonant with the reality in the slum. As I demonstrated in chapter 1, life in the slum is fundamentally different from middle- or upper-class life. As a consequence, the meanings slum dwellers invest in politics greatly differ from assumptions and theories reproduced among those concerned with formal politics, like political scientists and politically engaged middle-class people. Moreover, I contend, using externalist concepts to explain politics in the slum, degrades the politics of slum dwellers to upper and middle class agendas, while ignoring its contents and the dynamics it engenders.

The work of Javier Auyero (1999, 2000, 2001), on 'poor people's politics' in the slums of great Buenos Aires in Argentina, proves helpful for coming to grips with slum politics in Brazil. He shows how clientelist practices take place within mutual support networks which include slum dwellers and political brokers. In these mutual support networks, people produce and act upon symbolic representations so as to reproduce given systems of domination. Doing so, he implicitly invokes a Durkheimian vision of ideological cohesion and cultural meanings which are symbolically reproduced and shared by all social classes (cf Hansen & Stepputat 2006). However, these shared

"symbolic representations", which he captures within Peronism, deny the existence of fundamental social and political contradictions. His assumption that slum dwellers share a wider moral universe with dominant sectors of the political order - as reflected in Peronist populism - does not hold for the slums in Recife. Of course, this may be a reflection of the different political history and nationalist sentiments of Argentina and Brazil. Despite recent attempts of the PT to establish a set of moral values based on a socialist utopia in Brazil – communicated through symbols of banners, logos, and a pro-poor jargon – its emotional and moral value is incomparable with those of Peronism in Argentina. Nonetheless, Auyero himself exposes the problems inherent in his articulation of a shared moral universe when he documents the different reasons slum dwellers had to participate in a Peronist march: they participated because of the food waiting at the end, or out of loyalty to the community leaders who invited them, and not because they shared the values of a Peronist moral universe. My argument is that slum dwellers draw on a moral, political and cultural universe which differs widely from the values of Brazilian middle and upper classes. Doing so, slum politics is not necessarily functional to the reproduction of a system of domination, but, on the contrary, can be viewed as both distinct from and connecting to the dominant political system, whilst having an internal basis and a dynamics and logics of its own.

Nara Magalhães (1998) takes issue with the dictum once expressed by Brazilian soccer player Pelé that *'o povo não sabe votar'* (the people do not know how to vote), by showing how slum dwellers in Porto Alegre vote and perceive electoral politics. She emphasises that slum dwellers' politics cannot be understood by simply stating that they are uninformed, depoliticised, and alienated. She argues that slum dwellers base their choice for a political candidate on a logics that 'extrapolates the moment of an election' (1998:33) and takes recourse to slum dwellers' social imaginary of politics and politicians. However, while asserting the existence of different political logics, she fails to show its presence in practices of slum dwellers. Moreover, she – similar to Auyero's work in Argentina with regard to Peronism – looks for a shared Brazilian cultural vision of politics, arguing that although there are different classes with different perceptions of politics and political practices, there 'exists a cultural feature that unites these universes: we all belong to the same society, we interact, and we all know what we are talking about when we refer to, for example, the nation, government, democracy, elections, candidates' (1998:124). Doing so, instead of understanding the politics of slum dwellers from its own dynamics and logics, she eventually explains these within the frame of reference of governmental and electoral politics, arguing that slum dwellers share their political notions with upper and middle class.

Robert Gay's (1994) study of politics in two slums in Rio de Janeiro also leans too heavily on external notions. Gay discusses the clientelist practices through which relations between the urban poor and political elites are fashioned. Instead of understanding the politics in the slum from its own parameters, he describes the

changing nature of political clientelism in Rio, and provides a historical analysis of elite and middle-class politics and its notions of political parties and alliances, elections, and civil society organisations.

Critiquing Chatterjee's "political society"

My notion of slum politics, which overcomes the shortcomings mentioned above, comes closest to what Partha Chatterjee labels 'popular politics' (2004). Chatterjee's attempt to come to an understanding of 'the politics of the governed' focuses not on the politics of the state apparatus or the government, but on the politics of marginalised people. I whole-heartedly agree with his argument that this kind of politics should not be understood as "pre-political" and backward, but as a politics with its own parameters and logics, 'different from that of the elite' (idem:39). He shows how popular politics does 'not necessarily presume any particular institutional form' although it is often 'conditioned by the functions and activities of modern governmental systems that have now become part of the expected functions of government anywhere' (2004:3). Popular politics consists of practices which take place in 'political society', a concept Chatterjee refreshingly conceptualises as those 'contrary mobilisations' that may have 'transformative effects… among the supposedly unenlightened sections of the population' (idem:49). The 'supposedly unenlightened' are described as those who are not 'proper members of civil society and are not regarded as such by the institutions of the state' but stand in a political relation with the state as 'populations within the territorial jurisdiction of the state' (idem:38). In order to obtain resources from the government, the poor have to negotiate and apply pressure in the right places. 'This would frequently mean the bending or stretching of rules, because existing procedures have historically worked to exclude or marginalize them' (idem:66). 'The poor… have expanded their freedoms by using means that are not available to them in civil society' (idem:67). One of Chatterjee's examples is that of associations in squatter zones that, according to civil society, are illegal and do not exist. Chatterjee argues that the existence of this paralegality 'is not some pathological condition of retarded modernity, but rather part of the very process of the historical constitution of modernity in most of the world' (idem:75). Those who are not considered proper citizens cannot enter civil society, but they do enter political society, defined as 'the terrain of the heterogeneous social, where multiple and flexible policies were put into operation, producing multiple and strategic responses from population groups seeking to adapt to, cope with, or make use of these policies' (idem:137).

Slum politics is similar to Chatterjee's conceptualisations of popular politics, as it cannot be understood by merely focusing on what is often labelled civil society. Although slum politics becomes manifest within activities of NGOs – as in Ovídio's Wake Up People, Zezinho's Residents' Union, and Creuza's newly established

Community Association – and connections are established with other NGOs, these comprise of only part of the scope of slum politics.

Yet, slum politics differs from Chatterjee's theorisation of the primacy of modern governance. According to Chatterjee, popular politics can be seen as 'a politics emerging out of the developmental policies of government aimed at specific population groups' that transgresses the strict boundaries of governmental policy (idem:40). The primacy of governmental politics concerning the 'politics of the governed' becomes even clearer when he defines political society as 'a site of negotiation and contestation opened up by the activities of governmental agencies aimed at population groups' (idem:74) and 'located in relation to the legal-political forms of the modern state itself' (idem:74). As such, for Chatterjee, popular politics needs to have an 'engagement with the apparatus of governmentality' (idem:64). This, for me, is a too narrow view of the politics of the governed. Although I am aware that the needs and aspirations of the slum population partly emerge from incomplete and failing developmental policies of the government – especially given that slums are a monstrous side effect of modernisation – and that slum politics and governmental politics are strongly entwined, nonetheless, I contend that slum politics does not emerge from governmental politics, but from the local needs and aspirations of the slum population. Chatterjee depicts popular politics as a reaction to, or derivative of, governmental politics. In contrast, I argue that slum politics are internally generated, as it is grounded in slum dwellers' needs and aspirations and expressed in their practices. In contrast to Chatterjee's negative definition of popular politics, as derived from what it is not, namely governmental politics, I position a positive definition of slum politics, consisting of practices of slum dwellers and their attempts to construct possibilities for another world. Needs for employment, food, goods and *obras*, practices of caring, showing loyalty, the production of a shared history, utopian cravings for solidarity, social justice, and environmentalism, and attempts to remain connected and recognised, come together in slum politics.

Slum politics and governmental politics

Slum politics comprises of many practices which take place alongside or in the shadows of the workings of governmental politics. Nonetheless, although slum politics cannot be understood as reactive to or derived from governmental politics, the two are intricately entwined. Slum dwellers' involvement in governmental politics includes making use of state institutes and agencies and laying claim to social security and pensions. As chapter 4 showed, these aspects of governmental politics have immense effects on the economic situation of slum dwellers and their ways of organising their lives. Apart from social security provision, governmental politics in Recife is manifested in the slum through many different programmes with objectives that vary from improving infrastructure to enhancing security, and from supporting cultural expressions to building citizenship.

From the last years of the military regime, these programmes have slowly developed a more participatory mode of operating (see chapter 1). This process was intensified when the PT assumed its position in the municipality in 2000. As showed in chapter 1, currently the OP of Recife is one of Brazil's largest programmes aimed at infrastructural improvement and citizenship enhancement. Of all governmental politics, OP is most visual in the slums through its huge meetings which slum dwellers, headed by community leaders who are often elected OP representatives, attend and through which they participate in the selection of *obras*. Yet, it becomes clear that slum politics comprises of more than participating in, or reacting to, programmes such as these. In fact, slum dwellers seized the opportunity provided by OP and other meetings to arrange other things. Slum dwellers, and especially community leaders, try to establish contacts with the politicians and officials who come to the slums in the wake of OP and other programmes. They try to convince them of their needs, reminding them of their cooperation, recalling the municipality's broken promises, or touching upon emotional values like friendship. They negotiate in order to put pressure on the execution of *obras* and request other favours. These informal negotiations and bending of the rules are what Chatterjee refers to as part of popular politics in 'political society' (2004). But apart from this stretching and bending the rules, slum dwellers also use their contact with outsiders for purposes not related to governmental politics. One example is how community leaders try to get resources for their own projects. Slum dwellers relate to governmental politics when they organise protests or hand in petitions to public authorities (cf Perlman 1976). Meanwhile, they act outside of governmental politics in, for instance, filing complaints to private companies, like bus companies, or organising projects in the slum without any connection to public bodies or governmental subsidies.

Most slum dwellers are familiar with hearing notions of democratization and civil society, since these are taught at public schools and mentioned in governmental messages on television. However, these concepts do not resonate with the everyday life in the slum where citizenship rights by definition do not hold. Moreover, a blue-print of fully-fledged citizenship in which the urban poor are entitled to the fulfilment of needs as their rights, and the acting out of aspirations as their autonomous liberty, only exists on paper, and is completely out of sync with the lives of slum dwellers. The discourse of citizenship and social inclusion, I argue, is based in a naive trust in state order and produces a legalistic kind of wishful thinking which ignores the poignant marginalisation of slum dwellers. Moreover, as chapter 8 comes to show, the workings of state-designed projects of registered citizenship intervene in the lives of the poor in harmful and intrusive ways which do not confer any rights to them.

Following this line of reasoning, a focus on slum politics distances itself from pro-poor activism based in *conscientização* (conscientisation, awareness-raising) and citizenship construction which propagates change from "outside" to the slums, propagating state reform or governmental intervention. This kind of activism, present in

pro-poor governmental and NGO programmes is premised on the philosophy that improvement of the situation of the poor will follow once they learn to participate in governmental and electoral politics. This places the burden of responsibility for the marginalisation of slum dwellers upon their own lack of understanding.

I do not believe that social activists are necessary to teach slum dwellers how to think critically and make them conscious of their oppressed situation (cf Scheper-Hughes 1992, Leeds 1971). Without undermining the value and good intentions of these endeavours, I argue that, by trying to include the poor in the current political order, these projects tend to neglect the slum politics present before their eyes. As such, they run a high risk of remaining a form of social engineering, trying to create something "better" within a political order which continues to push slum dwellers to the margins.

While I admire the attempts of Paulo Freire (1970) and others to make slum dwellers aware of and fight against their discriminated position, these also risk ending up as another well-intended exercise in neglecting the potential already present among the poor. This is similar to Aristotle's ideas of potential, as the architect's ability to build even if he does not build and the musician's ability to play even if he does not play (Agamben 1998:45), I argue that slum dwellers have a potential that needs to be recognised, even when they are not given the opportunity (yet) to make it manifest. The unavoidable question one must ask most pro-poor social activism is: why attempt to implement new political ideas and ideologies, while promising politics already abound?

Slum dwellers and "the state"

The differences between slum politics and governmental politics are further emphasised by the absence of an abstract notion of "the state" in slum dwellers' ways of talking about and imagining power and order. To them, "the state" is neither a mighty and dangerous outsider with power to decide over their lives, nor a potential benefactor which offers possible access to resources beyond measure. In other words, slum dwellers do not seem to be engaged in the construction of representations of power and order through the fetishisation of the state as a unified locus of control (cf Nuijten 2003, de Vries 2007). Much anthropological literature on excluded groups in society confers great explanatory importance to the abstract notion of the state. However, not even a stripped-off form of the state as an entity 'sitting' on top and encompassing localities (Ferguson & Gupta 2002) appears in the discourse and modes of imagining power of slum dwellers in Recife.

This "absence" is not because , as some authors propose, slums are areas in which the state has insufficiently penetrated (O'Donnell 1993, Goldstein 2003). In those terms there is no absence of the state in slums, for slum dwellers have frequent encounters with state projects, programmes, and representatives embodied in the police, land measurers, health and social workers, topographers, and officials engaged in

participatory programmes. However, these are not perceived of as representatives of a distinct apparatus called state. Slum dwellers refer to persons, like officials, politicians and the president, instead of to "the state". When they mention an institution like the municipality, they immediately link these to the person of the mayor – or the building, since the municipality is also a geographical locus. When asking slum dwellers about their opinion of "the government" or "the authorities" they relate this, immediately and implicitly, to the persons of mayor, governor or president, whom they refer to by their first name.

Thus my notion of slum politics , especially with regard to the reproduction of the state, differs from Veena Das and Deborah Poole's theorisation of being 'on the margins of the state' (2004). Das and Poole argue that the workings of the state become most apparent in the margins, where both its fundamental violence and its spectacular enjoyments and attractions are experienced. According to them, the state, as a locus of control, is reconstituted through both the fear of those who, living in the margins, experience state violence, and their creative ways of dealing with state institutions. They rely on a Foucauldian perspective in which the 'alternative forms of economic and political action' which are instituted in the margins simultaneously criticise and regenerate the system (Das and Poole 2004:19). In contrast to their view, in which the political order is perpetually being regenerated in the margins, my purpose is to show the potential of the margins. I recognise 'that "things could be otherwise" politically, based on the recognition that they are already "otherwise"', both discursively and empirically (Gibson-Graham 2005:142).

Slum politics and electoral politics

Slum politics overlaps with and is fundamentally different from electoral politics. Slum dwellers draw on contradictory registers to conceive of electoral politics: it is lauded for its ability to provide prestige and access to resources and simultaneously eschewed when it comes to its unreliable and selfish character (see chapter 2). The term electoral politics, in the way I use it, comprises all practices that are in some way instrumental for getting votes, assuming or maintaining public positions, and making money as such. It corresponds to a certain extent with party politics, but is not limited to boundaries between or competition within parties.

As chapter 6 comes to show, election time can be seen as a critical event in which the overlap between slum politics and electoral politics reaches its height. When politicians come to the slum with deals and promises, electoral politics penetrates into the realm of slum politics. The needs and aspirations expressed by slum dwellers find – at least a partial and temporal – fulfilment in material and social resources distributed through the channels of electoral politics. However, as these channels are short-lived and unreliable, nothing is guaranteed in the long term.

To understand how slum dwellers deal with electoral politics, I argue that the emphasis should be on connections between individuals, instead of an examination of political parties, factions, or ideologies. A focus on political party lines or factions has little explanatory value in approaching the practices of community leaders and other slum dwellers in Chão de Estrelas. Political factions certainly exist in Brazil, as groups of persons, both politicians and others, of possibly different political parties, maintain close personal ties and cooperate in the realm of electoral politics (cf Leeds 1964). In Brazil people refer to this as a *turma*, broadly signifying 'group of friends'.[2] Yet, although Ovídio, Zezinho, Creuza and fellow residents sometimes temporally operate in a group in the realm of electoral politics, this is of a rather tenuous character and never limits their activities. I argue that slum dwellers firstly establish connections with persons, not political parties. In fact they move between different political parties, as they relate primarily to politicians who – as is common in Brazil – regularly change electoral political configurations during their lifespan. Community leaders, who of all slum dwellers establish most connections with politicians, are aware of the alliances and *turma* of a politician, but this does not determines how they engage in electoral politics. In addition, when slum dwellers and community leaders talk about electoral politics, they hardly ever refer to parties. Instead, they talk about persons. If they refer to a party, they call it "the party of" followed by the name of a politician.

This personalised view on politics is not only typical of slum dwellers or applicable only in Brazil. In Brazil, especially when elections are approaching, also middle-class people discuss decisions, alliances, and the personal lives of politicians over party programmes. Although outside the slum political parties, their ideologies, histories, programmes and alliances with other parties are also widely debated and form topics in newspapers, books, magazines and television programmes, the personalised element is strongly present as well. In general, name and personality of candidates are far more important than the party or coalition to which they belong. Next to pictures of a candidate's face, publicity material often only mentions – in bold – his name, sometimes with – in smaller letters – the name of the coalition or party she or he is affiliated with. Publicity material is always in the colours set by the coalition or party. In addition, publicity for candidate councillors always shows the name, and even often a picture, of the candidate mayor they are allied to.

Unusually, the PT – leading the Recife municipality and the country when this story gets underway – attempted to establish an image of a party that was not solely centred upon the presence and activities of its political big shots. The party was presented through slogans and logos with the party name and in its campaign messages 'the PT' was often mentioned instead of the name of the political big shot. The PT was known to be configured according to a clear party organisation. Although the PT also centred upon central figures like president Lula and, in Recife, mayor João Paulo, its image was that of a more coherent party (Montero 2005). Furthermore, the PT is known for

introducing a policy discourse on participation and empowerment, which currently has become popularised and used by other parties. Still, as political parties do not resonate with the political practices of slum dwellers, I only occasionally make reference to them. Slum dwellers acknowledge that, despite their participation in elections, they are not really represented in the state. The current democracy of Brazil, in which the PT assumed and maintained power under the leadership of president Lula who was introduced as the embodiment of the emancipation of the working class, has not changed the discriminated position of slum dwellers. Bluntly, acknowledging that the majority of Brazil's population lives in poverty, the current democracy has evidently not listened to the demands of the majority of electors.

Slum politics: rebutting clientelism

Slum politics does contains practices that may be labelled clientelist. Slum dwellers also refer to clientelism, most often calling it *assistencialismo*. They depict clientelism as a tainted part of electoral politics and accuse leaders of acting in clientelist ways, by which they mean connecting to politicians and other influential outsiders with the aim of getting goods or money for themselves without helping the community.

Most studies on Latin America and the role and effect of electoral politics on those living in the margins of the political order base their explanations on notions of clientelism. However, I argue that this cannot be understood solely through the logics of clientelism. The concept of clientelism has a long and well-known tradition in Brazil, especially through the famous work of Gilberto Freyre (1999[1933]) and Sérgio Buarque de Holanda (1936) who both describe what they see as the clientelist foundations of Brazilian political culture. Following these works, many practices are still identified as clientelist without further clarification. The existence and persistence of clientelism is often "explained" by the benefits it brings for both clients and patrons (Mainwaring 1999). However, studying slum politics militates against taking easy refuge in the explanatory power of clientelism, as the latter tends to ignore the precise processes of the complex encounters, meetings, and negotiations through which exchange of votes for favours takes place and the consequences these entail for those labelled "clients" (de Vries 1997).

Auyero again provides a good starting point for rethinking the paradigmatic triad of patron-broker-client. Auyero points to a central phenomenon in the study of political clientelism: the exchange of votes for material rewards. Analysing the social logic of clientelism, he starts from the paradox that 'at a time when public discourse is dominated by neo-liberal rhetoric that stresses the salutary retreat of the state from markets … politics (and personal ties) are increasingly important for gaining access to resources' (Auyero 2000:60). He wonders, in other words, how it is possible that a particular way of doing politics, based on a moral economy of patron-client relations, is

reinvented under neo-liberal market conditions that presume an increased individualization of political decision-making. Auyero answers this question by pointing out that these clientelist networks, functioning as mutual support or problem-solving networks, 'are important precisely because they fulfil the functions that the state is abandoning' (ibid). He understands political clientelism in terms of problem solving networks in which slum dwellers are involved in constructing 'personalised ties, an imagined solidaristic community, and a protective and predictable network that buffers the harsh everyday reality of the slum' (Auyero 2000:70). Thus, Auyero provides a valuable counter to traditional political science which, ignoring these other practices, denounces clientelism as a black box which can be tolerated as noise or condemned as harmful, but never completely grasped as it does not match universal criteria.

Auyero's analysis of the social logic of political clientelism is highly innovative in offering a powerful explanation for the persistence of populist politics in slums under conditions of state retrenchment, privatisation, and generalised material deprivation. For the purpose of my study, the innovativeness of his work lies in the way he relates issues of subsistence to the workings of power in a given political system.

There are two different trends in studies focused on clientelism. One trend is represented by multiple studies examining the embeddedness of patron-client relations in moral frameworks in which defined norms of reciprocity, care, and mutual support play a central role, thus constituting a defined moral economy. The other trend follows individualistic or rational choice approaches which dismiss such normative perspectives, stressing instead aspects of strategic calculation in exchanges between patrons and clients. In the latter, the modus operandi of a defined political system is explained by focusing on individuals as strategic calculators.

Moral economy approaches have been applied to the study of peasant rebellion in rural, so-called "traditional", regions facing the capitalist modernisation. As James Scott writes in "The moral economy of the peasant" (Scott 1976), patron-client relations thrive in social environments where clients are highly vulnerable to wider economic changes and highly dependent on resources controlled by powerful patrons. Clients render services and votes to patrons in return for favours and protection. Transactions between patrons and clients take place within a distinct moral framework of rights and obligations, a moral economy reflecting the logic of subsistence in a highly fragile ecological context. When patrons, spurred by incentives of commercial agriculture, renege on their moral obligations, hence imperilling the subsistence chances of their clients, the latter, feeling betrayed, will opt for supporting radical political forces.

One problem with the moral economy thesis is its tendency to represent notions of community in idealized ways, thus downplaying internal divisions. Another, deeper problem is that social actors are portrayed in reactive rather than forward looking ways, as conservative actors who under conditions of material deprivation are most interested in maintaining the status quo so as to ensure their subsistence possibilities. Although

moral understandings are important for grasping values inherent in slum politics, I find such reifications or objectifications of political culture overly simplistic explanations of complex phenomena.

Individualistic, or rational choice approaches, in turn, tend to view social actors as highly calculative individuals ready to change allegiances in a volatile political market, trying to minimise risks and maximise gain (Popkin 1979, cf Boissevain 1974, Perlman 1976, Grindle 1977). This approach privileges studying motives, expectations, and the career patterns of political actors as ways to understand how a particular political system is shaped. Individuals are seen to be driven by personal interests and their mode of operation is read off from the structure of incentives afforded to them. Yet, how their interests are shaped by particular discourses and ideologies – such as those on community or clientelism – is not considered.

In addition, many authors have pointed at the so-called modernisation of political clientelism in Latin America under processes of transition from authoritarian rule to democracy. Some authors discard clientelist practices as an obstacle to democracy and the development of citizenship. Concerned with the transition from clientelism to citizenship, their conclusions are based on the understanding that clientelism and democracy are incompatible (Fox 1994, see Gay 2006 for a discussion). Others, like O'Donnell (1996), indicate that there is no inherent contradiction between political clientelism and democracy. On the contrary, political clientelism may bolster the legitimacy of regimes that under conditions of neo-liberal structural adjustment have very little to offer to their populations in the way of social policies. This is the case of the Salinas and Menem regimes in Mexico and Argentina in the 1990s during which anti-poverty programmes were used as clientelist electoral machines.

Gay argues that clientelism, under certain circumstances, plays a positive role in processes of democratic consolidation and thus should not be 'condemned as an instrument of elite control' (Gay 1998:7). He cautions against making clientelism the scapegoat for all the flaws in Brazilian democracy (Gay 1998). Gay argues instead that clientelism may ensure a degree of stability in political systems that are restricted by the global neo-liberal economic agenda. The result of this is a highly fragmented and atomised political system in which clientelism abounds, defined as 'the distribution of resources (or promise of) by political office holders or political candidates in exchange for political support, primarily – although not exclusively – in the form of the vote' (Gay 1990:648).

Much of the literature that draws upon clientelist frameworks depicts local leaders, such as community leaders in slums, as brokers heavily entangled in clientelist practices. These brokers are considered to be determined by patrons or party lines. Community leaders do indeed often deal with influential and resourceful outsiders and, in election time, work as brokers. However, as opposed to the classic view of brokers, community leaders do not fill a fixed position in a pyramidal social structure between

patron and clients. They, in fact, have considerable room for manoeuvre, and base their choices for cooperation with outsiders upon personal contacts and recommendations. They establish connections with politicians from different parties and factions.

In the 1970s, Jeremy Boissevain's classic 'Friends of friends' made a major contribution towards understanding brokers. Boissevain, critiquing functionalism and structuralism, describes the broker as a strategic actor engaged in rational considerations. He understands brokerage practices from the stance of the brokers, whom he depicts as "entrepreneurs" and innovative risk takers (Boissevain 1974). He defines the broker as 'a professional manipulator of people and information who brings about communication for profit. Brokers occupy a strategic place in a network of social relations viewed as a communication network' (Boissevain 1974:148,149). Boissevain claims that what makes someone a broker is his position in the political order and his ability to create and maintain contacts for the purpose of accessing resources. Although instructive and momentous at the time, Boissevain, by focusing excessively on the agency of the broker, obscures the social embeddedness of the performance of community leadership. In other words, he ignores the ways in which brokers *are being created and reproduced* by their "followers". The community leaders studied in this book are being created and reproduced by their fellow slum residents. The latter are not the presumed clients usually represented in literature as gullible victims of rapacious brokers, but actively project their needs and aspirations on community leaders and hold him accountable for their deeds.

A further critique that can be levelled against Boissevain is that his view of brokerage is too strategic and leans on a rational choice perspective, depicting brokers as entrepreneurs who run a business in social relations and whose aim it is to make profit. I contend that these notions of modern individuality do not resonate with the social reality of community leaders in Recife slums. These leaders are not "in the business" only for profit, but, contrary to the view that emphasises their role as individualistic strategists, display a strong commitment to their community and notions of solidarity.

Similarly, a criticism often levelled by politicians and officials against community leaders is that they are not loyal to their political contacts and deal with political ideology in a purely pragmatic way (cf Gay 1994). This is based in the belief that community leaders sell their services, or their soul, to the highest bidder, regardless of ideology. I do not consent to this view which depicts community leaders as merely opportunistic and calculative operators, thus downgrading the capacities, initiatives and achievements of community leaders by locating them outside an "honest" politics centred on 'loyalty and principles'. Strategic calculation certainly plays a role in slum politics, but slum politics cannot be viewed outside its embeddedness in particular historical and cultural dimensions.

Auyero's analysis is very instructive, despite the differences between the brokers

Auyero depicts, who are politically active middle-class social workers, and the community leaders I study, who are themselves slum dwellers (1999, 2000, 2001). He provides a deft synthesis of moral economy and rational choice approaches, combining a focus on moral notions of care and reciprocity with a strong emphasis on the strategic agendas of political entrepreneurs. He depicts brokers as calculative actors who capture certain positions in a social hierarchy while connecting to different people, which enables them to control critical resources and hoard information (cf Boissevain 1974). At the same time they establish close relationships of care and mutual support with specific individuals and cater to the needs of slum residents.

Auyero's approach allows one to map both the objective structure of clientelism, as a system of domination based on the strategic position of brokers in-between "outsiders" and clients, and the subjective experiences of clients, who do not depict themselves merely as clients but define their connection to brokers in moral terms. In view of this, the social logic of clientelism entails both strategic calculative behaviour and the construction of moral ties. Similarly, it is my argument that the position and practices of community leaders in slum politics should be seen as a combination of their own strategic decisions and ways in which they are constructed "from below". Moreover, on the one hand, they are being influenced by the dominant political order, and on the other by slum dwellers who approach them with their needs and hold them accountable for their deeds.

Conclusions

This chapter has located the study of slum politics within an anthropological tradition of research into politics and political organisation in the shadows of, or outside, the dominant political order. Slum politics, based in strivings to counter abandonment, achieve recognition, and establish connectivity, takes place in the encounter between, on the one hand, modern needs for material goods and progress and, on the other hand, complex needs and aspirations for solidarity, care and countering processes of abandonment.

I argued that recent studies misrecognise the nature of politics in the slum as they approach it from an externalist and scholastic point of view (Bourdieu 1990, Auyero 2001). Doing so, they equate slum politics with governmental and electoral politics and notions of clientelism. To conceptualise slum politics, I turned instead to Partha Chatterjee's theorising of popular politics as the politics of 'the supposedly unenlightened sections of the population' which takes place in "political society" (2004:49). Whilst agreeing with his theorisation of popular politics as different from elitist views on politics, I problematise his delineation of popular politics as a residual category, derived from or reacting against governmental politics. Instead, I presented how slum politics relates to, but is distinct from, governmental politics. Furthermore, I

pointed at the absence of an abstract notion of "the state" in slum dwellers' ways of talking about and imagining power.

Thus, the chapter documents how slum politics overlaps, but is different from, electoral politics. Electoral politics instead is seen, by slum dwellers, as both promising in terms of resources and prestige and yet also potentially polluting those involved in it. Finally, I presented a critical assessment of clientelist dimensions of slum politics, arguing that a clientelist logic is present in the slum, but not in determining ways. Elements of both moral economy and rational choice approaches are present in the practices of community leaders, as they make their own strategic decisions, are influenced by the dominant political order, and are constructed "from below" by fellow slum dwellers.

Notes

[1] Paulo Diniz in the song 'Maria das Dores'

[2] Another word in Brazilian Portuguese that refers to the same phenomenon is *panelinha*, literally meaning 'little pan'. This term was less used, and, in my opinion, always used in a disapproving way and related to persons of high rank, while *turma* is a more neutral and general term. See also Leeds (1964) on this and related terms.

6

Community leaders contaminated with electoral politics

I want to do Politics with a capital P. Little party politics I do not do.
- Ovídio Ferreira de Paula, 2004

I do not like nauseating politics. I do not do play tricks.
- José Antônio da Cruz, 2004

Introduction

The contaminating dimension of electoral politics

In chapter 2 I explained how slum dwellers conceive of electoral politics as both attractive and repugnant, as it opens possibilities for prestige and resources, while implying the danger of steering away from community interests in the direction of personal gain. In other words, electoral politics contaminates slum politics. Electoral politics includes instrumental practices that are directly or indirectly aimed at getting votes, assuming or maintaining public positions and profiting through these. This chapter shows how, in the overlap between slum politics and electoral politics, the former can become contaminated with issues of self-interest. Electoral politics is always present in the slum, but manifests itself more evidently during election times. At these moments community leaders face the most tension from competing expectations. While on the one hand one is expected to be a leader who works selflessly for the community, gaining for it prestige and resources through connections to politicians, on the other hand accusations of self-interested disregard of community interest abound.

Existing studies on connections between community leaders and politicians in Brazil describe spaces and strategies for negotiation (Ottmann 2006, Nielsen 2002) and the results achieved (Banck & Doimo 1989, Gay 1994). However, little attention is paid to what exactly is at stake for community leaders in these negotiations and what they do. In this chapter I explore these stakes during election times, drawing from my experiences of joining Ovídio and Zezinho in meetings with officials, campaign workers and candidate-councillors and in conversations with fellow slum dwellers. This chapter focuses on the 2004 elections and their aftermath as a critical event. I narrate the stories of Ovídio and Zezinho in this chapter. While Creuza adopted similar practices, she will be the subject of the following chapter, and not this one.

The case studies show how electoral politics is organised in the slum and how Ovídio and Zezinho become contaminated. Ovídio's case demonstrates how his allegiance is sought after by several politicians who want him to work for them in their campaign.[1] He faces a daunting task as he must constantly fend off lurking accusations of slum dwellers that he has forgotten the well-being of the community. Eventually, he does not manage to live up to the expectations of being a good community leader as he gets *queimado* ("burnt") – losing the trust of his fellow slum dwellers – and retreats from electoral politics.

The case of Zezinho shows how he achieves little for the community, but sees good opportunities for personal gain. He takes pleasure in being "close to power" and gaining prestige, although he constantly remains on the verge of being ignored by the politicians he turns to. He organises meetings, makes innumerable visits to politicians, officials and campaign workers and tries to get access to prestige and resources while expending his time and energy talking, negotiating and waiting. This case also illustrates the intricate entanglement of electoral politics and spectacle.

The cases display how Ovídio and Zezinho differ when it comes to their individual aspirations in the realm of electoral politics. While Ovídio has already had his best moments, and knows how to navigate the world of politics, Zezinho aspires to be a politician himself one day. Working to build up the necessary connections and impressed by the spectacle of electoral politics, he is still learning how to operate in this realm. Despite the fact that most of his experiences have not been rewarding, he continues to dream of innumerable possibilities. Before delving into the case studies, I will first explain the setting in which the 2004 elections took place. While the elections involved myriad actors and a complex set of rules and regulations, here I only present those elements necessary for understanding the case studies.

The electoral political setting and its main concepts

Every four years municipal elections are held all over Brazil on the same day. Voting is compulsory for Brazilians between 18 and 70 years old[2] and optional for those between 16 and 18 or older than 70. In municipal elections two votes are cast, one for mayor (*prefeito*) and one for councillor (*vereador*). Exactly in between these elections, also every four years, federal and state elections are held. In these, people cast three votes for positions at the federal level: president, senator and member of federal parliament (*deputado federal*). In addition, they cast two votes for positions at the state level: state governor and member of state parliament (*deputado estadual*). People are summoned to vote by electronic ballot box in appointed voting districts.

Brazil has many different political parties of which none achieve a majority of seats in the senate or state and federal parliaments. None of the current parties has been in power for extensive periods of time, unlike the PRI in Mexico or the Colorado Party in

Paraguay. Moreover, Brazil does not have a political party that can distinguish itself through an identity politics based on a certain event that invokes sentiments of national belonging, like the Peronista Party in Argentina. Although most Brazilian parties have a certain ideological background, all, except for some minor leftist groups, adhere to a catch-all discourse through which they address everyone. An important feature of political parties in Brazil is that they are configured around one or a few strong figures. These political big shots are both leaders and figureheads of the party. It is commonplace for them to switch between parties or start new ones, taking colleagues and part of their constituencies with them.

In 2004 municipal elections were held on Sunday the 3rd of October. Recife had two main candidates for mayor. The first was then-mayor João Paulo from the PT who was running for a second term. He came from a working-class family and was presented as somebody who knew the needs of the urban poor. The results of the municipal elections were of great national interest, as in the country's major cities they were considered an accurate estimate of the popularity of the PT federal government under president Lula. The second candidate was Cadoca[3] from the Partido do Movimento Democrático Brasileiro (PMDB; Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement). He was supported by Pernambuco's governor, the popular PMDB-ista Jarbas Vasconcelos. Cadoca was a member of the federal parliament and Secretary of the State Department of Tourism. He was known for his predilection for festivities, which made him popular as well as vulnerable to critics who argued that he wasted too much state money on parties, instead of structural projects. As not all political parties introduce their own mayoral candidates, they instead form coalitions around a limited number of candidates. Candidate councillors mostly follow the party line in their alliances, but some support a mayoral candidate different from the one supported by their party. Hundreds of candidate councillors try to get a seat in the city council at each election. There is no limit to the number of successive terms a councillor can hold. In 2004, due to a federal administrative initiative, the number of seats in the Recife city council decreased from 41 to 36.[4] Many candidate-councillors are part of the so-called *cauda eleitoral*, literally meaning "the electoral tail", which consists of candidates in ineligible positions, added to gain more votes for the party's eligible candidates. Votes cast for the unelectable candidates are added to the frontrunner of the party. *Cauda eleitoral* candidates are often strategically spread across the city in order to gather additional votes in every corner of the municipality. Political parties select candidate councillors out of a number of interested people, so-called "pre-candidates". Every candidate councillor gets a position on the list, with a corresponding code to be entered on the ballot box.

Candidates are assisted by campaign workers. Paid by the candidate, they advise him, coordinate the campaign, and maintain connections with the electorate. Some merely carry out prescribed tasks, while others have a mandate to act on behalf of the candidate. Furthermore, elected councillors have a budget earmarked for appointing

people as *pessoal de gabinete* (office staff). *Pessoal de gabinete* carry out organisational and secretarial tasks and occasionally stand in for the councillor. When a councillor runs for a successive term, the office staff assist in her or his campaign. As office staff positions are limited and bound by regulations, in practice other "job descriptions" are commonly found. Politicians may have people work for them and pay them informally, either without a contract or with one but for a different position. People appointed by a councillor, or other politician, are called *pessoas de confiança*, meaning "trustworthy persons". These are individuals who have proved their merit to the politician and whom he can trust. The positions to which they are appointed – like office staff – are called *cargos de confiança*, "trustworthy positions". These are officially recognised and legitimate, although the common practice of employing family members in these positions is often publicly disputed with the accusation that these politicians are merely augmenting their family capital.

Elections in the slum: spectacle, obras and streamlining processes

In the run up to Election Day, Recife witnesses an outburst of political activity, especially in the last four months. Every day candidates appear in newspapers and television and radio campaign ads. They show up on talk shows and the news. The whole city turns into an advertising space, with everything from billboards and banners to the walls of houses flashing candidates' names and political slogans. The city is full of spectacle, as candidates organise parades, rallies, concerts and other festivities[5] like free bingo games and lotteries. They provide free food and drinks, sometimes even complete dinners. Music, dance and other cultural performances fill the streets, under the banners of political candidates. Flags, flyers and posters show the smiling faces of – mostly male – candidates promising all the best. People dress in free T-shirts and caps from political parties and *carros de som* drive around, loudly casting their propaganda and music into the air. All parties have a campaign budget, partly derived from governmental sources, but mostly from private investments and gifts. In 2006, the superior electoral court placed regulations on campaign activities and political advertising, leading to a decrease in festivities. Nevertheless, the outburst of spectacle remains a regular component of election times.

Slums, apart from the festivities that also take place there, are visited by candidates and flooded with campaign workers who try to establish connections with as many people as possible. The latter – some slum dwellers themselves – organise and attend meetings of grassroots organisations where they discuss the benefits their candidate will bring. These benefits vary from infrastructural projects to festivities, from sewage systems to bingo games. An important benefit sought during elections is the acquisition of documents like identity cards, working permits, and birth registration. Whereas the acquisition of such documents normally come at an official – and for slum dwellers high

– fee, during election time many politicians make them available for free (see chapter 8). Other bureaucratic processes like obtaining documents, or the allocation of public resources, are sped up in this period. This is referred to as *agilizar*, or "streamlining". In the months before the elections infrastructural projects are carried out in far larger numbers than usual. In 2004, the municipality had not carried out any *obras* in Chão de Estrelas for a long time, mainly due to a planned slum upgrading programme (see chapter 7). Then, in the months before Election Day, the municipality suddenly executed some *obras*: five roads were paved and an unfinished sewage project started years ago was completed. The municipality also offered a solution for what for years had been one of the biggest problems of Chão de Estrelas: the flooding of the main entrance during rainy season that was badly, if at all, paved with asphalt. For months, the entrance was blocked to most traffic, including busses and trucks. The problem became more urgent when the bus company threatened the municipality to withdraw their service from the area, as the roads were severely damaged and caused delays. The municipality had a concrete layer put over the road. People argued that this would cause more flooding in the low-lying parts of the neighbourhood, as water that formerly flooded the entrance drained over the concrete into the lower areas. However, at first things looked better to most people, and cars and busses could pass without trouble. Until the next rainy season, it was considered an improvement.

The execution of *obras* by the municipality was not explicitly related to the re-election of João Paulo. Banners and television advertisements exclaimed that the municipality – not João Paulo or the PT– improved the city for the people. However, as the PT was in charge of the municipality and hence the budget, people generally considered these activities as a part of João Paulo's campaign. Candidates who were already councillors and running for another term had a personal budget which they used for carrying out small *obras*. Yet also candidates without these budgets tried to lay claim to the same *obras*. It was always ambiguous who was responsible for a certain *obra,* and opinions differed about who deserved credit for it. In this way, due to the opacity of decision-making and a lack of bureaucratic transparency, a paved road could be attributed simultaneously to the municipality and to a councillor of the opposition. On the whole, the elections did not provide *obras* and other collective material rewards for the slums on a large scale. It was mostly limited to a few *obras* that had already been planned and were "streamlined" in election times.

Community leaders and slum dwellers in the elections

Candidates and campaign workers try to establish connections with as many people as possible, especially with community leaders. In this way, community leaders usually agree to work for a candidate in the elections. Sometimes they become candidates themselves, but often merely as part of the *cauda eleitoral*. As mentioned in chapter 3,

Ovídio, Zezinho and Creuza had revenues from electoral political alliances. Moreover, Creuza and Zezinho both had aspirations for becoming politicians themselves one day. Zezinho ran as a candidate in 2000, while Creuza did not hide that she still dreamt of becoming a councillor or *deputado*. Ovídio, on the other hand, no longer had such aspirations, as I show below.

The conditions of alliances with candidates are negotiated. Generally, a community leader receives a reward that most often includes monetary compensation in the form of a temporary salary or lump-sum payment. It may also include a reward in kind – like construction material – or consist of employment, for instance in a *cargo de confiança*. As such, promises are not always fulfilled, especially those concerned with employment or other assistance after the Election Day, community leaders emphasise the importance of establishing a close connection to the candidate. In the months before Election Day, the community leaders of Chão de Estrelas were involved in many meetings, some with clear electoral political motives and others of a more general nature in which electoral politics were nevertheless undeniably present. At these meetings, campaign workers discussed their candidate's plans and asked residents of the area about their needs.

Someone who works for a candidate is called a *cabo eleitoral*, an "electoral captain", or *cabo* for short. This is a political canvasser (Gay 1994) or ward healer (Perlman 1976, Linger 1993). The widely-used term evokes the times of *coronelismo*, when large landowners – the *coroneis*, or colonels – maintained their political positions in rural areas with the help of their functionaries, the captains. Nowadays, the *cabo eleitoral* bridges the distance between candidate and electorate and organises local campaign activities. Usually, he is a locally well-known person. Although the existence of *cabos eleitorais* is commonplace, they often experience the same criticisms as community leaders. The term evokes the image of an unscrupulous vote-getter who works for personal gain as an extension of a political candidate without caring about the population. Community leaders who work for a candidate avoid the term *cabo eleitoral* as to steer clear of this negative image.

In the months before Election Day, in Chão de Estrelas far more persons than usual were labelled community leaders. They were deemed leaders by themselves, campaign workers, candidates and fellow residents. These individuals, who in the past were never referred to as community leaders, were temporarily considered as such, engaging in activities like *cabos eleitorais*. Indeed, during this period they acted as leaders, holding connections with politicians. Once the elections were over, these persons "lost" their positions.

A few weeks before the elections, community leaders supporting a candidate organise an *equipe*, a team for campaigning in the area. *Equipe* members wear T-shirts with the name of their candidate, collate posters and try to convince others to vote for their candidate, often going door-to-door. Financial compensation for *equipe* members is common and is negotiated with the candidate by the community leader. In addition,

community leaders often erect *pontos de apoio*, "help posts", in the neighbourhood. These are locations – usually in the office or house of a community leader – where slum dwellers can ask for personal favours and where publicity material is distributed. Temporary community leaders often open their homes as "help posts". Another matter organised by community leaders working for a candidate is that of the *bocas de urna*, literally meaning "mouths of the ballot box". These are people who, on Election Day, dressed in the T-shirts and caps of a candidate, hand out flyers and shout slogans in order to persuade voters at the last moment. Community leaders register these *bocas de urna*, pass on publicity material to them and negotiate a compensation for them, usually between R$10 and R$ 20.

Finally, another concept in need of explanation: somebody who works with or is in favour of a political party is referred to by mentioning the party name suffixed by *–ista*. So PT-istas and PMDB-istas may mean politicians or members of that party, but also people who intend to vote for PT or PMDB, respectively.

Most slum dwellers consider the elections a period in which they finally can receive something from politicians. After the elections, they argue, politicians will forget them, so they try to get as much as possible out of the campaigns. The most clear-cut way to gain something is to work as a *boca de urna* on Election Day. It is common practice to work part of the day for one candidate and part of the day for another. This is a highly visible form of the more general switching between political parties, referred to as *trocar camisas*, "changing shirts". Although slum dwellers see the practice as slightly mischievous, it is not considered immoral. As a community leader told me: 'They can work for ten candidates if they like. They work for one, change T-shirts and work for another. They do the work they get paid for.' People argued to me that, although there was some treason implied in this practice, cheating on politicians was allowed as the latter hardly ever fulfil their own promises. The attractive and repugnant dimensions of politics converged in this practice. In addition, there were always rumours of candidates paying people for their vote, which was deemed an electoral fraud by newspapers, but seen as a welcome opportunity by slum dwellers.

In 2006, one of the changes promulgated by the superior electoral court was the prohibition of *bocas de urna*. This was considered a serious letdown by many slum dwellers. Still, other options existed for making money in the elections. Apart from working in an *equipe*, other publicity work continued, like waving flags at crossroads in the city. This type of work is often done by the poorest and unemployed residents of slums and students. Usually, employed people do not have time to spend in campaign activities and the rewards for these are too low to be tempting.

Ovídio in a tight spot: opposing loyalties, clashing expectations and being queimado

Electoral political career and connections

Connections to politicians

In the 2004 elections Ovídio found himself in a tight spot as he worked for two opposing candidates at the same, while having his daughter work for a third, and thus faced the criticism of his fellow slum dwellers. They accused him of making money for himself while neglecting them. Before beginning the story, it is necessary to pay attention to some of his many diverse connections with politicians, built up over time. For someone of humble origins who spent his life in marginalised spaces, the magnitude of Ovídio's electoral political activities and achievements is remarkable, not only in my view, but also according to many people who knew him, both slum dwellers and outsiders.

Unlike Zezinho, whose connections to candidates and politicians emanated from his election time activities, most of Ovídio's contacts with politicians emerged from activities not directly related to electoral politics.

Running for the city council, the PMDB and a cargo de confiança

During the military rule Ovídio worked with politicians and activists from the PMDB[6], long the only registered political party besides the regime's party ARENA[7]. After the regime fell, the PMDB remained an important party. Ovídio shared the widespread view in Brazil that the PMDB had throughout the years moved from the left to the centre of the political spectrum. Ovídio had been active in the leftist movement that had gained increasing ground in Pernambuco as dictatorial powers declined. In 1982, in the first municipal elections allowed by the regime, he ran as candidate for the city council of Olinda, under the banner of the PMDB.[8] He would have been elected if there had not been an incidence of fraud:

> Right, it was there in Olinda, I lost. I won and I lost. Because two weeks before I had 1500 votes, while at the moment of the result I had 1048. I was robbed. Because I had votes all over Olinda. There was nobody who could compete with me.

Disappointment and annoyance made him temporarily withdraw from electoral politics. Nowadays, he can laugh about the story, saying: 'I had the votes in my hand, but I was deceived. So I said "Leave it. I do not want it any more" and I left.' He argued that high public positions did not suit him: 'Because I never wanted to be a sycophant.'

Inácio (see chapter 3) reflected upon this episode, arguing that Ovídio certainly had the chance to become councillor: 'He had this moment, but then he lost it'. He explained to me, using examples from his own life, that electoral politics was a long and exhaustive run, in which one had to work hard and be present everywhere in order to remain visible and connected. Some of Ovídio's fellow slum dwellers believe that Ovídio actually was a councillor and refer to this with reverence. Ovídio rarely speaks of this episode, and never in public.

Although Ovídio lost the elections, he maintained his connections with politicians from the PMDB. After the military regime the PMDB took charge in Recife, and Ovídio gained employment as a *pessoa de confiança*. For two years he worked as coordinator of the local and still active *Centro Social Urbano*, Social Urban Centre (CSU), a multifunctional centre which at the time offered social education – about hygiene and family planning – and professional courses, organised sports and cultural activities and operated as a delivery point for documents like working permits (Assies 1992, Cabral 2004). He was appointed by the administration of PMDB mayor Jarbas Vasconcelos (1986 – 1989). When Jarbas was elected, Ovídio had just finished building the community bakery (see chapter 3). This achievement did not go unnoticed by politicians – some of whom had been actively involved in it – who considered him an important popular leader who represented the sentiments of the victorious left. The postponement of the inauguration of the bakery until after the 1985 elections, in order to avoid claims from the military regime, was positively received by the leftist opposition (Folha dos Bairros 1987). Ovídio proudly stated that he had been the first slum dweller to have such a job. In this position, he coordinated many activities that ranged from improving the neighbourhood's pavements to events with street children.

Pedro Eurico, the PSDB and running for the senate

'To me, he is a very good person,' said Ovídio about Pedro Eurico. Eurico was member of state parliament and one of the most important PSDB-*istas* in Pernambuco. The Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira (PSDB; Brazilian Social Democracy Party) was founded in 1988 as a social-democratic party that appealed to Third Way politics. It never had a firm base in trade unions or social movements. Through the years, the party moved increasingly towards a neoliberal position. The relation between Ovídio and Eurico dates back to the struggle for the resettlement scheme in the early 1980s, before the PSDB existed. Eurico, a lawyer at the time, was involved in various leftist programmes and connected to the Liberation Theology clergy. In 1982 he was elected councillor of Recife and in 1986 became president of the public housing company. In both positions he was dedicated to the popular struggle and assisted Ovídio and his fellows in their efforts which resulted in the resettlement. In 1985, Ovídio closely cooperated with Eurico, supporting a fellow party-member in the federal elections.

Eurico has since had a successful political career as a member of state parliament for five consecutive terms.[9]

Ovídio earned a monthly minimum wage from Eurico. Officially, he was employed in general services[10] in a cleaning company. However, in reality, he never set foot in this company. Eurico had arranged a "job description" for him. Ovídio did in fact work in general services – but only for Eurico.[11] Instead of working at the company, he was involved in projects of waste recycling and consciousness-raising about environmental issues for which Eurico provided the materials. Ovídio referred to this work, involving different people in neighbourhoods all over the city, as that of "Eurico's team". The employment Eurico arranged for Ovídio should be seen as a politician's endeavour to build a historical record of achievements and create the necessary loyalties for constructing a political career. By linking his name to projects in the realm of environmental issues, Eurico constructed a positive image of himself in the city that, at a minimum, brought in votes at election time. Furthermore, those who worked for him were his "eyes and ears", informing him about relevant issues in the city. Many politicians did similar things, engaging in what was known as "social work". This "social work" was not considered related to electoral politics, although it was acknowledged as the basis for a politician's popularity.

Although his was a common situation – Creuza, for instance, similarly worked for a politician for several years – Ovídio was reluctant to talk about his income. This was understandable, given the lurking accusations from slum dwellers of being self-interested and contaminated by electoral politics. Upon my insistence, he explained to me that he had accepted the job because he had been in a situation of dire poverty. 'At the time,' he told, 'I found myself in a difficult situation and he offered me a place. So, I accepted it.' In addition, he used the job to complete the number of working years required for a pension: 'It has been four years that he is paying me a minimum salary, to complete the years for my pension.' Chuckling, he quoted what Pedro Eurico told him: 'This is your breakfast, now you support yourself with your handicraft.' The employment included a work card and the right for a thirteenth month. Ovídio emphasised that he, although paid by Eurico, was allowed to do whatever he chose and that he had never been a member of the PSDB. Defensively, he asked rhetorically: 'I want to render a service and I should not get paid for that?!'

Ovídio's bond with Eurico is strong and based on a shared history of struggle, friendship, and a financial benefit on top of it. He said: 'Pedro Eurico is always there, every year, he is always helping us.' They do not see each other often, but once in a while meet or speak on the phone. Ovídio emphasised that Eurico never tells him who to vote for. Ovídio never described his relationship with Eurico in terms of electoral politics, but in terms of friendship, loyalty, and necessity. Indeed, in the 2004 elections, Ovídio cast his vote for the opposing mayoral candidate João Paulo. Yet, as I will show, he felt obliged to support Eurico's protégé for councillor. Ovídio said resentfully that a

problem with Eurico was that he had moved to the right over the years: 'He was very much leftist, but now not anymore. I do not understand.' Ovídio considered leaving his work with the politician and tried to get his pension arranged, which he eventually managed to do.

In recent years the PSDB was the most important adversary of the PT in the run for presidency, presenting Fernando Henrique Cardoso and José Serra respectively as the main opponents of Lula. In Pernambuco this rivalry was evident, which put Ovídio in dilemmas, as he had both strong connections with PSDB-*istas*, and loyalty towards PT-*istas*, as the next section shows.

PT, criticism and leftist ideology

Ovídio had plenty of connections among current PT-istas, many of which originated during his engagement in social movements under military rule. Ovídio appealed to the leftist ideology of the PT, but was critical about the way the party tried to turn its ideology into practice. He accused the PT of being in favour of the middle-class, of working '*for* the people' instead of '*with* the people'. He frequently agitated against the party's proclaimed participatory pro-poor ethos. According to Ovídio, the PT divides people since it endorses personal rather than community – in the sense of collective – incentives. He argued that people only went to the current participatory meetings to get their own street paved instead of improving the whole neighbourhood. 'Everybody goes with a proposal for his own street. Completely divided', he stated, annoyed. He compared it with the period of the social movements and argued that then 'there was fraternity among the people, because they had the same problems and the same struggle'. He continued – while moving his hand down from above, turning it as if squeezing something – that the PT 'is suffocating the mobilisation.' He stated that 'the dictatorship served us better than the current democracy' because at that time people stood united against the government.

Meanwhile, Ovídio only discussed and criticised the ideology and programmes of the PT and never other of political parties. Despite all the shortcomings that he noted, he appealed to the party as the only one capable of bringing improvement for the poor. Once he even declared: 'I am PT-ista. I always was.'

The 2004 elections

Eurico's protégé

In March 2004 Ovídio had a sticker on his gate saying 'Dilma, Recife, 2004', in yellow, the colour of the PSDB. Dilma, a middle-class woman, was the protégé of Pedro Eurico, who supported her candidacy for the city council. Political big shots often introduce a

protégé as a candidate whom they favour and support (cf Leeds 1964).

Later, Dilma tried to become involved in the urban agriculture project that Ovídio had started in April 2004 (see chapter 3). Ovídio introduced Dilma as a good person who could help the project, not as a political candidate. However, the other participants in the project distrusted Dilma, who they perceived as an intruder in their community project. According to Marta, one of the participants, Dilma was only looking for projects which she – if successful – could present as an achievement in her electoral campaign. She said: 'Dilma was here and gave a speech, not at all about politics, but about a successful example of another agriculture project. That one was not her project at all. She just went to that well-functioning project to make a connection in order to use it as *her* successful example.' She accused Ovídio of having started the project merely to help Dilma. Maria, also participating, grumbled that Dilma 'did not do anything for the project.' She continued: 'But Ovídio continues to follow her.' His fellow slum dwellers accused him of trying to get in the good books of officials, as he often visited governmental offices, and they suggested he built up political alliances for personal gain.

In dealing with the accusations, Ovídio denied that he was working as a *cabo eleitoral* and claimed that he acted independently and for the sake of the community. He ardently opposed the idea that he supported Dilma because Eurico paid him for this, claiming that he chose Dilma because of her qualities. He argued that his practices were not influenced by any politician, and time and again emphasised that he looked for candidates, politicians, officials and other influential people in their capacities as professionals in order to gain benefits for the community. He contested the idea of getting paid for carrying out projects aimed at enhancing a politicians' electoral gain. He firmly stated: 'I stay away from these things. I am doing a job for the community.' He argued to me: 'Sometimes it looks like everybody is fighting, saying "Ovídio is part of the *turma* of whatever his name is! No, he is part of the *turma* of so and so!"' With a smile he continued: 'But it is alright, because in this way I remain free. Is that no so? I am in nobody's *turma*, I remain free.' In general he tried to steer clear of any electoral political motives for his practices. Regarding his past job at the CSU –which he did not deny he obtained from PMDB-istas – he emphasised that he 'accepted it only because it was social work. I did not do it for politics.' (cf Auyero 2001).

Long before Election Day, Dilma withdrew as a candidate, because she wanted to get a master's degree instead. When she pulled out, Pedro Eurico soon presented another protégé and asked for Ovídio's support.

Paulo Muniz and the equipe

Pedro Eurico's new protégé was his young party fellow Paulo Muniz, the son of an influential businessman. Muniz also had the public support of other leading PSDB

politicians, including a senator.[12] Ovídio also supported Muniz. By that time Ovídio had gathered an *equipe* to work in Muniz's campaign in Chão de Estrelas. The *equipe* consisted of seven persons: Ovídio, Maria, her grandson, Josa, Marta and two other women. The women were all also involved in Ovídio's agriculture project.

Maria explained how Ovídio connected the *equipe* to the candidate: 'We,' being the *equipe*, 'help Ovídio, he helps his candidate, and he brings the help of the candidate to us. Ovídio talks with the candidate and invites him to the community to discuss his proposals with us.' Then, 'on the basis of his lecture', the *equipe* members decide whether or not to support the candidate. Maria stressed that they help the politician and that he helps them. She called this way of dealing with things 'dynamic'.

One morning in August Muniz and some campaign workers came to the neighbourhood to introduce themselves. Ovídio had organised a meeting with breakfast in Maria's yard. Apart from the *equipe*, other slum dwellers were also present, attracted by the candidate's visit and free breakfast. Muniz gave a speech in which he set out his plans, talked about his support of Cadoca for mayor, and emphasised his interest in waste recycling projects, a focal point in Ovídio's activities. Later, the slum dwellers commented that they thought the candidate a poor speaker. After this speech, Ovídio invited others present to say something. Some recounted the history of the community, attributing a heroic record of achievements to Ovídio. Next they had breakfast, enjoying bread with jam, buttered toast and fruit. Ovídio and some others went inside the house with Muniz and his campaign workers. They discussed recent projects concerning waste recycling and other activities. At Ovídio's request, some slum dwellers performed short plays about environmental care that they had rehearsed for other occasions.

Four days later another meeting took place, again at Maria's place. The *equipe* was present, in addition to some other slum dwellers and campaign workers. Muniz was absent. Practical matters were discussed with regard to the local campaign. The *equipe* members were instructed to persuade others, put up posters in the neighbourhood and go canvassing 'door-to-door' in order to promote the candidacy of Muniz. They were promised a payment of R$100 per month for August and September. Later, Ovídio confided in me that he had received an additional sum of R$300, but had spent this money on campaign costs. At the meeting, one of the campaign workers stated: 'Our goal for Chão de Estrelas is a hundred votes. So if everybody arranges for fifteen people, this can be achieved.' Ovídio was very enthusiastic, making jokes, laughing and happily exclaiming that the *equipe* would carry out a campaign according to the latest fashion, a 'campaign of the 21st century!'

After some time, the campaign workers left and with them all of the slum dwellers except for the *equipe*. When Ovídio also left, a discussion started about loyalty to Eurico and the money involved. Josa immediately started complaining. She argued that Muniz would get very few votes 'because he is not very strong and he does not know how to talk.' She referred to his dull speech at the previous meeting. She continued that Muniz

was too young and only a beginner. She argued that they only had to support him because of Eurico. 'While all this time,' she continued, 'Pedro Eurico did not do anything for the neighbourhood! He never comes and never does anything for us. That is what I am going to say to Ovídio too. We again support someone from Pedro Eurico, but what does he do for us after all?'

Meanwhile, confusion arose about the money. They wondered if they would get R$100 a month or as a lump sum, and if the month of October would be paid out, as Election Day was on the 3rd of October. Marta concluded: 'We will have to ask Ovídio in a minute.' Another remarked that she had in the past worked for a candidate who paid R$10 to everyone who voted for him. 'At least that was effective,' she said.

When Ovídio returned, Josa repeated her complaints about Eurico and asked why they had to remain loyal to him while he had not done anything for them. 'Pedro Eurico only comes when the elections are near. After that he never comes!' She talked about how Eurico had not done anything when she asked him to take care of unauthorized bills she had received: 'When I needed him, he turned his back on me. And here, what did he do for the community? He never showed his face here.'

Ovídio fiercely opposed her arguments. As she complained he made surprised guttural sounds and stated that Eurico had done many things for the community. He accused Josa of only thinking about her private issues. Furthermore, he argued: 'How can a member of parliament, who has so many people that voted for him, do things for all the people that voted for him? He cannot say "Now I am going to Chão de Estrelas to do things for two persons there", can he?' He also mentioned waste recycling projects that Eurico had taken part in, but Josa stuck to the opinion that Eurico ignored them. Marta tried to ease the situation, arguing that they were meeting in order to discuss Muniz's campaign instead of bickering about Eurico. After repeating her request to calm down several times, Ovídio and Josa stopped quarrelling. Ovídio was upset. Marta chaired the remainder of the meeting, concisely proposing data for following meetings which she jotted down on paper. Ovídio repeated that everyone would receive R$100 a month for two months. He argued that this was well paid, as he had expected only R$50.

Finally, when everybody was about to leave, Ovídio announced his stance on the elections. He distanced himself from Cadoca, the mayoral candidate supported by Eurico and Muniz, and instead opted for the PT-ista João Paulo. He did not call upon the *equipe* to follow his example, but plainly declared: 'I do not know for whom you all will vote, maybe Cadoca, maybe João Paulo, but I vote for João Paulo'. At that moment I could not fathom the complex reasons for Ovídio's choice to combine Muniz and João Paulo.

Ovídio manoeuvres between different loyalties

In Ovídio's relationship with the PT, Inácio was an important person. This official, who had been a councillor for the communists[13], had introduced me to Ovídio. He had first met Ovídio in 1975, under the military rule, when he was a communist activist and a press photographer. He had assisted Ovídio in the community soup project and others. The men maintained contact over the years and Inácio recently helped Ovídio in several projects, like the urban agriculture project (see chapter 3). Inácio had become PT-ista of late after years of working with a small communist party. In the run for the 2004 municipal elections he was actively engaged in the campaign and tried to persuade Ovídio to support the PT in order to show his new comrades his capacity to mobilise people, especially well-known community leaders like Ovídio. Now, Ovídio manoeuvred between different interests and loyalties: between the PT-ista Inácio and the PSDB-ista Pedro Eurico. In hindsight, I know that my presence in the community as a friend of Inácio also influenced Ovídio's electoral political choices. At first, Ovídio, seeing me as a friend of Inácio, tried to hide his connection to Muniz from me. He invited me to many things at the time, but not to the meetings with Muniz. As the meetings were organised on the street where I lived – a new car with Cadoca-stickers was displayed in front of Maria's house – I found out and attended. Ovídio did not seem embarrassed by my presence and even introduced me to Muniz. Yet he was reluctant to provide me with any information about his collaboration with Muniz.

Immediately after the second meeting, Ovídio suddenly came to my house and started justifying his choice of Eurico's candidate to me. At the moment I could not fully grasp what was going on, but I later found out how matters stood. After the first meeting, I had told my supervisor, then in Recife, about Ovídio's cooperation with Muniz. He had in turn discussed it with Inácio. Inácio, who thought that he had convinced Ovídio to support the PT, asked Ovídio for an explanation, and the latter presumed that I was the "leak". Ovídio had agreed with Inácio that he would support PT candidate-councillor Osmar Ricardo. However, as Ovídio already arranged payment for the *equipe* with Muniz and wanted to remain loyal towards Pedro Eurico, he did not want to change his *equipe* to Ricardo and would only work in a personal capacity in Ricardo's campaign outside Chão de Estrelas. Now, Ovídio had to find a way to deal with me. He assumed that Inácio would certainly tell me of his choice for Ricardo. However, if I divulged this information in the community, slum dwellers would surely accuse Ovídio of making money through different candidates. Furthermore, what would happen if this information reached Muniz? Thus Ovídio decided it was best to emphasise to me his loyalty to Muniz, at the risk of criticism from Inácio if he found out through me. Ovídio seemed tense when he came to my home and was looking for words when he stated: 'I always was of the left.' He told me how Inácio had questioned him about his choice for Muniz. He underscored that he would cast his vote for Muniz.

Yet, to support the PT, he would vote for João Paulo for mayor. He defended his choice for Muniz by emphasising his loyalty to Eurico, narrating about their long history together which included the resettlement to Chão de Estrelas. He admitted that the latter indeed did not come to the community in person, 'but his works do'. After our conversation, Ovídio seemed to loosen up.

The equipe: rumours, payment problems and disparagement

In the following weeks, several meetings were organised in the homes of the different *equipe* members. All members had to contribute with topics to discuss, ranging from public transport to employment to caring for the environment – the latter at the insistence of Ovídio. The idea was that each member should bring others to the meetings in order to gather more voters for Muniz. However, the new people who occasionally attended left soon enough when they heard that they could not be included as paid *equipe* members. The *equipe* went on putting posters on walls and lampposts in the neighbourhood and tried to convince people to vote for Muniz.

Meanwhile the *equipe* members worried about their payment. A week after the breakfast meeting, they had still not received any remuneration from Muniz, though they had thought they would be paid immediately. They expressed their worries to one another: 'Will Muniz come to bring the money himself? And if so, when?'

In the next days rumours filled the air among the *equipe* members saying that Ovídio employed connections to another candidate besides Muniz and João Paulo. Word had it that Ovídio was being paid by the other candidate as well and that, perhaps, the payment of the *equipe* was at risk. In these rumours Ovídio was depicted as an opportunistic *cabo eleitoral* who worked for different politicians for personal gain, hiding his connections from his *equipe* and cheating on the candidates involved. The *equipe* members were not bothered about the candidates, but accused Ovídio of being self-interested and deceiving them as he had them work for one candidate while he placed his bets on another. Ovídio was thus considered to be contaminated by electoral politics as he forsook the needs of his fellow slum dwellers. Maria told me about the rumours and suggested that Ovídio was helping another candidate councillor and thus received a salary from both Muniz and the other. According to her, she had discussed it with Ovídio who told her: 'I help Muniz for the *equipe*, because the other does not have the money to pay for the work of the *equipe*.'

The next day, Ovídio's position worsened. He had organised a meeting with the *equipe* at Maria's place. In hindsight, I know that in some way Muniz suspected him of working for another candidate and cancelled his payment for the *equipe*. The message to Ovídio was clear: in order to get payment he had to show Muniz that the *equipe* still did publicity for him. Ovídio opened the meeting stating that there would not be any payment. Nevertheless, he argued, they had to continue their work. 'Look,' he said,

'Politics is devious. But we must not be devious too. We just have to do some work.'

After these words, I expected everyone to leave and quit working for Ovídio and Muniz. However, to my surprise, this did not happen. Everybody remained seated, but the atmosphere grew tense. One of the *equipe* members had brought a relative and Ovídio took the opportunity to emphasise that everybody needed to gather more people who would vote for Muniz. However, everyone was in an awful huff, and grumbled to Ovídio that he could not force them to do so. Maria's grandson brusquely blurted out: 'I do not have time. I work in the morning, I come here in the afternoon and at night I have classes. When do I have to visit people?' Ovídio reacted with agitation to his grumbling, but the young man impudently interrupted: 'Be calm, let me speak!' Maria firmly stated: 'I do things my way! I make my house available for meetings, but you cannot expect me to…' Her words ended in unintelligible muttering. Ovídio tried in vain to structure the meeting. He again emphasised the need to convince others to vote for Muniz and argued that merely five persons per member would suffice, but nobody paid attention.

Marta, who had pacified Josa and Ovídio in last week's meeting, attempted to cheer things up, optimistically arguing that everybody could take food and drinks to the next meetings: 'I make a cake, one brings this, another one that.' When she asked Maria to prepare some food, the latter got mad. She angrily exclaimed that she was not a maid, that nobody could instruct her to make anything to eat and that she would not set foot in a house where she was supposed to do so. She shouted that she would only use her foot for kicking someone's ass. Marta backed down and eventually apologised.

In the midst of this uncomfortable scene Ovídio displayed his talent for joining bad with good news. He suddenly started talking about empty jewellery boxes which he had gathered at the shopping mall and which they could decorate with Christmas designs and sell. He proposed to sell homemade Christmas cards as well like he had done before. He assured the project would bring good wages to everybody. However enticing these ideas may have been, moods remained low. Josa started talking about a councillor who recently distributed drinks, food and T-shirts in the neighbourhood, as if to say, 'look, he knows how to deal out.' The meeting faded out and everybody left, except for Maria, Josa and me.

I was confused. I did not understand why the *equipe* members, being angry with Ovídio, still stayed with him. I did not dare ask Maria and Josa about this, as I did not want to incite them against him. Instead, I tried to figure out how the women reflected on what had happened between Ovídio and Muniz, as I was convinced that Muniz had a motive for withdrawing his offer of paying the *equipe*.

Upset, Maria exclaimed: 'He wants us to work for free!'

Although Ovídio had not clarified anything and nobody asked for an explanation, Maria and Josa stated that they knew that Muniz cancelled the payment because Ovídio was with another candidate. Josa argued: 'We know that he is with another. He is with a

candidate from the PT.' Maria agreed in a conspiratorial voice that she was all but sure that Ovídio was with another and individually gained money from both candidates. Josa agreed: 'He is eating from two sides.' The women made all kinds of suggestions about how Ovídio had come to support another candidate besides Muniz and who it could be. Maria asked me, referring to Ovídio: 'If you are with a candidate that has done all kinds of things for you, can you leave him and go to another?' When I responded that this did not seem right, she blurted: 'Exactly. But Ovídio is doing this right now.'

When I asked what role Pedro Eurico played in this, Josa replied that Eurico was helping Muniz. I enquired if Ovídio could go simply to another candidate while Muniz was Eurico's candidate. Josa knew: 'Ovídio always earns a salary from Pedro Eurico. Also after the elections he continues to receive this.'

I insisted: 'Can Ovídio then simply choose another candidate?'

Both women stated with resignation that it was possible.

Pushing a little further, I asked: 'But imagine that I am a member of parliament and that I pay Ovídio. Then the elections come and I call Ovídio to tell him to support Muniz. Next, Ovídio does not do so. Then I would get mad at him, would I not?'

Maria blurted: 'That is exactly why Ovídio still helps Muniz! Do you understand?'

Provocatively, I suggested that we should call Muniz and ask him how matters stood. Maria was taken aback: 'No, that is not possible! Ovídio will never let us!'

Suddenly, Ovídio returned. The women abruptly stopped their heated discussion and acted very nicely towards Ovídio. Entering the room, Ovídio stated appeasingly: 'People, we now know each other already for fifty years…' He referred to their shared history of struggle and mentioned their joint achievements. Josa reacted by recalling Ovídio's efforts to construct the community bakery. Ovídio responded that he had not done it alone, but together with them. Maria dramatically added: 'Yes Ovídio, we may quarrel, but I just said to Martinho: "We have never left you".' The women persisted that there was nobody who could compare with Ovídio. Ovídio listened with tears in his eyes and concluded: 'Let us not talk about this, people, let us talk about our work.' With a joke that was welcomed with laughter, he recalled how they had made Christmas cards in the past and how they would again make it a success.

Why stay? The slum dweller – community leader connection explained

To my great surprise, in spite of payment problems, the *equipe* members remained and continued to work with Ovídio. As explained in chapter 2, the connection between slum dwellers and community leaders is versatile and dynamic. While the *equipe* members criticised Ovídio, they did not leave him. On the contrary, Maria and Josa even emphasised their affection for him. I was sure nothing else had occurred and that nothing else was promised to them, as I closely followed the *equipe* members and talked to them on an almost daily basis. I wondered what it is that ties slum dwellers to a

community leader.

Economic needs play a role, as the *equipe* members all longed for remuneration. However, the connection between slum dwellers and community leaders is composed of matters that supersede money and material resources. Hence, with the reward cancelled, the people continued to work in the *equipe*. In order to understand what was at stake, I point to other needs and aspirations that formed reasons for the *equipe* members to stick to Ovídio. These reasons, I argue, form general dimensions of the slum dweller – community leader connection, although with different emphases between different leaders who have different histories and operational styles.

As said, economic needs play a role. Apart from the financial reward promised, participating in Ovídio's meetings could result in involvement in some income-generating project. Ovídio catered to these needs with his plans to sell Christmas boxes and cards. Another dimension was the gratitude that existed regarding needs which Ovídio had fulfilled or tried to fulfil in the past, through achievements for the community and personal favours. Maria and Josa left no doubt that they still felt indebted towards him. When I asked them why they stayed with him after the payment problems, Maria replied: 'It was he who gave us the houses, did he not? I owe him much' Josa agreed: 'I owe my house to him and I am still grateful for that.' She added that she really loved Ovídio for this.

Intangible needs and aspirations played a role, too. Marta, for instance, told me that she aspired to become a community leader and liked to learn from Ovídio by participating in his activities. Furthermore, an important element is the simple enjoyment of being together. Community leaders cater to this enjoyment by organising meetings and collective activities. The *equipe* members enjoyed recalling a shared history in which they often put their shoulders to the wheel together. Ovídio referred to this, when he reminded Maria and Josa that they had known each other for fifty years. Maria especially had a long friendship with Ovídio who often visited her to talk about his activities and grumble about his problems. Maria usually listened, nodded and agreed with most of his ideas. She and Josa, like other women who had known Ovídio for a long time, sometimes showed an affectionate, caring attitude towards him. When talking about him, they picture Ovídio with a kind of motherly love. The other *equipe* members, while not having such an extended shared history with Ovídio, enjoyed being with him and one another in the meetings. There, the history of the community was narrated, including solemn stories about loss and suffering. These stories left people touched, sometimes with moist eyes. Ovídio occasionally cried. Meetings also consisted of hilarious anecdotes and happy singing and dancing, which contributed to the enjoyment of being together. Along with Ovídio's sparkling ideas, enthusiasm and talent for joining bad with good news, this made me understand that working with him was pleasurable.

A nostalgic sense of togetherness entails feelings of belonging and sentiments of

solidarity. As Maria once told me, after a severe quarrel with Ovídio, she had made up with him 'because we are from the community, are we not?' Dealing with the *equipe*, Ovídio had called upon sentiments of solidarity when he argued that they had to work together and not be influenced by the deviousness of politics.

Slum dwellers also told me that they joined projects of community leaders because they 'wanted to do something' with their lives. Ovídio and the other leaders provided opportunities to engage in something satisfying (cf chapter 2). In addition, there was always the idea that some action was going on in projects of community leaders. People liked to participate and later talk about it to friends; they gleaned enjoyment from being where the action is.

Furthermore, as explained in chapter 3, slum dwellers had relatively high expectations of Ovídio who was known to have good business sense. Regarding the elections, people said of Ovídio that 'he always wins,' as he selected his candidates well. In addition, he was known to take care of the participants in his projects. After the payment for the *equipe* was cancelled, the members remained hopeful that Ovídio would find a way to arrange remuneration. The day after the meeting in which the *equipe* was informed that payment had been cancelled, Maria's grandson – be it reluctantly – lent his ear to Ovídio's request to continue publicising for Muniz. While gluing a poster to a lamppost, he told me that he believed that Ovídio would make Muniz pay after all. Josa argued that she continued to believe in Ovídio's integrity and that she was convinced that he was busy trying to arrange the payment.

Another dimension which shows slum dwellers' needs and aspirations lies in the records Ovídio provided of participation in his projects. For courses he designed certificates for the participants. He often had leaflets or brochures made of his projects in which he added the names and sometimes pictures of participants. He also gave people little keepsakes, like coloured wristlets used at workshops to divide the people into groups – each group with its own colour. These forms of tangible proofs were highly appreciated. I see this appreciation in light of aspirations of belonging, remaining connected and acting against abandonment. Being part of Ovídio's projects implies being part of the community and its annals, and thus a part of history.

Hence, the connection between slum dwellers and community leaders is a complex and multifaceted relationship. It centres upon issues of income generation, improvement for the community, personal favours, gratitude, friendship, enjoyment of being together and doing something with your life, a shared history, feelings of belonging, sentiments of solidarity, trust, being where the action is and acting against abandonment. Community leaders, fallible as they are, nevertheless form the point of convergence of all these sentiments, expectations, needs and aspirations.

The day after the tense meeting, another meeting was held. It seemed like the bad news of the day before had not affected the relationship between the *equipe* members and Ovídio, who were all present. Before the meeting I met with Maria, her grandson

and Josa. They were curious about what Ovídio would say regarding their payment, but did not seem worried. At the meeting, Ovídio gave shape to a great leadership performance as he addressed those present with "feel-good" ideas and laid out several plans for future income-generating activities. He even managed to get everybody singing and clapping hands to a well-known song and enthusiastically announced a festivity organised by Muniz. In more assertive terms than before, Ovídio declared his support for Muniz for councillor and João Paulo for mayor: 'We are with João Paulo, are we not? We are with João Paulo and Muniz knows this.' He recalled Eurico's help to the community in the past and added that 'but the rest all came from João Paulo.' It seemed that Ovídio managed to work for two candidate-councillors without causing him too much trouble of his fellow slum dwellers. However, it would soon take him much more manoeuvring to steer clear of criticism, as his secret support for Ricardo would become crystal clear to everyone.

Ovídio's secret link to the PT and the risk of being queimado

Ovídio had not told anyone in Chão de Estrelas about his connections with the PT councillor. If his fellow slum dwellers were to find out, this would surely cause him trouble: he would be considered *queimado*, "burnt". Being burnt refers to being politically discredited. The notion also exists in Spanish-speaking countries of Latin America. Grindle, in her study of Mexican bureaucrats, refers to being *quemado*, in Spanish, with the same connotation of being in disfavour, at least temporarily, for reasons of indiscretion and errors made in the realm of electoral politics (1977). In order to understand the severity of the risk of being *queimado*, I present the account a community leader from another neighbourhood, who did not know Ovídio, gave me on the issue. As it was difficult to discuss the issue with community leaders in Chão de Estrelas, because they would immediately cast suspicions upon each other, I discussed it with this leader. He stated that community leaders should never talk too much about their own activities, because this can only cause them trouble and lead to them being burnt. Community leaders, according to him, were always balancing on the edge. He argued that a community leader cannot work for two candidates who compete with one another in the elections. He will run a high risk of burning himself with both candidates and with his fellow slum dwellers, especially with the *equipe* members. In regards to the candidates, he argued that a community leader must to be accountable to a candidate. 'The candidate will request proof that you work for him. If there is no proof, you burn yourself.' He blamed community leaders from his own neighbourhood who had worked for two candidates. According to him, they pretended to work for one, meanwhile working for another. He added that even if a leader really works for both candidates, he will burn himself if they find out. In terms of fellow slum dwellers, he resolutely stated that a community leader who works for two candidates 'will be

distrusted by his *equipe.* He will lose confidence and be dropped out.' Meanwhile, this community leader knew exactly what he was talking about, as that year he and his brother worked for opposing candidates who both gave assistance to a project that the brothers set up. In his own home, one candidate would hold a meeting on the ground floor with him, while the other candidate was addressing the people on the first floor with his brother.

After this conversation, I understood that Ovídio was between a rock and a hard place. On one hand, he wanted to remain working with Muniz who was Eurico's candidate and he wanted to regain the payment for the *equipe*. On the other hand, he wanted to remain loyal to Inácio who convinced him to support Ricardo. He had to combine loyalties to different politicians – presumably all topped with financial remuneration – all the while trying to steer clear of burning himself. Ovídio tried to hide part of his dealings from his fellow slum dwellers. However, this became extremely difficult when Ricardo organised a festival in Chão de Estrelas.

One night at the end of August, I heard music and loud voices coming from the bus terminal annex soccer field. In that period, many festivities were organised at the bus terminal – all in some way related to the elections and full of political publicity. A voice through a microphone caught my attention, calling out gratitude to Ovídio. As I still had no certainty about who Ovídio supported at the time, I decided to have a look and gathered from the flags and charts that it was a festival of Ricardo's. Many people were listening to a band that blasted its music to the audience. Walking around, I concluded that no members of Muniz's *equipe* were present. I realised that Ovídio now faced a hard task avoiding accusations of his fellow slum dwellers after this public announcement of his support of Ricardo.

I soon found Ovídio and decided to act dumb. I told him that I had heard somebody mentioning his name through the microphone and thought 'hey, there is a festivity of Ovídio going on' and went to have a look. Ovídio anxiously asked me whether the sound could be heard all the way to my house. I told him yes –adding in my mind, 'and to the houses of *equipe* members with whom you work for Muniz'. He then admitted that Ricardo was his candidate. He said that he supported him, but that he had agreed not to organise anything for him in Chão de Estrelas. He declared: 'The *equipe* helps Muniz. But I stay with Ricardo.' He argued that Ricardo and Muniz agreed and concluded: 'They are both friends of mine.' Ovídio quickly moved to another subject and then disappeared into the crowd. Later that night, people from Chão de Estrelas and adjacent neighbourhoods, who were active in Ricardo's campaign, held speeches. Late at night, Ricardo arrived and gave a speech. Ovídio did not speak – perhaps still trying to hide his link to Ricardo from the community. As such, he lived up to his word to not display any activity supporting Ricardo in Chão de Estrelas. Neither did he show any sign of working with Ricardo – no T-shirt, flags, stickers or cap – although these were normal things to do.

Two days later I discussed the matter in more detail with Ovídio. He was aware of the difficulty of his situation which he explained to me. 'I did not feel at ease,' he said, 'because I stay with one and at the same time I am with another.' I asked him why he had not decided to have the *equipe* work for Ricardo, especially since Muniz cancelled the payment. He firmly replied: 'That is because Ricardo and the PT never helped me. Never. Now Pedro Eurico is always there, every year, he is always helping us. And we stayed with Muniz, who is his candidate.'

I inquired why he selected Ricardo. Hesitatingly, he explained that Inácio asked him to support a PT councillor: 'It was him who brought me to Ricardo.' First, Inácio had proposed a councillor whom Ovídio knew but did not like. Then, Inácio had suggested Ovídio to move the *equipe* that worked for Muniz over to work for Ricardo. Ovídio had replied that he did not want to support Ricardo with the *equipe*, but would work with him in another neighbourhood, where the councillor was involved in a waste recycling project. He argued: 'Here I have always been with Muniz. I helped Ricardo only in another community. Not here in the community. Inácio persuaded me to stand behind Ricardo. I said to Ricardo: "Alright, but I will not undertake any activities. My people already work for Muniz." But I would help Ricardo in the other neighbourhood.' Ovídio stated that he refused any remuneration from Ricardo. He had told Inácio: 'I do not want anything, no. It is merely voluntary.' He said that this was so that Ricardo would have no reason to induce his support. In Chão de Estrelas, Ovídio continued his work with the *equipe* for Muniz, as such staying loyal to Eurico. Apparently, Ovídio managed to account for his deeds towards Muniz, as within a week the *equipe* members were paid after all.

After working with Ricardo for three weeks, Ovídio stated to me and Maria that he had made up his mind and quit working for him. He argued that Ricardo had not treated him well. He had only been informed at the very last moment about Ricardo's festival at the bus terminal. He said: 'I, tired, went and waited for him, but went home after some time. But eventually he arrived at 23.00h. Then I thought "Not in this way!"' He continued, saying that after his decision to quit working with Ricardo, several of his campaign workers had called him on the phone. An assistant of Ricardo had called him 'devious' for leaving Ricardo. The assistant had discredited Muniz, arguing that he was the son of a businessman who did not care for the poor. Ovídio had responded that he could not care less about the man's opinion of Muniz. He argued to us that he would cast his vote for Muniz because he was Eurico's protégé. Annoyed with the situation, he asked rhetorically: 'My salary, that I get already four years from Pedro Eurico, with the right for an extra month in December, does that not have any value?' He argued that now he wanted to make things clear and concluded: 'There has been enough confusion.'

Soon after, at a meeting, Ovídio accounted for his recent actions to the *equipe* members, who by that time knew all about Ovídio's "wanderings" between Muniz and Ricardo. With a smile, Ovídio stated that he had finally decided: 'Well, my candidate for

councillor was difficult, but I am with Muniz.'

In the following months the *equipe* continued its campaign for Muniz. Ovídio displayed his preferences as he wore T-shirts of Muniz and had posters of João Paulo on the wall around his house. He arranged *bocas de urna* for Muniz, consisting of the *equipe* members and several other people. Everything seemed to have settled down. Ovídio had strategically found a way of manoeuvring between Pedro Eurico – supporting Muniz in the neighbourhood – and Inácio – publicly supporting João Paulo and having helped Ricardo elsewhere for a short time. However, Ovídio would come to face more criticism from Muniz, this time for supporting the PT-ista João Paulo for mayor, instead of Cadoca, to whom Muniz was allied.

Ovídio still follows his own path and is again held accountable

In the months before the elections, Ovídio set out on his own path – though none too straightforward, as I have shown – and made his own choices. He had decided to support João Paulo for mayor and Muniz for councillor, although Muniz was allied to João Paulo's adversary Cadoca. The magnitude of Ovídio's room for manoeuvre, I argue, emerged from his prestige as a leader. Because of his prestige, his support was sought after by different politicians. Due to this prestige, he could afford to take some liberties. Yet he could not afford too many as this would harm his prestige. An example of his ample room for manoeuvring, as I will show, was when he managed to get alternative campaign T-shirts from Muniz that did not carry the name of Cadoca. At the same time, Ovídio's room for manoeuvring was limited, as he had to go to great lengths in order to prove his allegiance to Muniz again.

A week before Election Day, Muniz organised a huge rally in a luxurious club. Ovídio invited fellow slum dwellers to attend. On the night of the party, at 19.00h, thirty neatly dressed up people gathered in Ovídio's yard, while many others – especially youngsters – were waiting in the street. Ovídio had stated that the festivities would include a contest for "queen" and "princess" – the most beautiful woman and girl respectively – which animated people's spirits. From the *equipe*, Maria and one of the other women were present. One of Josa's daughters joined the contest for "queen". Ovídio's daughter and daughter-in-law were also among the party-goers. Most of the appointed *bocas de urna* were present. Marta could not come due to other obligations, but had invited many others to the rally. Ovídio told me that he wanted to show up with as many people as possible. He confided in me that he wanted to show Muniz that he could mobilise a lot of people to support him. He explained that his choice to support João Paulo for mayor, instead of Cadoca, had discredited him among Muniz and his campaign workers. People from other slums with whom Ovídio cooperated in waste recycling – part of "Eurico's team" – also supported Muniz, but had followed Ovídio's choice for João Paulo. Now, Muniz again cast doubts on Ovídio's loyalty.

Ovídio said that these doubts about his loyalty were related to the T-shirts he had made for the *equipe* and bocas de urna. He showed me the shirt with the image and name of Muniz on it. The usual shirts also carried a large print of Cadoca's logo, the mayoral candidate whom Muniz was allied to. But Ovídio's was a special shirt as it did not have the Cadoca logo. He said that he told Muniz and his campaign workers: 'We surely want to wear your T-shirt, but without the Cadoca logo. I do not vote for Cadoca as I do not like the guy.' The alternative T-shirts expressed how eager Muniz and his campaign workers were to comply with Ovídio: they took the effort to make alternative shirts and risked reprimand from Cadoca. However, the move put a great deal of pressure on Ovídio. Looking up from his shirt, he said: 'Do you now understand why I want to be present with many people?'

An assistant of Muniz had promised to send a bus to fetch the people for the rally. However, none arrived. Ovídio nervously walked to and fro, from the street to his yard. He made a phone call and assured people that the bus would come. He added that he had actually planned to rent his own bus, but that Muniz's assistant had promised to send one straightaway.

When people started to become impatient and left Ovídio tried to keep up the good spirits. He complimented the "queen" and "princess" on their beautiful homemade dresses and declared about the rally: 'It is not just for everybody, but especially for us.' He argued that there were many people waiting in the street, hoping to find a place on the bus and join them, but that they could not, as 'the festivity is only for us, for the *bocas de urna* and those that are also with Muniz!' Everybody made affirmative noises. Ovídio continued: 'Right, you can go home if you like. I surely understand. But I will wait until 20.30h. If the bus does not arrive at 20.30h, I will quit. Who wants to wait, can stay here to wait for the bus in order to go to the festivities together.' Everybody reacted: 'We will stay as well, *seu* Ovídio.' But soon most people left, including the "queen" and the "princess". Ovídio sadly watched them go.

When there was still no bus at 20.30h, Ovídio rented a van from a van-driver around the corner. He paid out of his own pocket, but said he would claim his expenses with Muniz's campaign workers. We drove off to the club. Besides Ovídio and myself, only nine people were left: Maria, the other *equipe* member, Ovídio's daughter and daughter-in-law, two *bocas de urna*, one with her daughter, and two other women. In the van, the mood was cool, in contrast to the high spirits of other trips I had joined, like Zezinho's picnic trips where everybody was singing, talking and dancing. Ovídio's daughter-in-law and another woman wore the alternative shirts of Muniz. Ovídio grumbled: 'I should have arranged a bus myself, then I could have appeared at the festivities with fifty people.'

Arriving at the club, we found an enormous queue at the entrance, mainly consisting of youngsters. Ovídio nervously walked up and down the line while the others queued up. He eagerly tried to find a way for us to get in quicker. After some

time he said that he had found a possibility for entering without queuing up. He said: 'Wait a minute. I will have another look.' Nobody of our group asked Ovídio what he was doing. They only asked each other when he was away: 'What did he say?' and 'Will he manage?' When Ovídio returned, he did not say anything and joined us in the queue. It seemed that his plan had failed. Without asking, everybody queued up until we finally got in.

The club was packed. A band was playing on a stage decorated with publicity for Muniz. Many people wore T-shirts of Muniz, complete with a large Cadoca logo. As soon as we were inside, Ovídio left our group and mingled with the crowd. I joined him for some time as he quickly moved around, looking for people. I understood that he was looking for people he knew, especially for campaign workers of Muniz to show his face, prove his allegiance and claim his expenses for the van. He spoke briefly with some campaign workers. He met residents from other slums, whom he knew from his work with "Eurico's team", who happily greeted him. They wore T-shirts of Muniz, just like him without a Cadoca logo. Muniz, Ovídio was informed, had already held a speech and had gone inside. Ovídio's fellows from Chão de Estrelas, who remained aloof of the jamboree, were disappointed that they had not seen Muniz. When we went home again, Maria grumbled: 'He has not even given a speech. We have not seen or heard him!'

Not two, but three candidate councillors: Ovídio's daughter working for another

In the last two weeks before Election Day rumours circulated among the *equipe* members who worked for Muniz, saying that Ovídio's daughter was engaged in the campaign business of another candidate. Besides, they were still unsure whether Ovídio really quit working for Ricardo or still cooperated with him in another neighbourhood. They criticised Ovídio, arguing that, as his daughter was part of his household, he made money through three different candidates. Maria, irritated, stated: 'So his daughter is with one candidate and Ovídio with two. Three candidates in the house of Ovídio, you see!'

Ovídio's daughter worked for Paulo Dantas, a politician Ovídio still knew from his activities during the dictatorship. Dantas was active in the PCdoB, *Partido Comunista do Brasil*¸ Communist Party of Brasil. He had been a councillor from '95 until '96 and from '01 until '04. He had also been Secretary of Health at the Recife municipality and involved in the initial health care projects in Chão de Estrelas. Ovídio and he maintained contact through the years and occasionally cooperated on activities related to health and environmental issues. In 2004, Dantas stood for another term as councillor and approached Ovídio. Ovídio explained the situation to Maria and me. Anticipating criticism, he had decided to forestall rumours: 'I want to leave everything clear. There has been enough confusion.' After repeating how he had chosen his candidates, he vividly narrated how Dantas had phoned him and asked whether his daughter could

work for him as a coordinator of his local campaign. 'He said that he did not want to ask me, because, he said, "I already know that you are a son of Pedro Eurico." Now, my daughter will work for him. Pedro Eurico will understand. He and Dantas are good friends.' To my question he answered that his daughter would receive from Dantas 'an amount of money for coordinating his campaign in Chão de Estrelas.' He concluded by saying that Dantas was 'a fantastic person'.

Consequences of Ovídio's troubles

In the elections, João Paulo was re-elected mayor, Muniz lost, Ricardo won and Dantas was elected but then withdrew because of the reduced number of seats on the City Council. The *equipe* members and *bocas de urna* claimed to have voted for João Paulo and Muniz and received their rewards – the *bocas de urna* even a relatively high amount of R$20 per person. Ovídio had proved his good business sense, in contrast with other cases in the neighbourhood where nothing was paid out. In addition, Ovídio remained on good terms with both Inácio and Pedro Eurico. Although he only joined in the campaign activities of Ricardo for a short period, Inácio appreciated this and his support for João Paulo. After the elections Ovídio confided in me that he had voted for Ricardo: 'I only gave him my vote because of Inácio.'

The troubles Ovídio had during the elections had not been without consequences. Apart from the accusations from fellow slum dwellers, politicians and campaign workers during the campaign period, after Election Day his relationship with the *equipe* members deteriorated. Ovídio's contacts with many of them broke off, at least temporarily, as they remained very critical of Ovídio's wanderings in the realm of electoral politics.

In the *equipe*, one woman who participated in the urban agriculture project accused Ovídio of being stubborn and unaccountable and broke off relations with him. Josa accused Ovídio of forgetting her. She regularly recalled that Ovídio had worked for two candidates at the same time and cynically argued: 'Look, he can do this. But if we would do this, he would say "No, you cannot! It will clash, it will clash. I do not want it!"' She stated: 'In the next elections, I will not work for Ovídio anymore. I will not. Because afterwards he never comes. And Pedro Eurico also only comes to the community when he needs us for the elections. I do not feel ashamed to say this.'

With Maria, whom Ovídio considered one of his closest friends, he did not speak a word for a year after Election Day. She blamed him for what happened: 'He should not have worked for two candidates. You cannot work for one, receive a salary from one and vote for another. If you work for me, I pay a salary and everything and you tell the people to vote for me and bring them to meetings and rallies. Then, when Election Day comes, you vote for somebody else?! You cannot do that! But, this is what happened. It is a nasty thing he did.' She recalled that she had made a very nice breakfast for the first

meeting and worked hard for Muniz. She felt used, as Ovídio had her working for a weak candidate whom he did not support and who lost, while placing his own bets on another: 'If Ovídio had exerted himself more, if he had not stayed with the other, he would have won! We worked hard.' Meanwhile, Ovídio said her that her grandson had not done anything in the *equipe*. He claimed that this was unforgivable, especially since he himself had contributed with his own money to pay the *equipe*. When Maria's daughter married three months after Election Day, Ovídio ignored the invitation for the wedding. Maria considered this a great insult. Only after a year, did they return to speaking terms with each other.

It is hard to say if the *equipe* members turned their backs on Ovídio only because he was burnt in the elections. Most of them worked with him in the urban agriculture project as well, which slowly faded out (see chapter 3). Not only that, with some, like Maria's grandson, Ovídio had never had a close relationship. Yet, looking back, the incidents having to do with electoral politics certainly were a major factor in the deterioration of Ovídio's connections to his fellow slum dwellers.

In the meantime, Ovídio dissolved his contract with Pedro Eurico and distanced himself from the politician, according to him because Eurico had become too much of a rightist. In my view, the trouble he had lived through in the elections were an incentive for this decision. He had not quite completed the number of years needed for his pension, but Ovídio turned to Inácio who helped him get his pension in November 2005. In 2005 and 2006, Ovídio worked closely with Inácio in several projects, like an attempt to publish a book about the history of Chão de Estrelas.

Eventually, Ovídio retreated from electoral politics. In the state and federal elections of 2006, he stayed aloof of the campaigns. Wiping his hands, meaning "good riddance", he said of campaigning: 'I did not want it anymore. I only voted for a candidate because Inácio asked me to.' He said that Inácio had brought him publicity material, but that he had refused. Proudly, he added that even without campaigning he arranged twenty votes for the candidate. He did not vote for Pedro Eurico, who was a candidate for state parliament, but rather for a PT-candidate Inácio recommended. Yet he also voted for candidates from other parties, arguing that he liked the PT president Lula and voted for him, but that those who surrounded him were a bunch of frauds.

Zezinho moving to and fro from power

Close to power

Zezinho and I sat on the porch of his house. I brought today's newspaper with me and showed him an article in which several of Recife's councillors were accused of what the paper called corruption. The header on the front page said: 'Councillors contract family

members' (Jornal do Commercio 27/02/2005). I read the sub-header aloud: 'Of the 41 councillors in Recife, 23 appointed family members.'

'Yeah,' Zezinho said with a smile. A table in the paper showed the names of twenty-three councillors who had appointed family members in public positions. When I saw the name of the councillor whom Zezinho supported, I showed him and said: 'Here, Zezinho, your councillor. He also appointed family members.'

Zezinho, following the text with his index finger, read aloud the names of the family members whom the councillor had appointed. With a content smile, he commented that he knew several of them. Reading the name of a woman, he looked up from the paper and excitedly blurted out: 'I know her. She is his wife! Is she not?' Continuing, he cheerfully read that she was indeed the councillor's spouse.

Zezinho was not interested in the newspaper's accusations. He was happy to know the councillor and his family members. In order to understand how Zezinho acted in the elections, it is important to analyse the imagery he holds of his connections to influential, high-ranked, and resourceful people. On another day, he proudly showed me a Christmas card he received from Marco Maciel, current Senator and ex-governor of the state of Pernambuco. The Christmas card that Zezinho received was one of many automatically-generated cards sent to everybody whose name for some reason – often related to assistance in political campaigns – was in a database. In a similar way, Zezinho was keen on receiving business cards from politicians, officials and campaign workers. He collected these cards and copied the names and phone numbers in a notebook that he always carried with him to meetings.

The way Zezinho dealt with these cards resonates with what Geert Banck aptly describes as *estar próximo do poder*, being close to power (1998). Power, here, should be understood in its colloquial definition, associated with a centre of control – be it personalised or not – and notions of command and domination. Being close to power refers to the prestige one gains from one's connections to politicians and other important people. Aside from the attraction of money and other material needs, the prestige that emerges from being close to power is important. It is as if the higher-ranked person "projects" his aura on the lower-ranked person, and the latter derives power from being close to it (Banck 1998:29). Boasting about his important connections, an important element of Zezinho's operational style, led to an enhancement of his own prestige. Yet, being close to power comes with a risk of being considered contaminated by this very power, as I showed in the case of Ovídio. In a way – especially with regard to objects like business cards – it reminds me of the *hau*, the spirit of a gift among the Maoris, as described by Marcel Mauss (1970[1954]). A card is not merely a material object as it is injected with the spirit of the person who gives it. Moreover, the material dimensions of electoral politics are important to Zezinho, as these provide a vital contribution to his income. There are also the intangible and utopian aspects – expressed in Zezinho's attempts to stay close to power – which are of significance in order to understand his

perseverance in engaging in electoral politics in spite of the setbacks and disappointments he faced.

Resonating with the dictum that the more important the ones you deal with, the more important you are yourself, Zezinho tried to enhance the prestige of people he dealt with. When a politician could not be found to make an appointment, or kept him waiting for hours in spite of a prior arrangement, he would say proudly that the politician was certainly very popular and thus too busy to attend to him. He transformed the condescending approach that most politicians took towards him into a positive thing, arguing that he was happy that these important people had eyes for him and the needs of the community. This kind of reasoning was common among slum dwellers: when politicians did not appear at meetings or rejected invitations, they often argued that these persons were too busy to be present always and everywhere.

The importance of being close to power can be expressed in a literal and physical way (see also Banck 1998:28, 29). People try to stand next to or, better still, be embraced by an important politician. Community leaders spoke of having *intimidade*, "intimacy", being "close" with politicians, officials or campaign workers (see chapter 3). The physical aspects of being close to power became clear to me when analysing my own and other photographs of meetings and events. In most pictures that featured a politician, official or other bigwig, the community leaders stood next to him or gave him an *abraço* (embrace). In general, the politician was at the centre, the community leaders next to him, while everyone else was more towards the fringes of the frame. In these pictures – some were taken spontaneously, but most were staged – the community leaders proved their proximity to power. Banck emphasises the importance of photographs in which the physical proximity to "power" – embodied in an influential person – is captured as a "visual record". He states: 'the audience attending the rally is important, the photograph of the *abraço* … may be just as important' as it becomes part of an 'iconography of power' (Banck 1998:29, 30). My camera was used to document many *abraços*. Zezinho's regret of my absence during the visit of a councillor to his office could not have been more poignantly expressed than in his lament that I had not been there to take a picture.

A more general example of the 'iconography of power' is found on the flyers and banners that paper the city during the election period. These show photographs of candidates next to the mayor, the governor or the president, the higher-ranked person conferring his aura onto the lower-ranked person. It is often easy to see that the picture has been doctored – in other words, the two were not really together for the picture – but the meaning is clear: this candidate is close to power.

In Zezinho's practices, not only the importance, but also the excitement of being close to power comes to the fore. He is certainly not primarily engaged in a conscious strategic attempt to gain prestige, but also plainly enjoys the enormous attractions of electoral politics. He takes great pleasure in talking about politicians and their qualities

and wealth. He can completely lose himself in monologues about important persons he knows and their big cars, nice houses, luxurious yachts and exclusive holiday addresses. When talking about his youth in the country side, he never refrained from emphasising his relationship with the local mayor, whom he called his friend. He liked to reminisce about the huge parties this mayor organised and claimed that for São João[14] they lit the highest fires in the region.

In 2004, Zezinho's propinquity to power materialised in the installation of a residential telephone. He had not had a phone and used to make his calls from the public phone in front of his house or from other people's cell phones. To receive calls, he used the phone number of a neighbour. As he took great pride and pleasure in calling politicians and officials he knew, and even more in receiving their calls, the lack of a home telephone bothered him. The first thing he did with the money that he made in the 2004 elections – to which I will return later in this chapter – was acquire a residential telephone connection. Marilene did not agree with the installation, as she thought it too expensive. Later, Zezinho indeed had problems paying the bills. Nevertheless, the phone provided him with a connection to power, enhancing his nearness to it and thus his prestige.

A physical aspect of being close to power is expressed in Zezinho's dealings with important persons. As I showed, he enjoys talking to important people on the phone. Be that as it may – and this is common in Brazil – he prefers meeting people in person, even if this means travelling hours to an office. Similarly, he prefers negotiating face-to-face with a politician above leaving a message with a secretary, even if this implies a long wait.

Zezinho, far more than Ovídio and Creuza, is attracted to the richness that awaits in the world of politicians. The attractions of opulence and the "spoils of power" formed an important motive for him to engage in electoral politics. But lest I give the impression that he was completely dazzled by and obsessed with power, I must emphasise that Zezinho was not blinded by its brilliance. He remained concerned with the ever-lurking accusations of his fellow slum dwellers of being contaminated by electoral politics and emphasised his own agency in accomplishing things for the community. He publicly refuted the idea of being an extension of politicians and critically assessed politicians and their promises. Once he received a load of old furniture for use in his meeting room. When people suggested that he had acquired things, like new furniture for the office of the Residents' Union, through the intervention of politicians, he emphasised irritably that he had arranged things himself. In addition, he did not think politicians flawless, but frequently criticised them and their campaign workers. What is more, as I show, he always remained alert in his negotiations with them.

In the following sections I show how Zezinho's attempts to be close to power were expressed through his activities in the election period. These attempts moved like a swing, leaving Zezinho sometimes close and sometimes far from power, swinging to

and fro. Often his efforts to be close to power were at best a struggle not to be far from it, stemming from a fear of being ignored.

Zezinho negotiating for money and festivities

In-built sonar for political activity

How did Zezinho engage in electoral politics during the 2004 elections? I present an ethnography of his negotiations with the councillor whom he supported, which shows in detail how he negotiated about money, other resources and festivities for the community and himself.

Months before Election Day, Zezinho started to take an active interest in electoral politics. It was as if the approaching elections woke Zezinho from a long slumber as they transformed him from a sleepy daydreamer into a busy political entrepreneur. He organised meetings, attended campaign rallies, set up festivities, paid visits to many people and received campaign workers in his office. He became deliberately "drenched" – not, I argue, completely drowned – in the swirling current of electoral politics generated in this period.

In those days Zezinho seemed to have an in-built sonar system that was constantly scanning the area for electoral political movement. He was eager to know "who went with whom" in the community. He was keen on discovering who intended to vote or work for which candidate. I had the habit of regularly dropping by to talk with Zezinho about recent encounters and conversations in the neighbourhood. Usually he remained rather drowsy during these meetings, but when I told him about electoral political engagements of slum residents, he paid complete attention. Once I told him that a candidate had visited a local shop. He was all ears, asked what I had seen and heard, discussed the issue with his son and arrived at the conclusion that the shop owner must be working for this candidate. He leaned back at ease and appeared to be content with the solution to this political puzzle. He kept an eye on the political commitment of other community leaders. He did not discuss these with them, but was eager to know their alliances. As the majority of community leaders in Chão de Estrelas currently supported Cadoca for mayor just as he did, he regularly joined them in campaign meetings. At these meetings, the leaders announced who they supported for councillor and what kinds of benefits they were trying to derive for the community. The electoral preferences of his fellow slum dwellers were no reason for Zezinho to exclude them from his activities or assistance. He argued that he would not refrain from doing a favour to anybody who asked him, even if that person supported a candidate opposing his own.

Zezinho watched the daily electoral political transmissions on television. Usually, he did not watch much television, but now he had his lunch in front of the screen and happily blurted out remarks like 'Ah, I know him, he is the son of [an important

politician]!' or 'Look, he works together with [an important politician]!' He enjoyed the polls. If these predicted that Cadoca was to lose, he did not seem disappointed or tense. However, if the polls foresaw a victory for Cadoca, he happily spread the news.

Zezinho tries to become a candidate-councillor

In the 2004 elections, Zezinho attempted to become a candidate-councillor. He had achieved this once in the elections four years earlier. He proudly presented me with a *santinho*, a small flyer with his portrait on it. He had carefully stored this small piece of evidence of his candidacy and pointed at the number indicating his position on the list printed on the flyer. He did not mention to me – what I knew from other sources – that he had been in an ineligible position on the list, in the *cauda eleitoral*, with the "function" of gaining votes for the party's eligible positions. He boasted that he had a hundred-and-eighty-two votes without doing much campaigning, 'only walking around'. Sulkily, he stated that he had not made any money, as the party had not paid him: 'I did not receive anything.'

Zezinho ran again for candidacy in 2004. He engaged in activities for the PV[15], a party that was relatively small in Recife and different from the one he stood candidate for in 2000. Zezinho referred to the PV as 'my party'. He was well-informed about its goings-on. He received an invitation to an expensive three-day party congress. With the fees far too high for him to pay, he could not afford to go. However, he kept on talking about it and time after time took up the invitation in order to read it again or just look at it.

For the municipal elections in Recife, the PV allied to the PMDB and its mayoral candidate Cadoca. Zezinho explained: 'My party is very small, so it will pass on its votes to the PMDB with Cadoca as a candidate'. Zezinho's motives for favouring the PMDB were unrelated to the party's history or ideology, which he did not know. Neither did he know the meaning of the acronym PMDB. He favoured the PMDB because he liked the party's two main dignitaries: Jarbas Vasconcelos and Cadoca. Jarbas Vasconcelos was a former mayor of Recife and the current governor of Pernambuco. According to Zezinho, 'Jarbas was the best mayor of Recife. He has even been elected best mayor of the whole of Brazil. He is now governor.' Likewise, Zezinho was very enthusiastic about Cadoca, arguing that he was very rich and – according to both early polls and Zezinho – the favourite candidate. Zezinho stated: 'As he is a member of federal parliament, he has a lot of money. When he is mayor he will have a lot to spend.' While saying this, he looked as happy as a child and gesticulated in the air, indicating how beautiful the future would be with Cadoca as mayor.

Pending his candidacy for councillor, Zezinho happily spread the news that he was a pre-candidate. He had his sons paint his name in blue upon many white-chalked walls in the neighbourhood, including that of his own house. The words 'Zezinho da Cruz,

Cadoca is Recife' – the latter being a PMDB campaign slogan – were everywhere. That year, Zezinho was among the first in the whole city to have his name painted on walls. He proudly showed me the publicity and explained that later, when he would be appointed candidate, his sons would paint the word *vereador*, councillor, and the number of his position after his name. He spoke with reverence of his number on the list and confided in me that he already knew it, but was not yet allowed to add it as he had to await his appointment as candidate.

In order to become candidate, Zezinho had to arrange for many juridical documents and attend several meetings. This was a demanding task that left him very busy. In June, he called for a meeting in the Residents' Union to prepare for his inauguration as a candidate-councillor which, he said, completely thrilled, would take place later that week. His intention was, he told me, to arrange for a large group of people to join him at the PV-meeting to support him. However, when only four persons came to the meeting besides him and myself, Zezinho did not touch upon the issue of the inauguration. A week later, he informed me that there was a chance that he would not become candidate, since the number of seats in the city council had been reduced. The PV, like other political parties, had had to decrease their number of candidate councillors. Zezinho sadly reflected that his name 'which is already widespread in every corner' now probably had to be removed from the walls.

Nonetheless, Zezinho still believed in his chances, as became clear when he went to a huge rally in support of Cadoca's candidacy, organised by the PMDB and its allies, like the PV. Before this rally, Zezinho proposed repeatedly that he might be invited to speak at this gathering as a candidate-councillor. However, at the rally no room was provided for him to take the floor. Shortly after the rally, to Zezinho's regret, the PV officially decided on his redundancy and excluded him from being candidate. Zezinho, after having been informed about it, retold the story in a more positive light, highlighting that he had resigned of his free will. To his fellow slum dwellers, he stated that he 'gave up the position of candidate-councillor'.

Cadoca and the PMDB

Half a year before Election Day, when Zezinho had only heard the first rumours of Cadoca organising his campaign, he started to visit people in the neighbourhood and beyond in order to involve them in the campaign. He seemed to believe in the existence of a huge machine-like plan for getting votes, stating that Cadoca had a list of people who would help in his campaign. He had never seen this list, but argued that he knew more or less who was on it from Chão de Estrelas. He said that he needed to invite those people, since 'later, each of these persons will be the head of groups of twenty, thirty persons for campaigning'. As such, he visited many people whom he exhorted to support Cadoca.

After attending a meeting with Cadoca, Zezinho enthusiastically reported that the mayoral candidate would come to the office of the Residents' Union. He exclaimed, beaming: 'This Sunday or the next Sunday! I invite you as soon as it is settled!' Some days later Zezinho told me that his plan had not yet been realised: 'I have not yet made an appointment with him.' He explained that Cadoca actually wanted to pay a visit to Chão de Estrelas, but that he did not like that, because a "visit" was much too short. 'I want a meeting,' Zezinho argued, 'I do not want a visit in which he will be here for three minutes and then leave again. I want a meeting, for then the people may speak up.' After this, he never referred to this meeting anymore. He was busy convoking and attending lots of other meetings.

Several PMDB campaign workers came to Chão de Estrelas in search of Zezinho. Gatherings were organised in the office of the Residents' Union and other locations, together with slum dwellers and other community leaders. The campaign workers listened to the needs of those present. Zezinho emphasised the need of the community to find a solution for the floods and to build leisure and sports facilities for youth. However, over the next months, the campaign workers did not respond to these needs and only brought large amounts of publicity material, like caps, T-shirts and flags.

Little achieved, much enjoyed

None of Zezinho's initial attempts succeeded. He had not become candidate-councillor, did not get a meeting with Cadoca, and did not acquire anything from the campaign workers. Nonetheless, he continued his involvement in electoral politics with great pleasure. During this period, he was on a high. He was extremely busy, mixing his time-consuming activities with attending festivities that he – according to himself – deserved, because of his hard work. He went to rallies organised by politicians and held drinking sessions at home. Every Sunday night he closed the week with friends and large amounts of cachaça.

Zezinho connected some of his activities in this period directly to the elections, thus showing to his fellow slum dwellers that he was "close to power". At the end of May he organised a barbecue with free food and drinks. Before, he divulged that it was a project of Cadoca's. Afterwards I asked if Cadoca had sponsored the barbecue. Zezinho said that he had not, but that he had 'made a round' along the shops in the neighbourhood and received meat and drinks in exchange for word-of-mouth publicity and possible favours in the future. A week later Zezinho was still bragging: 'Boy, so many people, I had a hard job supplying all the cachaça'.

First meeting with Menezes

As soon as the PV dropped him, Zezinho decided to offer his services to councillor

Marcos Menezes. Zezinho told me that he still had another option, so if he could not reach an agreement with Menezes, he would turn to yet another candidate. Zezinho explained to me that he did not work with only one party or politician and that he would work with any politician who could be of some benefit to the community or himself. He clarified: 'If we agree upon something, I work with them'. Menezes was a police chief, current councillor for the PMDB and running for his third successive term. Zezinho did not know him personally, but had established a connection as he was *encaminhado* (passed on, directed) by a cousin of the latter and another acquaintance. He was enthusiastic about Menezes, for reasons that boiled down to the councillor being a rich and influential police chief who was sure to be re-elected due to his popularity. Zezinho left no doubt about the purpose of his negotiations with Menezes, as he light-heartedly stated to me that it was 'for gaining', while making the 'money' gesture with his thumb and index finger. He tried – as was completely normal in this context – to get a financial reward for his services and set out to achieve a job for his unemployed oldest son and a salary for himself. He stated: 'He is rich. I am poor. But I will *cobrar*!' – meaning that he would demand something in return for his support. He slammed his fist into the palm of his other hand and repeated: 'I will *cobrar*!'

In July, Zezinho went to meet Menezes for the first time in City Hall.[16] He had talked to Menezes on the phone and made an appointment for early afternoon. Although Zezinho was often considered naïve, this study shows that he was in fact learning to "play the game" of electoral politics. He was well-shaved and wore his best long trousers, leather shoes and an ironed shirt. He took a letter with him that he had written to Cadoca and received back with pen marks and the politician's signature. In it, Zezinho made a request for the electoral campaign: T-shirts, financial assistance and payment for *bocas de urna*. In addition, he asked for a job at the local CSU – the multifunctional centre where Ovídio had worked in the past – in exchange for his services 'in case Cadoca wins or is defeated in the elections.' Zezinho treated this letter, just as the Christmas card from Marco Maciel, like a relic.

Arriving at City Hall, Zezinho cheerfully greeted someone he knew. He told me that he had been there many times, but that the last time had already been long ago. In the building he looked at a chart in order to find the office of Menezes. At the office, Zezinho knocked the door and we entered. The office reminded me of Kafka's Castle. In a small room without windows a secretary sat behind a desk. Two doors led to – as I noticed later – another secretary and an assistant's room, respectively, each furnished with a desk and bookcases. On the other side, both rooms gave way to the councillor's office. Newspaper cuttings on the door to the assistant's office said that Cadoca was leading the polls.

The secretary asked the reason for our visit and Zezinho replied that he had an appointment with the councillor. He had her write down his name on a waiting list. Then we had to wait outside the office for what ended up being three hours. Zezinho

had apparently expected this waiting time, since he immediately offered me to show me around the building in the meantime. Upon returning to Menezes' office, Zezinho checked with the secretary whether his name was still on the list. While we waited in the corridor, many well but casually dressed men, most of them potbellied, and high-heeled women walked in and out of the councillor's office, lively and somewhat pompously discussing things with each other, the men jovially slapping each other's shoulders. I have to admit that the situation annoyed me, since we had to wait so long despite Zezinho's appointment. After a long time, the advisor (*assessor*) of Menezes, Adriano, a casually dressed, corpulent man in his fifties, came into the corridor. He enquired about Zezinho's business. Zezinho stood upright, introduced himself and replied that he had an appointment with Menezes. The advisor went in again. Zezinho sat on the bench in the corridor and remained totally calm – unlike me. I was irritated and asked Zezinho if he should not go in and tell the secretary that we had an appointment for three hours earlier. Zezinho did not want to and said: 'Let us wait for some more minutes. If he does not call me, we will go'.

Finally, we were called in. Marcos Menezes was a rather big man in his fifties, wearing casual jeans and a shirt. Standing behind a completely empty desk, the councillor was acting busy, exchanging words with people in the doorways and adjacent offices as he agitatedly asked Zezinho about his proposal. Zezinho calmly introduced himself in his usual manner. He stated that he was president of the Residents' Union and *titular* of the Comul. The latter he had become only recently, as a substitute (see chapter 3). However, he was clever to mention it as it added to his prestige as a community leader. Zezinho continued that he had been pre-candidate for the PV and emphasised the alliance between the PV and Menezes' party, the PMDB. He stated that he had voluntarily resigned from his position as a pre-candidate. However, he argued, as a pre-candidate he could count on a large constituency with voters not only in Chão de Estrelas, but also in other neighbourhoods. The voters in these other neighbourhoods were family members, but he did not mention this – again this displayed a certain craft as he embroidered a positive image. Zezinho demonstrated that he knew the rules of the political game, as he named all the elements important to displaying his prestige: his official titles, a large amount of support and personal decisiveness.

Menezes did not seem impressed and asked in a condescending tone: 'And your proposal?'

Zezinho, seemingly unruffled, mentioned campaign activities in which he had participated and concluded: 'I have been working for your party for a long time.'

Menezes – still unmoved – repeated: 'But what is your proposal?'

Zezinho: 'I have a son who has been unemployed for two years'.

The councillor, irritated, blurted out: 'You are explaining about your story, but what is your proposal?'

Zezinho introduced his proposal: 'Right, this is my proposal. I give my services to you, and I want a job for my son, plus R$ 3000.'

Menezes replied thoughtfully: 'R$ 3000? Hmmm.'

Zezinho: 'R$ 3000 spread over three months, until October'.

Menezes then sent us to the secretary in the next office – almost pushing us out of his office – stating that Zezinho had to fill in a record. Before being sent out of the room, Zezinho quickly pulled out the letter to Cadoca. Menezes did not look at it and simply said: 'I will talk to Cadoca. No problem'.

In the next office, the secretary filled in a record for Zezinho. She asked for his particulars and his *pleito*. *Pleito* literally refers to a juridical case or an electoral contest, but here it refers to the request Zezinho made in exchange for his support for Menezes. Zezinho emphasised that the secretary should add that he was president of the Residents' Union and *titular* of the Comul. About the latter he cannily stated that 'I was elected two years ago by the people' – which was indeed true, although he had been elected as a substitute and only recently became *titular*. Zezinho also had her write down that he had been *encaminhado* by Menezes' cousin and another man, and emphasised that his name, together with Cadoca's, had already been painted on twenty-five walls in the neighbourhood. The secretary added technical information about Zezinho's voting district. She said that with this information they could reasonably monitor whether or not he gathered votes for Menezes. Zezinho repeated his request to the secretary: work for his son and R$3000 spread over three months. The secretary wrote it down on the back of the record. Then she discussed some practical things, like whether Zezinho already had a painter for painting more adverts on walls. Eventually, when the secretary had put down her pen, Zezinho wanted her to add that he had been a pre-candidate for the PV and that he was already allied to Cadoca.

The secretary did not seem willing and replied: 'Did you already say so to Marcos?'

When Zezinho confirmed this, she replied, 'So he knows' and tried to close the case, moving aside the record towards a huge pile of similar papers on her desk.

Zezinho insisted: 'But jot it down. Just to be sure.'

The secretary smiled: 'But he knows. He never forgets anything.'

When Zezinho pretended not to hear her and repeated his request, she wrote it down. She handed over a pile of *santinhos* with Menezes' smiling face and a stack of small forms. These were to be filled in by people around Zezinho and handed in, in order to show how many people he could persuade to vote for Menezes. The secretary concluded that Zezinho's proposal would be taken into consideration and that he needed to return the completed forms soon. The forms were an important artefact in the organisation of electoral politics. Later, Zezinho requested slum dwellers to fill in the forms. I remember Raquel who had a form, but did not understand what to fill in. For a laugh, I suggested that she could put a request in exchange for her support to Menezes. Zezinho, hearing us, reacted with slight annoyance: 'No, you must not fill in anything

there.' According to him, those who filled in the forms were not supposed to make requests. Only he was.

Outside City Hall, Zezinho reviewed his first visit to Menezes. First of all, he complained that he only received a small amount of forms, implying that he considered himself capable of persuading more people to vote for Menezes. Then, his face beaming, he stated that Menezes was *gente fina*, meaning that he thought of Menezes as a "fine", esteemed, well-educated person. 'We arrived, he received us. Like this, like that. Very good, was it not? And did you see all these people? It was full of people! He is very popular, did you see?'

Zezinho was not irritated by the many people who had walked in and out while we were kept waiting. On the contrary, he saw this in a positive light as he perceived of their presence as an indication of Menezes' popularity and prestige. I asked Zezinho if he had received a salary like he asked for now in other elections. Zezinho explained: 'No, I have not. But now my prestige has increased, has it not?' He referred to his newly attained position as *titular*.

I asked: 'Will Menezes approve of your proposal?'

Zezinho replied: 'We will see. Now, he will take it into consideration'.

Municipal and Comul elections merged

Apart from a job for his son and a salary for himself, Zezinho negotiated with Menezes about assistance in the Comul elections that would take place two months before the municipal elections. Zezinho had allied to Creuza and was running for the next two-year term. Zezinho handed in a request to Menezes in which he asked for 'two hundred printed T-shirts, two vans for transporting the voters to the ballot boxes, a *carro de som* for the 24th from 1.00 p.m. until 5.00 p.m. and R$100, - to organise a lunch for the organisers and volunteers.' Eventually, Menezes partly complied with the request, providing a sum of money and sending people to lend a hand on the day of the Comul elections.

Meanwhile, Zezinho turned to other contacts. Together with Creuza, who also supported Cadoca for mayor, he negotiated with a highly-positioned campaign worker of Cadoca. The man promised assistance. However, three days before the Comul elections, the assistance promised fell short, supposedly because six out of eight candidates for this specific Comul supported Cadoca and had all requested money and goods. As a result, the campaign worker alleged, the assistance initially promised to Zezinho and Creuza had to be divided among six people. In the end, no assistance came.

At the last moment, Zezinho tried to get help from a member of state parliament and a member of federal parliament whom he had supported in the last elections. He asked to use the printing press at their party's headquarters. Unfortunately, after calling the office of the member of federal parliament, paying several visits to an assistant of the

member of state parliament, a lot of waiting and being sent from one person to another, the press turned out to be unavailable, because it was continuously in use for making the party's own publicity material.

While campaigning for his candidacy in the Comul elections, Zezinho did publicity for Menezes as well, telling his fellow slum dwellers to vote him into the Comul and Menezes into the City Council. One woman expressed her support for Menezes, saying: 'He always does what we ask for. He has a lot of money'. This left Zezinho very content. During a walk in an adjacent neighbourhood, campaigning for the Comul elections, Zezinho noticed that Menezes' name was painted on many walls. He happily exclaimed: 'He will not lose!' In those days Zezinho was on top of the world and feeling close to power in terms of command and opulence.

Zezinho is forgotten

Only six days after his first meeting with Menezes, Zezinho's high times received a blow when the councillor appeared to have completely forgotten about him. It occurred when I accompanied Zezinho to Cadoca's headquarters to see the campaign worker about assistance for the Comul elections. We had to wait for a while and in the meantime Zezinho talked to a man who turned out to be a cousin of Cadoca and a friend of Menezes. The man, who had to phone Menezes for some reason, did so and mentioned Zezinho's name. On the phone, the councillor said that he did not remember any Zezinho da Cruz. When Zezinho heard this, he was shocked. He emphasised that he really visited Menezes. He pointed at me and said: 'He was there with me too. We went on the 14th. We talked to the councillor Marcos Menezes. I took some forms with me.' Worriedly, he wondered: 'Would he not remember me anymore?' Zezinho was lost in thought for some minutes. As I see it, his proximity to power and his prospects for an income were at severe risk, if they had not completely vanished already. Then he resolutely argued to me that it would be of great importance to see Menezes again as soon as possible. He firmly stated: 'So, I will not call him. I want to see him personally.' He decided to go to City Hall immediately after the meeting with the campaign worker.

When we were let into the office of the campaign worker, Zezinho discussed matters regarding the Comul elections. Afterwards, he told the worker that he had just heard that Menezes did not remember him anymore. The campaign worker, already on his way out of the room, light-heartedly said: 'Why, he must be joking, Zezinho.' This did not set Zezinho at ease. Once outside, he muttered indignantly about the campaign worker: 'He thought that Marcos Menezes was only joking when he said that he did not remember me. I do not think so.' He concluded that Menezes had probably forgotten about him because there were so many people that day.

Second visit to Menezes' office

In City Hall, Zezinho first turned to Menezes' secretary. Menezes was not present, she said, but soon we were allowed to enter the office of an assistant. The assistant took time for us, sitting behind his all but empty desk. Zezinho told him in detail about his visit of six days ago and his proposal to Menezes. He said that he had returned to ask for help in the Comul elections and showed the request. Zezinho had already made photocopies of it, so – he had told me – he could leave a signed copy behind and 'keep another signed copy as proof'. Zezinho also showed his request to Cadoca. Like he had told Menezes, he again talked about his pre-candidacy for the PV and his decision to resign. He also talked about his campaign activities in two other neighbourhoods, and said that his name had already been painted on many walls.

The assistant inquired: 'How many walls?'

Zezinho: 'There must be about twenty-five. But I have twenty-five more, ready to be painted.'

The assistant criticised Zezinho for not having submitted his request for assistance in the Comul elections earlier. He stated that 'now it is very much at the last moment'. However, he promised to talk to Menezes about this matter on the phone. Apparently he did not want us to be present during this conversation, as we had to leave his office, but he assured us that he would call us in again.

Before we went outside, Zezinho quickly asked the assistant for some forms with which people could agree to have their wall painted. These forms were about the only thing on the assistant's table. The assistant gave him one form with the remark that Zezinho had to make copies. We waited in the corridor where Zezinho carefully wrote down the name of the assistant among all the other names and phone numbers in his notebook. Ten minutes later the assistant came out and reported that he had tried to call Menezes, but that he had not succeeded. He asked: 'Do you want to stay a bit longer?'

Zezinho agreed and the assistant went in again. Fifteen minutes later, another assistant invited Zezinho into the office to talk to Menezes on the phone. The assistant cordially said: 'It will be alright!' Zezinho had a short conversation on the phone in which he repeated his requests.

When he finished, Zezinho confided in me *sotto voce*: 'I spoke with Marcos Menezes. I do not know about my money. He was grumbling.' Menezes had complained about the R$3000 that Zezinho asked for. Zezinho muttered that Menezes had at first said he did not remember anything about his meeting with him, but then seemed to remember. He told Zezinho that he had to discuss matters further with his advisor Adriano. Zezinho went to Adriano, who was around, and told him the whole history of his pre-candidacy for the PV, showed the request for assistance in the Comul elections and began negotiating.

Further negotiations about the money

Adriano wanted to know what Zezinho had requested from Menezes.

Zezinho replied: 'R$ 3000 and employment for my son.'

Adriano wrote down 3000 on a piece of paper and argued that at the moment money was a problem. He stated that in 2000 Menezes had ten thousand votes – a very high amount. Adriano asked: 'Do you know what that means? That means a lot of work.'

I did not immediately understand what he meant. Then it occurred to me that this remark – regarding the pending issue of Zezinho's financial reward – pointed to the fact that Menezes had an enormous amount of people he had to keep satisfied, since they belonged to his constituency, in accordance with the norm that a politician elected should do favours for his voters. Regarding Zezinho's request for money, the knowledge that Menezes had to provide favours to ten thousand voters, was of great relevance to the negotiations at hand.

Adriano continued: 'Let us talk like serious people about serious matters'. He asked Zezinho whether he would be satisfied with half of the money.

Zezinho reacted neutrally: 'I made my proposal. Make yours.'

Adriano persisted: '1500, is that alright with you? I will talk it over with Marcos. It is better to make a reasonable proposal, than to end up with nothing, is it not?'

Zezinho held the neutral expression on his face as he repeated: '3000 is my proposal, now you make yours.'

Then Adriano changed the subject to the request for work for Zezinho's son. He enquired about the work experience and education level of his son. He concluded: 'It will be difficult. We have to fight for this, do you understand?'

Zezinho indicated that he understood, while Adriano emphasised that all this was a struggle and that nothing came for free. Then Adriano returned again to the R$ 3000, mumbling: '3000, is it not?'

Zezinho reacted that he wanted the money not as a lump sum, but divided into smaller periodic payments: 'Not all at once, but spread.'

Adriano sluggishly repeated: 'Ah, spread.' Then he quickly put his pen to the paper and blurted out: 'Zezinho, can I put 1500 here?'

Zezinho remained silent for a while and then stated: 'Put 2000.'

Adriano slowly replied, hesitating between his words: 'So 2000. That will be about 700 a month. I will talk to Marcos Menezes about this. I will discuss the 2000, but…' He hesitated before he continued: 'May I arrive at 1500?'

In response, Zezinho only watched Adriano silently, "poker-faced". Adriano assured that he would discuss the R$2000 with Menezes and that, only if they ultimately could not agree, he might have to turn to R$1500. Zezinho was reluctant to agree. However, after some discussing back and forth, repeating the same things several times,

he agreed.

Before we left, Zezinho brought out the letter to Cadoca. Adriano read it and said that the request for a job for Zezinho at the CSU could only be fulfilled if Cadoca won the elections. Zezinho responded that Cadoca had approved of the requests, since his pen marks and signature were on it. Adriano asked him: 'Did Marcos already read this?'

Zezinho: 'Yes, he knows about it. He said that he would discuss it with Cadoca.'

Adriano took the letter and said that he would discuss it with Menezes. Zezinho did not want to leave the letter behind as he had no copy. Adriano argued that he could not make a copy here and stated he would discuss the issues with Menezes without the letter. When Zezinho silently agreed, Adriano asked for his phone number and showed us out.

Zezinho reflects on the negotiations

Outside, something rare occurred: Zezinho, who never reflected much on his practices, started to reflect elaborately on the negotiations. He showed that he was keenly aware of what he was doing. He stated that he had known that he had to ask for R$3000 in order to receive only R$1500. Putting his index finger beside his eye – signifying "I am clever" – he explained: 'I will not ask 1500 and end up with 750. I also said that the amount of money was to be spread, did I not? I said that, because if it were a one-time payment, he would have thought that I wanted to rob him. Because, if it were a one-time payment, he could give me the money and I could run away without working for him.' He also reflected upon the criticism of the assistant who had said that he should have given Menezes the request for the Comul elections at their first meeting. Zezinho explained why he had not done so: 'First I had to settle things with him. After that, I brought the proposals for my election. You cannot ask these things without settling things before, can you?'

Fear of being ignored

From that day on Zezinho waited for a long time before he actually received his financial reward from Menezes. This period was full of uncertainty, since, Zezinho feared, Adriano and Menezes could forget about him, like Menezes had done before, or doubt his loyalty, as it happened many times that community leaders supported different candidates simultaneously, in order to try to derive benefits from all of them. Ovídio's case, as I have shown, presented a similar situation. Gay (1994) gives the account of a parallel occasion on which a community leader in Rio de Janeiro negotiated conditions with five politicians at the same time.

Zezinho considered it important to display his fidelity to Menezes, in order not to be ignored. The day after they had met, he called Adriano several times, but the line was

busy. He worried: 'I hope Adriano does not think that I am with someone else.'

I asked why Adriano would think so. Zezinho replied: 'Because it is politics. Because I did not call today, he may think that I am with another.' He decided to visit Adriano as soon as possible 'to talk to him'. I asked Zezinho whether he thought that Adriano and Menezes had approved of the R$2000 or if it would become R$1500. Zezinho, already having a plan in mind, stated: 'If it becomes 1500, alright, but then they will have to agree with my proposal for the Comul elections.'

The following afternoon, Zezinho told me that he had been busy the whole day. In between other meetings, he had visited City Hall twice and had finally managed to talk to Adriano. Curious, I asked: 'And? Did you succeed?'

He replied: 'I succeeded, but not those 2000.'

I asked: 'How do you mean?'

Zezinho said: 'Those 2000 not. It has been decreased.'

'So you get 1500?'

'Yes,' Zezinho confirmed, 'but I immediately said that then I want help for my Comul campaign. He does not want to give T-shirts, because these are very expensive, he said. But he approved of the *carro de som* and the lunch.' He told me that Adriano would visit him the next day: 'He will bring the money and have a look in the community.'

Zezinho's fear of being ignored was based in experiences like the one that happened the next morning. He went to the headquarters of Cadoca to try to obtain materials for painting publicity ads on walls in the neighbourhood. Adriano had told him who to talk to in Cadoca's headquarters. When this person appeared to be in a meeting, Zezinho stood guard at the door of the meeting room. When he came out, Zezinho directly approached him and asked for painting materials. The man, disturbed, replied shortly that there were no materials. Zezinho countered: 'But Marcos Menezes said that you had the materials.' The man shook his head, returned to the room and closed the door. Then Zezinho turned to another man who worked at Cadoca's headquarters and solicited him about getting the materials. The man, however, did not take any notice of Zezinho and after some time Zezinho left.

Waiting for the diminishing money

That same day, at the end of the afternoon, Zezinho hurried home in order to welcome Adriano, who said that he would come 'to look around and bring the money.' However, it turned out that he had hurried in vain, as Adriano did not come. After waiting for some time, Zezinho phoned him and Adriano told him that he was too busy to come. They made another appointment for the next week, on Monday.

The next Monday night, Zezinho informed me that Adriano had not come, but promised to come the next day. He added: 'He did not mention a time, so I will stay

here waiting. He will come.'

I asked: 'He will bring the money, will he not?'

Zezinho confirmed this, but added that the amount of money would decrease. Instead of R$1500 divided over three months, he would probably only get R$1000: 'It will not be 500 a month. Marcos Menezes had a problem with the 500 a month I asked for. It will be 350.' He did not seem to be particularly sad.

The next day, Adriano again did not come. When Zezinho called him again, Adriano told him to visit him the next day at 10.00 am at City Hall. Three days later Zezinho told me about a party at Cadoca's headquarters, where he had been the night before. He did not mention anything about the money, but beamed that Menezes had been there, too, and had said: 'We will win this one, Zezinho! We will win!' He also told me that he had already received R$100 from Menezes for his Comul campaign. The payment for his support had not yet been handed out. Zezinho, however, was not worried and insisted that he would surely receive it soon.

In high spirits

On the 1st of August, the day of the Comul elections, two men and a woman came to help Zezinho on behalf of Menezes. They brought an envelope with his payment and a pile of *santinhos*. Zezinho gave them an elaborate welcome and rode in their car to visit the ballot boxes.

Zezinho won the Comul elections. The first thing he did – his house crowded with many happy people celebrating his victory – was calling Menezes to tell him about his triumph. Afterwards, he joyfully exclaimed that the latter promised to contribute to the victory festivities that he had planned for the next week. Later that night, Zezinho became completely drunk and lyrically proclaimed that he would invite Menezes and Cadoca for his victory festivities next week. He kept on repeating this, declaring: 'Cadoca will be here at my festivities, you know!'

During these days, Zezinho grew in his role of successful community leader. He told me that his prestige had grown. The stories he recounted to his fellow slum residents about his achievements waxed more and more grand. He was in high spirits and fantasised about Menezes and Cadoca coming to the neighbourhood. He pondered the possibilities of Cadoca having a parade in the area and of Menezes coming to his place. Zezinho's hopes were not in vain, as later Cadoca indeed paraded through the area and Menezes indeed came to his house. He donated a ball and shirts for a local football team, leaving Zezinho elated.

Shortly before Election Day, Zezinho organised an *equipe* that publicised for Menezes. Menezes won the elections. Cadoca lost to João Paulo. Afterwards, Zezinho maintained his connection to Menezes for some time. He kept on referring to him as 'my councillor' and presented him to fellow slum dwellers as an important source of

assistance. The connection turned out to be of specific use when a relative of Zezinho was caught by the police, accused of theft. Zezinho – who normally eschews crime, but this was a family matter – turned to Menezes, who was still a police chief. Within some days his relative was set free. Later on, the connection between Zezinho and Menezes faded away. In the elections of 2006, Zezinho worked for candidates who were unrelated to Menezes.

Accusations of contamination

The opportunity to acquire money and other resources comprise an important motive for Zezinho to engage in electoral politics. After the 2004 elections, Zezinho confided in me that he had received a total sum of R$1500 from Menezes, of which he had spent R$500 for his Comul campaign. Of the remainder, he had, among other things, his home phone installed. In addition, he received a cheque from Cadoca for his support in the elections. The cheque was valued, according to Zezinho, 'at least R$500'.

However, this got him into trouble as fellow slum dwellers accused him of merely being a *cabo eleitoral*, an unscrupulous and self-interested vote-getter. Anticipating criticism, Zezinho cautiously avoided talking to fellow slum dwellers about the negotiations with his candidate about a financial reward. Instead, he flaunted his prestigious contacts and the resources he could possibly derive for the community to them. He publicly emphasised that the Residents' Union did not relate to electoral politics: 'The Residents' Union, independent of politics, does a job independent from whatever politician. Let me make that clear!' Pointing at himself, he continued: 'So we, who represent the community, do not have any obligation to help a candidate when the elections arrive. But we help, because through them we bring improvement for the people.' He added that sometimes politicians help and sometimes they do not because they all have their imperfections. 'We need all politicians, whoever it is, whatever party it is. The Residents' Union needs help from all politicians from any party.' The tensions he faced were expressed in his emphasis on working independently of any politician and, simultaneously, his need for the assistance of politicians. On a Saturday night after the elections, I mentioned to Zezinho that people blamed him for only having filled his pockets in the elections. Drunk, and simultaneously principled and combative, he blurted out: 'But I work for the community, I work for the community!' He gesticulated wildly with his arms and continued: 'I do not even want to know who has lost or won! I work for the community!'

The spectacle of electoral politics

The intrinsic link between electoral politics and spectacle

The attractive side of electoral politics includes both the resources that may be attained through connections with politicians, and the sheer enjoyment of the spectacle that is entwined with it. The spectacular dimension of electoral politics comes to light in Zezinho's practices. During the campaign period he organised and attracted festivities to the neighbourhood, with or without explicit electoral political purposes. When Cadoca organised a campaign parade that also entered Chão de Estrelas, Zezinho happily stood in the dancing and cheering crowd. Cadoca passed on foot, shaking hands with many people. Shortly before the elections, Zezinho and his brother Rildo went to a rally of Menezes in a restaurant. 'So much food!' he exclaimed, 'Rildo had six plates! Six plates! And I also ate a lot!'

In this period, Zezinho considered himself close to power, had gained resources and prestige and was spurred along by the plain enjoyment of the spectacle offered by electoral politics. Like many other slum dwellers, he seemed able to set the difficulties of his life aside and dive into the many festivities that filled the city in the months before the elections. Parades, rallies, concerts, free food and drinks all came together in the political ritual of the elections, fulfilling the expectations people had about electoral politics and politicians (cf Abélès 1988). Beyond the campaign period, the linkage between electoral politics and spectacle lingered, as in a television commercial shortly after carnival, proclaiming that the municipality of Recife – with the PT in charge – 'made the best carnival in Brazil'. Yet during the run for the elections the spectacular dimension of electoral politics became more manifest. Spectacle was expected by the people and provided in abundance by politicians who thus orchestrated people's enjoyment (cf de Vries 2002). The enjoyment, the opulence – the beautiful faces, clothes and cars of politicians – but also the excess and decadence – their outrageously high salaries, corruption scandals and sexual affairs – formed essential elements of electoral politics. In 2006, the superior electoral court ruled to regulate campaign activities and political advertising: on Election Day no festivities, loudspeakers or waving flags were allowed. In addition, there were fewer rallies, parades and concerts, allegedly so that political parties could save money. This disappointed the residents of Chão de Estrelas, as their expectations for spectacle were not fulfilled. One of them articulated the general disappointment: 'It does not even look like elections. There is nothing. The elections passed so silently. It looked like a museum.'

In Brazil, not only do electoral politics imply a spectacular dimension, the reverse also holds true: spectacle entails a political dimension. All festivities, all kinds of spectacle – be it in the city centre, a slum or a shopping mall – seem to have an electoral political aspect. Political parties, individual politicians, and even governmental institutions – which were always thought to act under the influence of the ruling party –

facilitated festivities, donated money for costumes or instruments for musicians and lent their names to the events. Sometimes the involvement of electoral politics is publicly present, while at other times it plays a role behind the scenes. Such was the *Recifolia*[17], which at first seemed to be a festivity promoted by the State Department of Tourism, but later became a key event in Cadoca's electoral campaign. Hence, electoral politics and spectacle are inseparably entangled, as spectacle is politicised and enjoyment is politically orchestrated.

Cadoca's rally and a festivity in Chão de Estrelas: spectacular dimensions of electoral politics

Zezinho actively participated in the organisation of events with an electoral political dimension. He also took part in the pleasures they produced. In June 2004, he went to a huge rally of Cadoca and engaged in a successful attempt to organise a festivity in Chão de Estrelas.

Zezinho was eager to attend a rally of Cadoca's in a large club. He invited boys from the neighbourhood to join. He arranged for a van, but it appeared to be too small, as Zezinho and two boys did not fit in it. The boys went home and Zezinho decided to go by bus and meet us at the entrance of the club. The atmosphere in the crammed van was cheerful. Arriving at the club, all the boys were cheerfully chanting Zezinho's name. When Zezinho also arrived, we entered the club where the festivities were in full swing. Bands played, a *maracatu*[18] with *caboclos de lança*[19] was present and youth groups performed hip-hop and *capoeira*. There were fireworks, flags, and banners. The youth walked around, watched the performances and had fun. It resembled the Recife carnival: happy people everywhere, music, dance and excitement. After some time, politicians allied with Cadoca started to give speeches onstage, welcomed by a cheering crowd waving charts and banners. Zezinho disappeared into the crowd.

Later, back in Chão de Estrelas, Zezinho attempted to arrange some festivities there. He repeatedly expressed this desire to Cadoca's campaign workers and to Menezes. One week before Election Day, some festivities were indeed organised on the football field of Chão de Estrelas. Zezinho was in high spirits. The party was publicly announced as organised by Cadoca, but Zezinho stated that it was also organised by Menezes. He was proud of what he referred to as his achievement, although it remained completely unclear what Zezinho's role in the organisation of this event had been. The celebrations featured performances of locally famous bands. As soon as Zezinho knew about the festivities, surrounded by his excited sons, he announced it to anyone who happened to be around. He told about the bands that would play and exclaimed: 'And it will continue until 01.30 am!' He immediately informed some of his friends who made a living selling food and drinks, so that they could be among the first to put their booths up at the site.

At the festivities, apart from the music, there was time for speeches. Community

leaders who supported Cadoca addressed the crowd with monologues, larded with electoral slogans, in which they praised Cadoca and encouraged those present to vote for him and his allied councillors. Zezinho took the floor, completely drunk, and shouted his supportive and thickly-spoken words into the microphone. He declared about Election Day: "On the 3rd of October *you* will decide, because the voice of the people is the voice of God" – an expression that he once took up and used on many occasions. Everyone had a good time. Politics was spectacle to enjoy.

Conclusions: operating between slum politics and electoral politics

This chapter showed how electoral politics penetrates the slum and contaminates slum politics. In the realm of electoral politics, slum dwellers find opportunities to strive for their needs and aspirations. However, doing so entails a risk of veering away from community interests and into self-interested yearnings for power and money. The case studies in this chapter documented how Ovídio and Zezinho tried to manoeuvre in the realm of electoral politics in such ways as to make money and cater to the needs and aspirations of fellow slum dwellers while steering clear of accusations of self-interest. They worked as political canvassers, all the while trying to keep up an image of working purely for the community.

Ovídio faced hard times when he was blamed for cheating on his fellow slum dwellers as he had them work for one candidate while he placed his own bets on another and had his daughter work for a third, making money with all three politicians. Slum residents accused him of straying from community interests and being self-interested. Ultimately, Ovídio did not manage to live up to the expectations of being a good community leader and retreated from electoral politics.

Zezinho found himself confronted with extraordinary opportunities to be "close to power" and make a living by offering his services to candidates. He was unable to do much for the community and garnered an income for himself instead. His case also illustrated the close entwinement of electoral politics and spectacle. Spectacle, in the sense of festivities and images of influence, affluence and opulence, is orchestrated by politicians – and also community leaders – and comprises part of the attractive dimension of electoral politics. Furthermore, his case showed how Zezinho, constantly at risk of being ignored, tried to connect himself to the political order and act against abandonment.

Notes

[1] It is hard to distinguish between working *with* and working *for* politicians. Both terms are used by slum dwellers (*com* resp. *para*), as do I.

[2] For the illiterate who can prove illiteracy with a stamp on their identity papers, voting is optional.

[3] Cadoca is the nickname of Carlos Eduardo Cintra da Costa Pereira

[4] Until after the elections it remained uncertain if 41 or 36 councillors could assume their positions. Finally, after several irregularities, only the first 36 elected candidates were inaugurated.

[5] I opt for "festivities" instead of parties in order to avoid confusion with political parties.

[6] During the military regime the PMDB was still called MDB, *Movimento Democrático Brasileiro*: Brazilian Democratic Movement.

[7] *Aliança Renovadora Nacional*: National Renewal Alliance

[8] Ovídio had lived in Cabo Gato, part of the Olinda municipality.

[9] In 2006 he was elected for a sixth term.

[10] This term is explained in chapter 4.

[11] A similar phenomenon can be found in Argentina, in which the person involved in the job description is called a *ñoqui* (Auyero 2001).

[12] Senator Sérgio Guerra (Diario de Pernambuco 18/01/2004)

[13] He was councillor for the PMDB, as the communists did not have a legal party at the time and operated in the left-wing of the PMDB.

[14] Popular festivity on the 23rd of June.

[15] *Partido Verde*: Green Party

[16] There is a difference between City Hall and municipality. The City Hall (*Câmara Municipal*) is the building in which the councillors reside. The municipality (*prefeitura*) is the building in which the mayor and officials of the municipal departments have their offices.

[17] *Recifolia*: festival organised in November, dubbed 'the biggest carnival outside the season'

[18] *Maracatu*: cultural performance of Afro-Brazilian and indigenous origins.

[19] *Caboclo de lança*: folkloric figure, part of *maracatu* and icon of the Pernambucan carnival.

7

Slum upgrading: community leaders and heterogeneous modernity

This is not an abandoned area. I cannot see an area as abandoned when it manages to obtain a programme of this scope.
- Coordinator of Prometrópole at a meeting in Chão de Estrelas

Introduction: a slum upgrading programme

Making sense of slum upgrading: theoretically and ethnographically

In August 2007 the slum upgrading programme Prometrópole started carrying out its *obras* in Chão de Estrelas. Bulldozers, road rollers and excavating machines redressed the area, pushing away remainders of shacks, and flattening the surface along the water. For years, stories of the huge slum upgrading programme that was supposed to bring urban development had floated around the area like spectres. The programme was supposed to target an enormous area, including Chão de Estrelas and many other slums along the Beberibe River. In this area, thousands of shanties were to be demolished in order to build roads, quaysides, bridges, viaducts and parks. Months later, new houses were built for those whose homes were demolished. In these houses, it was assumed, the quality of life of relocated families would be improved.

The moment the *obras* started, and even more the moment they were finished, might have been ruptures in the long process of the programme, wiping out memories of delay, political fights and people's elongated stays in temporary dwellings while waiting for new houses. "All is well that ends well", as Shakespeare has it. Often, I noticed, this is what happens in development programmes: the final implementation of the project covers up the memories of past problems. However, I want to dig up the past, as I contend that a programme like Prometrópole can only be understood by meticulously following the ways in which it was conceived. It can only be understood through knowing how these conceptions affected the lives of people from the moment that rumours about the programme began until the *obras* involved materialised.

As such, I analyse the past of Prometrópole, presenting my studies while keeping pace with the processes involved in the long period between the first rumours and implementation of the *obras*. I show what happened under the banner of the programme

and what the consequences were for the people of Chão de Estrelas. I disclose the different conceptions of the programme and the aspirations people projected on it. After the introduction, this chapter is separated in two main sections with different purposes.

This first section of the chapter presents a theoretical treatise on Prometrópole, supported by apt illustrations, on how the slum upgrading programme – as a vehicle of modernity – penetrated the margins of the political order. First, I analyse how the programme became "real", how it – in the lengthy preamble to its materialisation – became part of people's imagination of order, without yet presenting any tangible or visible effects. I make use of Bruno Latour's ideas of how ambiguity points at the existence of an object and how projects create their own context. I show how the residents of Chão de Estrelas dealt with "hard facts" involved in the slum upgrading programme and ponder the explanatory value of Latour's concept of the *factish*. Second, this section approaches Prometrópole as a vehicle of modernity. It shows how through the programme modern aspirations, directed towards progress and the aesthetics of modernity, were mobilised and penetrated through Foucauldian techniques of government into the heterogeneous modernity of the slum. In order to grasp how these aspirations are worked out in the margins of the modern political order, I present the case study of a fallen bridge, demonstrating how time and again, modernity generates hope, cynicism and despair for the slum dwellers. I argue that modernity always, even at the core of the political order, generates hope and its opposites. Yet on the margins cynicism and especially despair are far more deeply felt as they point to the difference between having shelter or not, or even between life and death.

The second section presents an ethnographic account of how community leaders relate to the Prometrópole. It describes the different positions of Ovídio, Zezinho and Creuza towards the programme. Since Creuza was the most involved in the programme of all three, the ethnography focuses on her. For her, I argue, the programme was not only about slum upgrading or about the progress that modern urban development would bring. It was also about articulating and consolidating the needs and aspirations of fellow slum dwellers. They wanted to be represented and included in the programme, and needed explanations without the jargon used by the programme's representatives. Besides, Prometrópole also provided opportunities for Creuza to both make a living and gain prestige as a leader. Doing so, she had to strike a balance between the tensions between self-interest and unconditional love for the community.

Creuza's dealings disclose how slum politics relates to governmental politics as presented in Prometrópole. It shows how, in the overlap between the two kinds of politics, the governmental intervention of Prometrópole was translated, or reworked, by local people (Arce & Long 2000). Additionally, as in the previous chapter, electoral politics plays a role. Prometrópole was saturated with fights over public positions, power and money between politicians and officials. The chapter concludes with several critical observations on Prometrópole and on urban development in general.

Prometrópole

In plans and policy documents, Prometrópole was defined as a 'major project of improvement of the physical and social infrastructure' (Condepe FIDEM 2007) and as an 'infrastructure programme in low-income areas' (World Bank 2003) in the Metropolitan Area of Recife. It was funded with US$84 million of which US$46 million was a World Bank loan. The remainder consisted of investments by Brazilian authorities at different levels. The Recife municipality – under the banner of the PT – engaged in a fervent attempt to make Prometrópole succeed, to present it as a case in point of its pro-poor ethos. At one moment the party's pro-poor public image was at risk, when during the rainy season of 2004 people from Chão de Estrelas burnt tyres in its main access road. The protest was a response to the delay of promised *obras* that would improve the drainage system and avoid floods; the event made it to the newspapers (Folha de Pernambuco 08/06/2004). However, for the rest of the time, Prometrópole did not cause public commotion and the PT continued to push it forward as its showcase project.

Meanwhile, the state government also tried to take some credit for the programme and managed to take over responsibility for some of its components. Laying claim to parts of the programme was publicly considered a way to gain the support of the population, which could then be translated into votes. This happened, in a manner similar to what Robert Gay observed in Rio de Janeiro in the 1980s, not only through the execution of *obras*, but also by conducting projects in stages. This was in order to encourage people to vote for the party in charge, 'for fear that the projects would be discontinued if the party was not returned to office' (Gay 1994:31).

A consultancy agency was hired to carry out surveys, make designs and present these to both the authorities and the population. All had to be done in a participatory way, according to both local policy makers and the World Bank who placed criteria on its loan. As a result, the consultancy agency organised meetings with the population and opened a temporary office in the area where slum dwellers could come for information.

The set-up of the programme entailed starting with demolishing shacks and building new houses afterwards. This order of work had its precedents in other slum upgrading programmes. People had to leave their shacks and received a temporary compensation until the new houses were finished. This implied that hundreds of families received a monthly housing aid of R$151 to find a temporary place to live. This money was not enough to rent a house in the area, but, according to officials, people could temporarily move in with relatives. In practice this meant that they had to share a place for months – or maybe years, as this was unclear at the beginning – in small and cramped shacks with their family members. According to some slum dwellers, housing aid was also a way in which political parties tried to buy loyalty and votes.

In addition, what occurred in similar programmes was that when slum residents obtained new houses, a large number of them would never actually live there, as

happened during the beginnings of Chão de Estrelas. The poorest among them could not afford to pay real estate taxes and electricity and water bills. Others had debts that needed to be settled. These people would have to sell their houses and move to other parts of the city to live in shacks again, possibly in new land occupations.

Consequences for Chão de Estrelas

In Chão de Estrelas the programme's consequences were major. Hundreds of families who lived in shanties were forced to leave their homes and be resettled. In addition, the programme was alleged to end the yearly inundations of the community's main access road, as drainage would be improved.

The parts of Chão de Estrelas that would be most seriously affected by Prometrópole were those along the canal, the river and the Jacarezinho brook. These were the areas that had not been part of the resettlement scheme in the 1980s and had emerged later from illegal occupations of the river and canal sides. In contrast to the rather wide, straight and sometimes paved streets of the resettlement area, these areas consisted of narrow, winding and muddy alleyways which, crossed by open sewers, connected the shanties made of brick, wood and scrap material.

Residents of other parts of Chão de Estrelas looked down upon these areas that were the poorest of the neighbourhood. Some never set foot in these areas, even when they were at the end of their own street, less than a hundred meters away. They referred to the poorest of the poor as 'miserable' or 'people of low culture' (*gente de baixa cultura*). Most of the drug trafficking and related violence took place here and their residents were often made equivalent with criminals. Most had been the last to arrive in the community and were considered to be – both literally and figuratively – on the edges of the community. As such, Prometrópole was aimed at the margins of the margins.

The area along the Jacarezinho was of specific interest to the programme. The shanties in this area were built along and on top of the brook flowing into the canal, connected to each other by muddy alleys and rickety one-board bridges. People from other parts of the community argued that the dwellings blocked the water and blamed its residents for causing the regular flooding of a large part of Chão de Estrelas in the rainy season. Moreover, they argued, people along the Jacarezinho threw litter into the water, as such completely impeding its flow. In this way, these people were heavily stigmatised.

The needs of the people of Jacarezinho had already been brought to the attention of the authorities many times. Many women in the area – mostly of female-headed households – were members of Bina's Mother's Club, giving this NGO the largest number of members in the community. At OP meetings, Bina, Creuza and other representatives of the Club had pleaded for the improvement of Jacarezinho. The Club had won the final elections three times for *obras* of the OP in their district. As such, the

problems in the area had been officially singled out for resolution. Nonetheless, OP had not carried out anything, arguing that the *obra* was too big and complex, and that it was better to wait, as it was included in Prometrópole.

Becoming "real", factishes and modernity

Getting into the concepts and the area

A walk with the leaders

My first extended visit to the area from which people would be removed from along the river and canal sides took place one morning in March 2004, more than three years before the *obras* were to begin. Zezinho, who knew the area well, offered to show me around. We walked through the area and talked to people who lived there, in the streets and in their homes. Residents showed us the precarious living conditions in the flood-prone areas and indicated how high the water had been in the last rainy season. Some residents we met randomly, while others were specifically sought out by Zezinho to have them tell me their stories. They ranged from being about life in the area in general to personal problems. Zezinho introduced me as a researcher on Prometrópole.

João Silva joined our hike through these parts of Chão de Estrelas and the bordering communities. João, who returns later in this chapter, lived in Chão de Estrelas, was slightly younger than Zezinho and was considered a community leader by some, mainly people who lived close to his house. He had spent his youth as a street child and climbed up from the gutters to being a respected *pai de família*.[1] He was a PT-*ista* who had recently acquired a job from the municipality as a street sweeper and was actively involved in the OP as a *delegado*.

Before our walk, I had started to look around for traces of Prometrópole. Soon enough I concluded that nothing tangible could be found. Yet the walk with Zezinho and João showed me that the programme had been appropriated in the people's imagery of order and was part of the performance of the community leaders. Prometrópole had provided the leaders with many opportunities to establish and maintain connections, not only with outsiders, but also with their fellow slum dwellers. It provided them with an occasion to get in touch with their fellow slum dwellers, 'entering into the passageways of the shantytown' to discuss the programme (Auyero 2001:34). Prometrópole became a point of departure for successful leadership performance, although sometimes only gradually and hesitantly, like on the visit with Zezinho and João.

We passed the alleys in Chão de Estrelas where both Zezinho and João were greeted by many. Many people also knew them in a bordering community that we entered.

Curious, I asked people whose shacks were planned to be demolished whether they knew what would happen to their dwellings and themselves. It became clear that for the people it was to a high extent ambiguous and uncertain what would happen and how. Some claimed to know some information about Prometrópole, others stated that they had been at a meeting about the programme, while many did not know anything about the plans. People had incongruous ideas of the plans, especially regarding which houses were to be removed. One man stated that all the houses within seventy metres of the river were to be demolished, while others said ten or fifteen metres. Moreover, nobody knew whether this distance was to be measured from the middle or from the banks of the canal. Neither did anyone know whether they would receive financial compensation – as had been the case in similar programmes – or obtain new houses elsewhere instead. Some argued that they would prefer a substitute house, because compensation would never be enough to buy one elsewhere. Others argued in favour of indemnification, because they did not want to be forced to live in another neighbourhood – where the substitute houses would be built – and end up with neighbours they did not know. They emphasised the need of having good neighbours who would help them when necessary. Meanwhile, officials and managers involved in the programme – as I found out later – argued that it had been clear from the outset that those who had to leave their dwellings would get new substitute housing instead. However, for most slum residents it remained for years unclear what they would receive.

João argued to me that only a few of the people had gone to meetings, and he accused them of being lazy and disinterested. Besides, he indicated that also the provision of information by Prometrópole had not been flawless, as they had not sent written invitations to people. Nonetheless, in spite of the ambiguity present, some of the people in the area were familiar with the programme and "talked the talk".

During our walk, it became clear to me that Prometrópole was conceived of in different registers. In one register, the programme was considered a chance to fulfil modern aspirations. People expressed themselves hopefully: although forced to leave their houses, they argued that their situation would largely improve once the *obras* were finished. People referred to aesthetic aspects, saying that their living environment would become very beautiful. According to some, the area would then no longer be a slum, but a well-to-do neighbourhood.

Next to this hope that was generated through the rumours of Prometrópole, there also was despair, born out of the fear of being forced to leave the place one felt so much attached to. Many people had lived there for over fifteen years. One man, known as the first resident of the area, had lived there for thirty-five years. He argued that he would not like to move from his place. He did many different things for a living, like working with iron and steel, shoeing horses and keeping cattle around the corner. All these things, he argued, would probably not be possible if he had to move to a newly built apartment. He stated: 'If they offer me a new house, I will sell it.' Others spoke critically

of the plans. One man, referring to the plans to remove people and demolish the shanties, argued that this was a way of *extinguir,* 'wiping out', the slum.

While walking, I discussed Prometrópole with Zezinho and João. Zezinho was happy with the programme, because, he argued, it would bring improvement to the area. He appeared enchanted by the progress and aesthetics of the programme, claiming that he had already seen the project map of Prometrópole and exclaiming that it would become very beautiful, with bridges, viaducts and large streets. Later on, it turned out that no project map existed at the time and that Zezinho was referring to a flyer with a computer-generated image of a happy family in lush, green park-like scenery.

In contrast with Zezinho's hopeful attitude, João was initially cynical about the programme, arguing that it would probably not deliver. He knew from experience that surely everyone who had to leave her or his shanty would return a little later to occupy the same piece of land. He stated that if the authorities were to fully carry out their works on the land, people could not return to it. However, he argued, most programmes were never finalised and *obras* remained unexecuted, so before long, everybody came back to the same area.

Indeed, on another occasion, Zezinho introduced me to a man who had lived for thirty-five years beside the canal who told me how he had built his house three times. He was made to leave twice, after which his house had been demolished, but each time he had returned, as the authorities did not deliver on their promises of asphalting the quayside and constructing a road. Yet, he argued, the implementation of Prometrópole would mean that he had to leave a third time and perhaps return a fourth time to the same site if the programme was not finished. Stories like these gave way to a cynical attitude.

This morning provided me with insight into how Prometrópole had become a part of leadership performance. For many people, Zezinho and João formed the most important link between them and the programme. As such, the community leaders embodied the main connection between the programme's planners and coordinators and those who would be affected. Moreover, in the course of our trip, Zezinho and especially João started acting increasingly like popular leaders, guaranteeing everybody that the programme would soon begin. Zezinho and João listened to people's stories and promised that they would take care of problems. Moreover, they talked about a meeting that they would organise about Prometrópole for which they asked for people's presence and support. The idea for this meeting had suddenly emerged from João, while talking to a group of people in the street. He declared that at this meeting he would invite a representative from the municipality for people to ask questions. This idea took hold in his head, and from then on he mentioned it to everybody we met during our walk. While he had initially proposed it as a possibility, it became more and more a sure thing, an already certified event. At the end of our trip he assured everyone in a rousing way that: 'We will organise a meeting at the end of this month at which somebody from

the municipality is invited to answer our questions!'. He combined this announcement with the message: 'This month they will come and compensate for the houses!' It was from then on that João, pointing at me, pugnaciously declared to those we met: 'And this man will not leave until Prometrópole is concluded!' He underscored the need to demand the programme's execution. He talked about his connections with the OP and claimed he would demand clarity from them about Prometrópole. In addition to João's combative plans, Zezinho started to assure everybody that the *obras* would start that very month.

What had begun as a tame trip through the area in order to show me where the *obras* would take place, ended as a tour of leadership performance, combative language and activist stirrings. Zezinho and João spread the news that Prometrópole would change people's lives. Although they started the trip hesitantly, they ended it like apostles spreading a gospel in which urban development seemed to blaze the trail to redemption. They pointed their fellow slum dwellers towards the way to a modern future: improved and without the current misery of floods, dirt and lack of basic services. The situation – which resembles the second part of Goethe's *Faust* as it is so aptly described by Marshall Berman (1982) – presented Prometrópole as a vehicle of modernity. Prometrópole, like urban development programmes in the past, was put forth as a 'means of public salvation' (Pimenta 1926 in Valladares 2000), as it would, after a short period of suffering, lead to redemption. Before doing so, however, the programme had to gain a presence. It had to become real. How did this happen?

The programme becomes real

Ambiguity

When visiting the area with Zezinho and João it became clear that a lot of ambiguity and uncertainty existed about the exact shape of Prometrópole. Was this, as João argued, a failure of the people because they were lazy and refused to attend meetings? Or was it a failure of Prometrópole because it suffered from a lack of communication with its future beneficiaries? Would it have been better if ambiguity was avoided? Or was ambiguity, instead of a failure, a necessary dimension of the programme, perhaps even its most substantive element?

When I started to study the programme, I wanted to find an unambiguous story. I tried to construct a coherent narrative that would cover its history, design, purpose, priorities, budget and specific activities. I studied the programme from many sides, analysing its policy documents, plans, maps and survey results. I analysed both local events and global connections. I studied the contents and scope of World Bank policy documents dealing with issues of infrastructure, housing and poverty alleviation. Dealing with details about money flows, technical and participatory discourses,

elections, political alliances and struggles in public and behind the scenes, all kinds of involved public bodies and private companies, and – worst of all – innumerable acronyms, I tried to discover the logics of the programme. I conducted interviews about Prometrópole with slum dwellers, community leaders, officials, consultants and programme managers and followed the news in the papers. However, as I tried to merge my data, collected from these many different sources, I concluded that it was impossible to do so. No coherent narrative could be assembled from all the different elements and events supposed to pertain to Prometrópole over the years. Moreover, every attempt to tell a coherent or essential story would fail to tell that of the affected residents of Chão de Estrelas.

Looking for traces of Prometrópole, it turned out that stories about the origins of the programme were veiled in fog. Some sources claimed that Prometrópole started off in the 1990s. As what was understood as the programme repeatedly changed its name, scope and responsibility, the exact year it began was ambiguous. I traced the history of Prometrópole and its predecessors of which, according to some, it was an extension or, according to others, a modification. This resulted in an overview that contained many incongruities and contradictions, and was saturated with opaque decision-making, surveys without any follow-up and political struggles. As a result nobody – official, politician, community leader or slum dweller – was sure about the time span they were dealing with in terms of the programme. In general, most slum dwellers argued that the programme had been in the works longer than policy makers would have it. After a meeting in 2004, in which it was stated that Prometrópole took hold five years before, a resident from Chão de Estrelas argued: 'Five years? They already had meetings about Prometrópole when I was pregnant of my first son. That was in 1995, so already nine years ago!'

Chão de Estrelas had, like other slums, already faced many programmes and electoral political projects that promised betterment in terms of infrastructural services and living conditions. Yet most of these programmes did not have substantial consequences for the slum dwellers. Some programmes had been accompanied by large surveys, aiming at getting a complete overview and – according to policy discourse – an understanding of the area. For Prometrópole these studies were deemed out of date so new surveys had to be carried out.

The consultancy agency carried out a new survey in August 2003. On the basis of the survey data, plans for *obras* would be designed. A hazy process full of uncertainty and ambiguity followed. Deadlines were set but not met, meetings presented the same topics time and again without any decision taken, officials and consultancy agents were hired and fired. Schedules said that the programme would start by the end of the year, while rumours held that this was impossible, because of Christmas and the Carnival holidays. The location where new houses would be built remained unclear, although officials and managers claimed that processes of land appropriation were taking place.

A problem arose when a homeless movement occupied land where Prometrópole, according to its executives, intended to build. In addition, the design of new dwellings was subject to change, as plans sometimes presented houses and sometimes two-floor apartment buildings. Plans were postponed and disappeared, budgets were changed and vanished, and promises were made, changed, broken and remade.

All delay and ambiguity had a strong electoral political element. Rumours and conspiracy theories were often heard, like in 2004, the year of the municipal elections, when stories had it that the state government, run by a political opponent of the PT, deliberately caused delay.[2] The state governor, it was said, was afraid that the benefits of Prometrópole would translate into votes for his adversary, the current PT mayor. In the same year, it was rumoured that the municipality, run by the PT, caused delay, as it had introduced new consultants and contractors who did not have any experience with large programmes like Prometrópole. Rumours spread about who would spend the money and who would be honoured for it.

Meanwhile, until the beginning of 2007, Prometrópole did not have any tangible or visible results. The most often heard excuse was that unfortunately the value of the budget had decreased because the dollar rate had plummeted. This reason was also given when people wondered where Prometrópole's money had gone: it was claimed to have disappeared with the devaluation of the dollar.

Prometrópole was many different things at once. It did not have an essence. If it had a core, it was ambiguity. Meanwhile, with neither a clear narrative nor tangible or visible results, Prometrópole had become a programme people reckoned with. Although their attitudes, like of the three different community leaders, differed, they did not ignore the programme. How was it possible that this programme, which did not exist as a coherent entity, had become part of people's imagery of order? How was it possible that its stories affected people's senses of hope, cynicism and despair? In other words, how had Prometrópole become real?

When Latour analyses the never-realised French public transportation project Aramis in his book of the same title, he argues that 'ambiguity is part of translation' (1996:48). Indeed, all actors involved in decision-making and valorisation of projects translate projects differently; they have different interpretations, needs and interests and ways of dealing with things. As such, Latour states that 'existence precedes essence' (1996:48). Different people have different perceptions of huge projects like Aramis or Prometrópole. Hence they become different objects to different people. More intriguingly, this ambiguity creates presence where nothing is physically present. It circles around a vacuum in which something is formed. The centripetal forces of different opinions circling around act towards a central object that, by doing so, is created in the vacuum. As ambiguity produces an object, Prometrópole had – like Aramis – become an object. Both Aramis, the huge project aimed at implementing a revolutionary public transportation system in France, and Prometrópole, the huge

programme aimed at implementing radical urban development for slum dwellers in Brazil, were called into existence by the ambiguity inherent in their translation.

Prometrópole – despite stories of noble ideologies of including the poor, political reasons for assuming power, or architectural experiments in urban design – existed without essence. It was, in Latourian terms, an assemblage of many elements that could not be joined to form something coherent. Prometrópole resembled Dr Frankenstein's monster: incoherent and without an essence or soul, yet alive and well. The centripetal forces of ambiguity circling around it made it indisputable that it had become an object.

Creating a context and "little solidities"

It might be argued that without material expression Prometrópole was not real. However, I argue that through people's dealing with Prometrópole a context was created in which the programme was perceived as real. How did this happen? How did Prometrópole touch bedrock without delivering concrete *obras*?

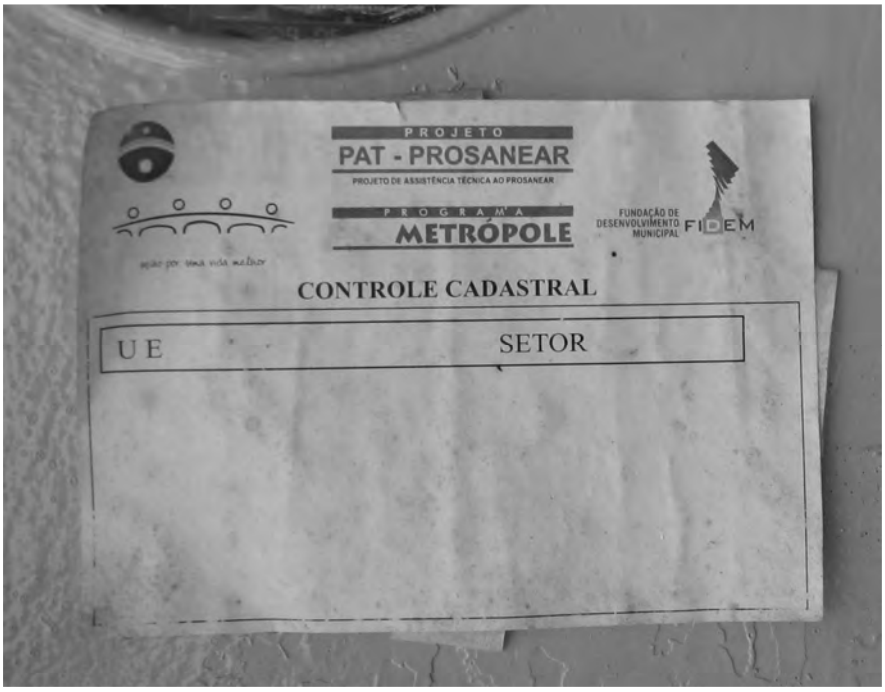
Latour argues that 'a technological project is not *in* a context; it gives itself a context' (1996:133). Projects need discourses to make them real; discourses to make people believe in them and construct the factuality of their object (Latour 1996, 1999). This contradicts the general view on projects, programmes and policies, which assumes that a project needs to be adapted to a given context. In Latour's view, instead, through meetings, surveys and changes a context is created in which the project can be accepted as an object. In terms of Prometrópole, my trip with Zezinho and João can also be seen in this light. The trip was instrumental in the creation of a context: two leaders and a foreign researcher enter the area, enquiring people's opinions about the programme: whatever way you look at it, it certainly creates a context.

Latour argues about the Aramis programme: 'Nothing is very solid in this area; nothing offers much resistance. But by accumulating little solidities, little durabilities, little resistances, the project ends up gradually becoming somewhat more real' (1996:45,46). Hansen, in a similar vein, writes about a 'constant performance – in authoritative writing, in public speech, images, songs, rumours, and so on' (2001:3) which allows something to become real. Drawing from Annemarie Mol, who states that 'just like glands secrete hormones, laboratories secrete reality' (2002:42), I contend that the little solidities involved in Prometrópole gradually secreted a real object.

During our walk, Zezinho and João referred to meetings organised in the name of Prometrópole. These meetings were 'little solidities', as were Prometrópole's offices, brochures, registers, maps, aerial pictures, surveyors and their reports and census stickers. They added up to create a context within which Prometrópole could be believed. One census sticker did not make Prometrópole real. Accumulating stickers and survey reports that correlated with dwellings designed on maps, and were then presented in offices at meetings about pros and cons, made Prometrópole increasingly

real.

An initial 'solidity' of Prometrópole was the house survey, conducted in August 2003. The first survey was about who lived in which house. Lots were measured and rooms counted, as the size and number of rooms would influence the new house. All shanties and houses were visited by surveyors and received a sticker on the door. According to some slum dwellers this was an important event, as they believed that only those whose names were on the sticker could later apply for a new house or – if the plans changed –financial compensation. When the first news about this went around, the people of Jacarezinho became far more interested than before. Although many people remained cynical about the programme's possible results, they wanted to get registered. Stories had it that people quickly moved into deserted shacks, divided existing shacks into separate units or built new ones overnight. Criminals, for whom identification involved the risk of being arrested, were said to put family members in their houses for the survey.



Weathered survey-sticker: a 'little solidity'

The programme, at a slow pace, continued its meticulous work. Although not yet tangible, it gradually established itself as a presence, an undeniable and unstoppable process. People, who at first had cynically conceived of Prometrópole as yet another plan for improvement that would probably never be realised, started to take it into account. The meetings, surveys, visits of officials, brochures, stickers, promises and inaugurations bore fruit: Prometrópole had become part of people's imagery of order. They reckoned with it and gave it a place in their visions of the present and the future.

Prometrópole relentlessly took shape. For both the slum dwellers and myself, our experience of the programme was like the big wheels of an enormous timepiece: slowly but surely rotating. Prometrópole could not be denied anymore. The machinery was working and one had better watch out not to be crushed between its wheels.

The first wave of accumulating 'little solidities' ceased with the execution of the house survey. After that, things seemed to be on the side of the cynics for a long time, since the survey appeared to be the last visible aspect of Prometrópole. Sunshine discoloured the survey stickers and finally the rain washed them away. However, the programme remained present in people's imagery of order. Little by little Prometrópole had become real.

"Hard facts" and factishes

At some point, I wondered whether through the accumulation of 'little solidities' Prometrópole had actually become "real" or merely "a social construction". Did it exist as a tangible fact or only in people's minds? And if Prometrópole was a social construction when no *obras* were carried out, how did the situation change when *obras* were executed? Should I think that Prometrópole started to exist in people's heads, among their ambiguous opinions – through the accumulation of little solidities – and that it later materialised into a "real" fact when results became tangible and visible? Would this imply that the programme started off as a *fetish*, as 'a blank screen onto which we have projected, erroneously, our fancies, our labour, our hopes and passions' (Latour 1999:270) – a "nothing" onto which slum dwellers have erroneously directed their hope, cynicism and despair? Would this imply that later, when tangible results were produced, the programme transformed from a "nothing" into a something – from a *fetish* into a *fact*? Perhaps these are the wrong questions. Perhaps I should comply with Latour in stating that these questions merely point out a type of modern iconoclasm, trying to destroy *fetishes* by denouncing them as not real, as opposed to facts which are real. Instead, he coins the neologism *factish* – *faitiche* in French – which is neither fact nor fetish and avoids the distinction between the two. As a *factish*, it does not matter whether Prometrópole was fabricated or non-fabricated.

This definition of the factish resonates with how slum dwellers perceived of "hard facts". It occurred that, in dealing with Prometrópole, they did not attach importance to the difference between "hard facts" on the one hand and rumours, gossip and other social fabrications on the other (cf Nuijten 2003). "Hard facts" regarding new houses, financial compensation, starting dates, money flows and meanings of lines on maps were easily mixed up or replaced by rumours that held the exact opposite. At first this surprised me. I recall when, after my return from an interview with Barbara, the director of Prometrópole, I wanted to share my information about the "facts" she mentioned with people from Chão de Estrelas. Barbara had told informed me about the design of

the houses and the starting date of the *obras*. The community leaders to whom I passed on these "facts" quashed my enthusiasm, as they hardly showed any interest in this knowledge. Later, I understood that the crux is that for slum dwellers "facts" – just like rumours – can be altered any time. Dealing with Prometrópole, echoing other governmental programmes, had made this clear once again: programmes generated a lot of "facts" which were always subject to change. In general, the uncertainties that saturated the lives of slum dwellers made "facts" into an ephemeral and unpredictable category. Viewing Prometrópole as a factish allows me to study the 'arguments and actions [that] are everywhere *facilitated*, *permitted*, and *afforded* by factishes' (Latour 1999:274). That is, after all, what I did: exploring the conceptions people had of the slum upgrading programme, the ways their lives were affected by it and the practices that emerged from it.

Prometrópole and modernity

Introducing modern aspirations in the margins

By mentioning the redemptive nature of Prometrópole, I touch on how the programme's main drive was centred upon aspirations to modernity. The disenfranchised slum dwellers longed for Prometrópole and imagined a future in which they would not be abandoned anymore, but redeemed because they would be included in the dream of progress. In accordance with what I argued in chapter 5, slum dwellers live in the 'heterogeneous time of modernity' at a site where 'the encounter with modernity' takes place repeatedly (Chatterjee 2004:7, 8). Their needs and aspirations contain both modern and non-modern dimensions. In Prometrópole, the residents of Chão de Estrelas embraced certain aspects of modernity, while keeping a distance from others.

The programme was undergirded by notions of progress that appeared to appeal to slum dwellers who argued that it would bring improvement. Slum dwellers approached the programme looking for jobs in its local work force, longing for new houses, yearning for compensation money and revering the aesthetics of modernity. With the belief that removal would be unavoidable if the programme found its way, what was at stake for them was to see to be included, since otherwise they might end up without work, a house or compensation.

Below, I analyse the dominant workings of modernity. I show the inherent Foucauldian techniques of government and the homogenising effects and aesthetics thus entailed. Furthermore, I pay attention to the ways in which Prometrópole – as a vehicle of modernity – generates a blend of hope, cynicism and despair among slum dwellers.

The dominant workings of modernity

The main *raison-d'être* of programmes like Prometrópole is, in my view, the tremendously powerful workings of modernity. This becomes manifest in both discursive – as a frame for giving sense – and non-discursive ways – like the tearing down of shacks. Through Foucauldian techniques of government – procedures, instruments, tactics, technologies and vocabularies (cf Dean 1999) – Prometrópole established itself as a manifestation of modernity that was to be aspired to.

Prometrópole's promises of new roads, houses and quaysides resonated with slum dwellers' notions of progress. 'The slum will turn into a city', I frequently heard, "a city" meaning a place with good roads and commerce where a good life could be lived.

Meanwhile, the workings of modernity affected people in the most vulnerable places. It took them away from their homes and the neighbours with whom they had lived together for years and could often count on for a helping hand. It took them from their working environment, from their sources of income. It pushed them to stay for months in other places, in cramped rooms or shared shanties (cf Perlman 1976). Still, most slum dwellers were looking forward to the temporary funds, and hope of improvement surfaced time and again in their reflections on Prometrópole.

This intrigued me: how could people aspire to a programme that would remove them from their homes, from the place where they lived next to their friends and had their few sources of income? How could they express themselves positively about a programme that would make them live for months in cramped places with meagre housing aid? How could they long for a programme that would uproot them? Why is modernity aspired to, even when it hurts?

The situation recalls Marshall Berman's account of the construction of the expressway through the Bronx, New York, where he lived as a child. For its implementation, many blocks of apartment buildings were demolished. Modernity, dressed up as the American dream of progress, highly valued and propagated by the Bronx residents themselves, 'was destroying our world, yet [it] seemed to be working in the name of values that we ourselves embraced' (1982:295). The situation resonates with the argument that modernity makes categories that are also reproduced among the people who suffer from them (cf Gibson-Graham & Ruccio 2001). The notion that – as Zezinho clearly put it – urban development in a slum equals removal of its residents expresses precisely this. Categories about what is good, normal and developed set slum dwellers aside as bad, abnormal and underdeveloped. Yet these categories were being also reproduced by the slum dwellers themselves. They aspired to a programme that would save them from abandonment. They expected it would worsen their lives temporarily, with the prospect of "being modern" in the future: in line with the programme's promise of redemption after a short time of affliction.

Homogeneity and aesthetics

The instruments of Prometrópole – surveys, maps, aerial photographs – were instrumental in the homogenising workings of modernity. Actually, the programme's instruments turned the area affected into a kind of laboratory. It became a laboratory in which people were replaced by numbers, homes by census stickers, streets by lines and communities by colours on maps (cf Latour 1999). The complex diversity of people and their homes was translated into clear-cut categories of owners and tenants, number of residents and rooms, and types of construction material. The communities with their blurred boundaries were substituted with strictly separated Sewage Units. Through maps, survey reports and other instruments Prometrópole was elevated out of its fuzzy locality into a standardised and homogenised world of modernity (cf Latour 1999: 58ff). This became even more manifest as the new houses were finally built: the crooked alleys and passages were replaced by straight lanes and streets. Perlman studied a resettlement project in Rio de Janeiro in the 1960s and 1970s which showed many similarities. Rational urban planning was considered beautiful. Yet Perlman resentfully argues that the 'spontaneity and individuality of the *favela* dwellings' were replaced by homogeneous apartment blocks and core houses that were 'lifeless and monotonous at best' (1976:203, footer pictures).

Homogeneity seemed to be the culmination of progress. This view was present in the reactions of slum dwellers to pictures of the working class neighbourhood where I rented a house in the Netherlands or, for that matter, pictures of other Dutch neighbourhoods. They said it was beautiful, mentioning its homogeneous character: equal sizes, equal colours and symmetrically placed flowers in window-sills. When I mentioned that due to policy a tenant was not allowed to paint the frames or the front door in other colours, they reacted in disbelief and their enthusiasm subsided. Still, their first reaction to the pictures of homogeneous houses was one of admiration that clearly fuelled their aesthetic aspirations.

These aesthetics of modernity fuel aspirations for modernity and make up part of its attraction. Mike Davis argues that slum upgrading is carried out not only in the name of 'progress', but also 'beautification' (2006:98) Valladares (2000) shows how aesthetic considerations lay at the foundation of slum upgrading programmes in Brazil (see chapter 1). Similarly, in Prometrópole, I argue that not only progress but also beauty was at stake. This was not only a pretension of the state, but an experience of the slum dwellers as well. They longed for a beautiful and clean place to live in. 'Without litter' and 'without potholed roads', they commented when reflecting upon improvement of the neighbourhood. Slums were considered ugly and messy, not only by the middle class, but also by slum dwellers. My friends from Chão de Estrelas could not understand how I liked the view from my first floor living room, overlooking the roofs of houses and shacks: 'It is only slum', they said. Slums were not beautiful. Prometrópole was

going to change the slum into a city, into something beautiful. The organic slums had muddy and winding alleys on which none of the lopsided shacks looked alike. They would be replaced by equally sized lots with uniformly designed houses, clean and straight streets and quaysides as shown on maps at the many meetings.

Hope, cynicism and despair: the case of the fallen bridge

Despite the homogenising workings of modernity, the ways in which people reacted to Prometrópole varied greatly between individuals and over time. Some reactions were hopeful, others cynical, some filled with despair. As I argued, through years of dealing with the programme, people's reactions grew increasingly homogeneous, as they all started to reckon with the programme in some way. What happened is that most people tried to "stay close to" the programme, because anything might happen. A new survey might include or exclude them and changes in plans might intimately affect their home situations. Moreover, despite communications that new houses would be distributed, the ambiguity and uncertainty surrounding the programme still raised doubts among many about whether they would receive houses or financial compensation. Dealing with Prometrópole generated hope, cynicism, and despair. These different emotions were expressed by the same people, as they simultaneously felt hope and despair. Likewise, their cynicism was always preceded and often accompanied by hope.

During the trip with Zezinho and João, the reactions of slum dwellers to Prometrópole expressed these different emotions. There were cynical remarks when people argued that the programme would never be executed, and that even if it were it would not bring improvement. There was also despair expressed towards the programme, relating to the objective of forcing people to leave their homes. Hope was articulated when people said positively that the programme implied improvement and would turn the slum into a city.

I present the case study of a fallen bridge between Chão de Estrelas and a bordering slum across the canal. This case illustrates how Prometrópole, as a vehicle of modernity, time and again generated hope, cynicism and despair. I paraphrase Nuijten who shows how the state – as a manifestation of modernity – presents itself to its subjects as a 'hope-generating machine', offering 'endless openings' and creating 'great expectations' (2003:16, see also Koster 2002). I contend that modernity similarly generates a complex blend of hope, cynicism and despair. This occurred through techniques of government, but also rumours and "facts". Before theorising further, I present the story of the bridge.

According to plans, new bridges were to be built under the banner of Prometrópole. Some of the old, ramshackle bridges would be replaced while at other sites new bridges would be constructed. In the rainy season of 2003 a very old and precarious pedestrian bridge crossing the canal came down. It had not been able to resist the swollen waters of winter again. I had crossed the bridge several times and had always feared it would

break and plummet me into the polluted and stinking water. When the bridge came down, people had to make a detour of about twenty minutes through areas they did not know and that were infamous for drug trafficking and related violence. As the need for a new bridge was urgent, people started to look for solutions. Waiting for a new bridge as a part of Prometrópole was considered too uncertain and time-consuming by many.

Several community leaders from Chão de Estrelas and the bordering slum made efforts to have the government repair the bridge. Zezinho brought a petition to the municipality, signed by many fellow slum dwellers. Local television made a news item of the case. Before long, the authorities sent a team of workers who patched up the old bridge. They replaced the worn-out iron frame, and painted and covered it with recycled, worn-out wooden boards.

The following summer, some heavy showers caused the bridge to collapse again. Again community leaders on both sides of the canal started their endeavours to have the bridge repaired or – better still – get a new one. However, it took much longer this time before anything happened. A man started a ferry with an old boat, charging R$0.25 for a single trip. Many children from that part of Chão de Estrelas went to school on the other side of the canal. For their parents, the ferry was the best option, as they did not want their children to walk the long way through areas deemed dangerous. However, the cost of fifty cents per child per day led some to keep their offspring at home. Besides, desperate parents argued that the ferry was dangerous for the children, especially the youngest, as they could easily fall out. According to everyone in the area – except probably the ferryman – the need for a new bridge was urgent.

However, the authorities did not do anything, in spite of repeated requests and complaints. The most important argument authorities at different levels gave for not building a new bridge was that Prometrópole was responsible for the *obra*. The fallen bridge became symbolic of Prometrópole's delay. The topic re-emerged at every meeting, be it of the COMUL, the OP or gatherings convened by community leaders. Leaders and other people of the community visited the municipality to discuss the matter with coordinators of the OP, and also visited Prometrópole's consultancy agency. The slum dwellers blamed the authorities for not doing anything. The situation filled them with despair as it looked like they had no choice but to make a detour or pay the ferryman. Meanwhile, rumours were rampant. At one point stories had it that an entry had been discovered in the Prometrópole budget for emergency works, and that the bridge would soon be rebuilt. This filled people with hope again, although many remained cynical about future prospects. On another occasion people heard that the municipality would soon come up with a temporary bridge, later to be replaced by a new one within Prometrópole. Hope bloomed. However, when nothing happened, people feared nothing would ever be carried out.

In May 2004 the fallen bridge was brought to the direct attention of João Paulo, the mayor of Recife. He was in Chão de Estrelas in order to "inaugurate" the first *obra* to be

taking place in a long time –one that was evidently related to the elections in October of that year. Actually, the sewage project that the mayor officially launched was not a new project at all. It was an *obra* that had commenced years ago but was left unfinished, started by the former administration or, it was said, perhaps even by the one preceding it. It had not been recently requested during the OP meetings or Comul procedures, but suddenly – with the elections approaching – the PT had decided to take it up in the last year of their administration. Eventually, after the mayor 'inaugurated' it, it would still take over three months before the *obra* began in bits and pieces.

At the meeting, João Silva was present. He lived close to the bridge and in between the people affected by its collapse. When the mayor fell silent in what appeared to be an impromptu speech, João Silva interrupted and shouted: 'Talk about the bridge!' The mayor seemed to know immediately what it was about. He even seemed grateful for the interruption as it provided a topic for his unprepared speech. He responded, referring to Prometrópole: 'Ah, the bridge. It is included'.

João Silva persisted: 'There are eighty children, mayor, eighty children who need to cross by ferry to go to school. That costs twenty-five cents for going and twenty-five cents for returning. That makes fifty cents every day.'

João Paulo repeated: 'Like I said, the bridge is included in the plan.'

After the meeting João Silva talked to a director of the OP and asked again about the bridge. The man assured him that the plan had been approved and that the bridge would be repaired. João Silva contentedly fanned the spark of hope in his fellow slum dwellers, convinced that now a new bridge would soon be built.

However, despite the mayor's promise, no action was taken. At a street meeting, co-organised by Creuza, her fellow *titular* in the Comul remarked that if Prometrópole had 84 million dollars – expressed as R$2.400.000 – the municipality should not make such a fuss about the bridge, as it only needed a very little bit of money to be repaired or replaced: 'When the municipality has R$2.400.000 to spend on Prometrópole, then what is the problem with spending R$50.000 on a bridge?!'

At this meeting people again signed a petition in which they requested a new bridge. Again, the response of the municipality was that the bridge was included in Prometrópole and that it would be carried out soon. At some point – according to some officials involved – it was decided to include the bridge in the very first stage of the programme, so that it would be among the first *obras*.

However, for months nothing happened and hope, cynicism and despair tumbled over each other. The bridge was not reconstructed until May 2005. Exactly a year after the mayor's promise, João Silva took me to show me the new bridge that had been built two weeks before. 'How did it go?' I wanted to know, 'Did the municipality suddenly construct the bridge?'

João first affirmed my thoughts: 'Suddenly, yes'. Then he seemed to change his mind and emphasised a more "active" perspective, saying: 'But we came together at

meetings.' He told about these meetings, their requests for a new bridge and visits to the municipality. Eventually, a provisional bridge had been built.

Arriving at the bridge, it was easy to tell from the scratches and dents that this one had also been built from old materials (see cover of this book). João admitted as much, but argued that they also used new materials. He insisted that the bridge was firm enough to hold for a long time. It is worthwhile keeping in mind that João, then a PT-ista, was never very critical about the current municipality. The bridge's surface looked worn out, made of used and burst planks. João stated that he was about to hand in a request to the OP to replace the wood. He repeated that later, when Prometrópole was carried out, a new bridge would be built.

Some politicians tried to lay claim to the achievement with a banner at a house next to the bridge thanking them in the name of the bordering communities. João did not pay any attention to the banner. When I mentioned it, he argued that these politicians did not have any stake in the process, but that a community leader involved had – for political reasons – put up the banner.

The delay in constructing the bridge, a rather simple *obra*, was emblematic for what happened with Prometrópole. Rumours constantly went around about possible *obras*, changed schedules, or specific entries in the budgets of Prometrópole, the municipality or the state government. As such, the story illustrates how the programme – as a vehicle of modernity – generated hope, cynicism and despair. Moreover, it shows how the general workings of modernity, by inciting cynicism and despair next to hope, had far more negative results in these marginal sites. Despair about unfulfilled needs and aspirations, like in the case of the new promised bridge, directly affected people's means for survival, as their expenses grew and the schooling of their children was cancelled.

Through both rumours about the programme and techniques of government, hope was generated that touched upon people's needs and aspirations. However, despair was generated as well. I argue that for slum dwellers, the despair generated by modernity affects them in their most vulnerable places. The case of Prometrópole affected their homes, their neighbourhood and their possibilities for work and, hence, survival. The feeling of despair touches upon the profound fear of being abandoned. Ana-Paula is hinting at this fear in the statement at the opening of this chapter.

Prometrópole would uproot the slum dwellers. They would lose their homes and the proximity of their neighbours who helped them out with food when in need, who looked after their children when they were away and with whom they made jokes. Many of them eked out a living washing, cleaning or doing odd jobs for neighbours who were slightly better off. When they sell their new house – and many of them are forced to due to lack of money – they must start all over again, building their lives from scratch.

I recognised the blend of different registers in my own perception of the programme. When, after my fieldwork, I read that Prometrópole started building the

new houses and saw pictures of shovels straightening the quaysides of Jacarezinho, it filled me with hope. Could it be true? Would the situation of these impoverished city dwellers finally be improved? My second thought was cynical, as I realised that the starting off did not yet mean that the *obras* would ever be finished, and even less that they would be implemented in a way helpful to the slum dwellers. My third thought was one of despair, when I became conscious that the shovels had actually started to demolish the homes of people. Many people, now homeless, would never live in the new houses as they could not afford to pay taxes and electricity and water bills. Furthermore, now separated from their neighbours and those for whom they worked, their possibilities for survival decreased drastically.

Leadership performance, connectivity and making a living

Creuza and Prometrópole

A tough meeting

One night in March 2004, a large meeting under the banner of Prometrópole was held in the vicinity of Chão de Estrelas. During the meeting Creuza left her seat and walked through the hall, talking to several of the two hundred people present. Then she went to the front and asked for permission to speak.

In this ethnography of Creuza's dealings with Prometrópole, I pay specific attention to meetings in which representatives of Prometrópole discussed the programme with slum dwellers. These meetings are arenas in which different people with opposing interests literally face each other. Unlike the myriad small instances in which Prometrópole was discussed in the streets or in people's houses, these meetings provided a relatively long *momentum* in which different conceptions of the programme, distinct discourses and diverging needs and interests become clear. They provide ample and specific room for shedding light on what was at stake regarding leadership performance, prestige, connections and ways to make a living.

The hall of the local Catholic school where this meeting was held had turned into a battlefield of words, interests and aspirations. The meeting was chaired by a coordinator of the consultancy agency that carried out the research for Prometrópole. Standing next to a statue of the Holy Virgin, she opened the meeting saying that the programme would deal with the people in ethically responsible ways. She attempted to dispel the desperate ideas people had about being removed without any compensation. She compared the programme to a church, of which there were many in the neighbourhood. 'Like a church has norms, the project has norms too', she stated, thus emphasising Prometrópole's good intentions. Despite her words, the people present seemed to doubt

these intentions, as the atmosphere remained tense.

Several individuals represented Prometrópole. Firstly, there were people from the consultancy agency that was in charge of the surveys. Secondly, there was a coordinator from the OP. The OP represented the municipality's stake in Prometrópole and was employed to establish contacts with the area's residents through its participatory structure. Thirdly, officials from the municipal urban planning department[3] were present. Fourthly, an official from the State Department of Planning and Research joined the meeting, representing the interests of the state government.

In addition, many slum dwellers attended the meeting. In order to give the meeting a higher level of participation, the organisers had requested local schools to send their adult pupils – otherwise in evening classes at this time – to the meeting. Several community leaders were present as well, including Zezinho and Creuza.

The technical discourse

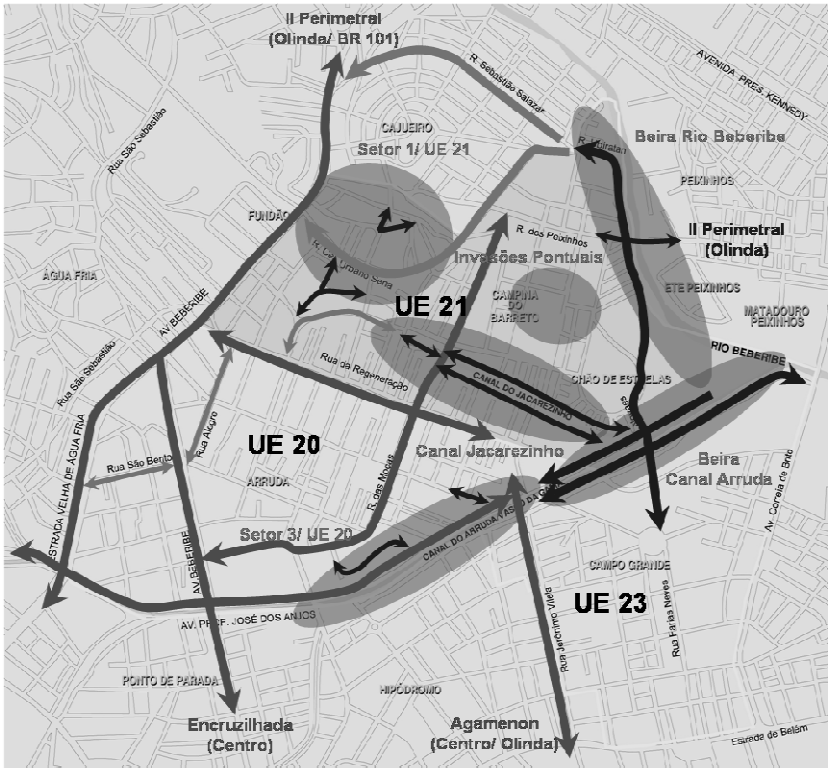
Before Creuza addressed her speech to the audience, a coordinator in charge of the household survey project took the floor. He proudly presented the survey results. He delivered a technical discourse in which he divided the area into *Unidades de Esgotamento*, Sewage Units. This was a technical way of zoning the area, different from the slum dwellers' zoning of communities, streets, references to buildings, the river and the canal.

The audience started to talk amongst themselves, completely disinterested in the man's speech. The OP coordinator started to walk up and down the hall, requesting silence. Meanwhile, the survey coordinator continued his technical discourse, explaining about different sectors that could be distinguished within the Sewage Units with regard to variables of poverty and presence or absence of water and sewage. Instead of saying 'Street X has no connection to the sewage system' he said things like 'The fourth sector of Sewage Unit 21 counts with an absence of sewage'. As he indicated all of the different sectors on the coloured aerial photos on the wall, the noise in the hall increased. When he finished, some people asked him to explain which community correlated with which Sewage Unit, as they had not understood. A man asked permission to speak and stated that he grew tired of hearing only technical explanation. The chairwoman calmly replied that this was part of the process and that it simply worked like that.

The technical jargon was completely incompatible with the slum dwellers' own ways of defining the communities in which they lived. Instead of explaining which houses were going to be removed by the programme, the officials and technicians showed colourful maps – the 'little solidities' discussed above – that most slum dwellers did not recognise as having any relation whatsoever to their neighbourhood. Prometrópole and the slum dwellers employed completely different ways of defining space. In addition, instead of telling the slum dwellers whether they would receive new

houses or financial compensation, and, in the case of the latter, how much, Prometrópole's workers explained about the different methods used for the survey.

Slum dwellers generally referred to technical or electoral political discourse as *enrolação* which literally means rolling up, but in practice meant 'beguiling with the use of beautiful words' or plain 'cheating'. I view the expression as a type of weapon of the weak (Scott 1985), an instance of people's resistance against the programme that was imposed upon them.



Map presented at the meeting

Creuza performs her leadership

After the technical elaboration, it was Creuza's turn to speak. Through the microphone she addressed the audience in clear terms: 'Of course you are not waiting to hear technical stories of these technical people'. She catered to the need for a clear explanation as she calmly clarified the consequences of the programme, without jargon and while clearly referring to communities, streets and other markers of the locale. She emphasised the fact that she 'as the community leader that I am' had played a crucial role in the process of bringing Prometrópole to the area. She referred to her struggle for recognition of the people of Jacarezinho and their need to be included in the programme, which, after a long period of uncertainty, had been achieved. In her speech, Creuza laid claim to this achievement, arguing it was a victory of the Comul with her as

titular. To this she added many other accomplishments that she had been responsible for throughout the years, which she defined as important victories for the people present. She received warm applause.

Creuza used the meeting to give an impressive *acte-de-presence* as a community leader. She was able to – before a huge audience that she herself would not have been able to convene – lay claim to many achievements for the people present. She also articulated the needs of her fellow slum dwellers. Before taking the floor she had walked around gathering information, asking opinions and feeling out the attitudes of her fellow slum dwellers. She provided the audience with clear explanations of Prometrópole and showed them that she represented them. Meanwhile, as a mediator, she also fulfilled the needs of the officials, managers and consultants, by – at least temporarily – silencing the noise in the hall.

However, as the meeting continued, the atmosphere became tense again and the noise increased when the same man as before stood up and argued that he was really fed up with 'technical explanations' while nothing happened. During his speech many people started grumbling and some left the meeting. Again, the OP coordinator agitatedly walked through the hall to explain things personally to people and calm them down.

The participatory discourse

Amidst this confusion the representative of the urban planning department took the floor. I knew her from other meetings as an ardent proponent of the participatory approach, although this needs to be viewed as part of her deft strategic discourse. She had a gift for wrapping up people with words and silencing protest by giving people the idea that they were being listened to and taken seriously.

The woman used an – in my view – condescending way of addressing the slum dwellers. She managed to catch everybody's attention with her clear speech that avoided technical terms and abstract concepts. Instead, she addressed those present as if talking to a child, starting with the outline of a failed project and theatrically asking those present: 'Is this what you want?' Many in the audience replied: 'No!'

'Alright,' she continued, 'so we need to do this together, do we not?'

'We do!'

After this response she started to praise the high level of people's participation in the programme. She reminded people that meetings had been organised and research carried out in order to listen to the people. She argued: 'We also came to you, knocking on your doors, one after the other, to talk to you, because we wanted to know your opinion.'

The urban planner continued her speech by explaining that the World Bank placed many participatory requirements on the programme: 'The World Bank talks like this.

"Right, I want to give you a loan, but you have to prove that the communities want this plan"'. She ended her speech by asking: 'Did you understand me?' When no immediate positive answer came, she added: 'More or less, did you not?'

The participatory discourse she put forward was an important aspect of Prometrópole. It was argued repeatedly that it took a long time before the *obras* could be carried out, as everybody – every citizen as the programme had it – who was affected had to be included in the research. So research and re-research took place. Ovídio once bitterly argued that the only ones who benefited from the programme were the consultants carrying out the research. The programme's participatory approach turned out to be a discourse that ordered the slum dwellers to 'be calm, wait and cooperate' (Koster 2002).

'We have waited long enough!': end of the meeting

After this, the chairwoman re-emphasised that the people who would have to move to other houses would remain close to their current dwellings. This was important, as many were dependent on work they did in the area. Still, the atmosphere remained tense. People were grumbling. When a man at the back of the hall suddenly shouted, 'We have waited long enough!' he was met with applause and an enormous noise. People started to shout, stand up and walk through the hall. The OP coordinator ran to the microphone in a final attempt to set everybody at ease, but he could not even drown out the noise. At that moment the atmosphere was – at least verbally – rather threatening. Everybody got up and moved towards the exit, bringing the meeting to an end in utter chaos.

After the meeting, Creuza, other community leaders and some politically active slum dwellers formed groups and remained talking for a while. Some exchanged words – this time calmly – with representatives of the different bodies involved in Prometrópole. After a while Creuza went home accompanied by Angêlica, Zezinho and some others. I joined them and assessed the mood they were in. The way they acted, talked to each other and made jokes about the meeting showed that they were not disappointed with the meeting. Their mood was both like that of scallywags taking secret pleasure in a trick they had played as well as that of revolutionaries who had successfully shown to the authorities that they were able of putting limits on oppression. Moreover, they expressed their cynicism towards Prometrópole. Angêlica teased me, saying while acting as if checking a list: 'When you have finished your research, you will have to write "Was not done, was not done, was not done".' All the others laughed. One of them added that even if I stayed for five years, Prometrópole would still not have accomplished anything in the area.

Community leaders' different stances

Creuza: deliberately dealing with Prometrópole

In order to understand Creuza's involvement with Prometrópole, several factors are important. These factors – as is so often the case in analysing people's practices – seem to merge into one big ball containing different strands. For the sake of the analysis I will unwind the ball, paying attention to its different strands of leadership performance, prestige, connectivity and making a living. All her practices, as I show, take place against a background of a fear of abandonment.

As I have said, of the three community leaders followed in this study, Creuza was the most active in dealing with Prometrópole. She had been involved from the beginning. Already at the time of the first rumours, she had been invited for a conference in a hotel where she stayed one week discussing Prometrópole. Creuza was always among the first to know about things related to the programme through her participation in both Comul and OP and personal connections. She was always present at meetings related to Prometrópole where she often, like in the meeting described, gave a notable *acte-de-presence*.

Sometimes Creuza was very critical of the programme – especially about its delay – while at other moments she was very positive about the benefits it would bring. The same goes for how she dealt with representatives of the programme and the officials involved: sometimes she publicly attacked them and sometimes she praised them. Meanwhile, on the whole, her stance towards Prometrópole became gradually less critical, as I will show.

In order to understand Creuza's strategic dealings with Prometrópole, I analyse how she gained prestige as a leader, articulated needs and aspirations of her fellow slum dwellers, enhanced connectivity and made a living. With regard to prestige, Creuza repeatedly declared Prometrópole a triumph of her own hard work, personally and with the Comul. She succeeded specifically because she was considered largely responsible for the inclusion of the Jacarezinho in Prometrópole. Due to the haziness of the programme's geographical boundaries, for long it had remained obscure whether this precarious part was included or not, causing uncertainty among its population. They wanted to be represented in order to be part of the programme. In my view, they desired recognition of who they were and of the precariousness of their situation. Time and again Creuza mobilised the people of Jacarezinho and went to meetings at which she made their needs public. When it was finally decided to include the area in Prometrópole, Creuza claimed this as a symbol of her good leadership. At meetings and in personal conversations with residents, she left no doubt about her indispensable role in this accomplishment.

Prometrópole provided Creuza with an important motive to connect with the people of Jacarezinho. Next to her contacts with Bina and her work on gender issues

with the women of the *Clube de Mães*, Prometrópole was the most important "reason" why Creuza was seen as the most "considered" community leader in this area.

Meanwhile, in the Comul, Prometrópole appeared on the agenda of every meeting. The board discussed which areas were going to benefit and where alternative dwellings were to be constructed for those that would have to leave their houses. The ever increasing delay was part of every meeting's grumbling. When the Comul elections approached – held on the 1st of August 2004 – Creuza made Prometrópole an important issue in her campaign.

One night, seven weeks before the Comul elections, Creuza and her fellow *titular*[4] had organised a street meeting at which they discussed community matters. Creuza gave a rousing performance of her gift for "rebel" speech: 'There is nothing left for us to do at [the urban planning department], so we will do it here in the community! Let us go with a bus! Not with ten persons, because like that I would not even go myself. But let us go with a lot of people! The people are fed up with meetings, the people want action! So let us agree on this in the community, let us go! … Chão de Estrelas is built with a lot of struggle, a lot of fights, a lot of protest marches, with empty bellies and feet on the ground! … Prometrópole cost a lot of money, that is right! But if we do not unite and fight, nothing will happen! Let us go to the government offices! Let us fill this bus!' She expressed her anger about the delay of Prometrópole. All those present, or merely passing by, listened to her rabble-rousing words. Eventually, no protest was held at the government offices, but Creuza had clearly performed her leadership.

A little later, Creuza decided to engage in a joint campaign with Zezinho for the Comul elections. In this campaign, the emphasis on Prometrópole was mainly hers. On flyers they designed, Creuza added the promise that Zezinho and she would participate in the meetings of Prometrópole and 'continue with the struggle to guarantee the implementation of the Prometrópole project.' She strategically used Prometrópole for campaign purposes. This was evident when she explained how she wanted to generate support for her candidacy in the adjacent communities that belonged to the Comul's area, the ZEIS. She argued that these communities were also included in Prometrópole and that everybody was waiting for the *obras* to begin. 'So', she deftly concluded, 'I will go there and say that I am keeping up with the programme, participating in the meetings of Prometrópole.'

Ovídio: cynical about Prometrópole

In contrast to Creuza, Ovídio stayed cynically aloof of the programme. He sceptically stated: 'Prometrópole will be one big deception. It will not bring any good. … They have been talking for fifteen years about this project and until now I have not seen anything'.

He added that he knew from experience with other projects that Prometrópole would not work out well for the poor. According to him, the only ones who would

benefit from the programme were middle class people who work for the government and consultancy agencies. He clarified that a large part of Prometrópole's budget had been spent on coordination and research. When part of the research had to be carried out again, due to outdated data because of the delays, more and more money was spent on this. He grumbled about the director of Prometrópole: 'That woman has had this function for already fifteen years. She is coordinator of the project for fifteen years. Governments come and governments go, but she does not leave'.

Though the officials involved had urged Ovídio to join meetings, as they considered him an important connection for establishing the programme, he did not do so. Other community leaders, both from within and outside of Chão de Estrelas, remarked that this was a pity as they valued his possible contribution to the process.

Ovídio hardly ever participated in the programme's meetings as these, according to him, did not provide any useful information. He criticised the meetings for never touching upon the implementation of any *obra*: 'At a meeting one should present concrete matters: we will do this and this. You have to present a date on which the work will start.' He grumbled disparagingly that he knew beforehand that the meetings would not lead anywhere.

In spite of his absence at most Prometrópole meetings, Ovídio remained connected to the programme through other channels and even tried to influence it – thus showing that he did not completely discard it as ineffective and proving his own inexorable urge to maintain control. Through other people who attended the meetings, like Creuza, but also through personal communication with officials, measurers, surveyors and consultants involved, he stayed well-posted. Knowing that I kept in touch with the programme, he frequently questioned me about it. Sometimes he asked me to discuss certain matters with consultants and others.

In addition, Ovídio tried for a while to enhance the environmental focus of Prometrópole. He tried to implement a project to grow trees in the neighbourhood as an, according to him, important element of local environmental improvement. When Prometrópole was delayed, and with it Ovídio's plans, he desisted. Yet he still frequently connected the programme to his own meetings with an environmental focus – about water pollution and nature conservation – to which he invited representatives of the programme to present their plans and achievements. As such, Ovídio managed to "push" Prometrópole in a for him suitable wrapping of environmental projects.

Ovídio's refraining from meetings while maintaining some level of influence on the programme, is telling of his stance towards the programme. Ovídio knew that at these meetings no decisions were taken and that many affairs that did not have his interest were discussed. Indeed, the Prometrópole meetings resembled Nuijten's descriptions of meetings in a Mexican *ejido* (2003). She recalls the words of Bailey, arguing that these public meetings are arenas of 'bickering and indecisive confrontation' (Bailey 1969:90). Yet, in these meetings, other leaders like Creuza saw an opportunity to gain prestige

and establish and maintain connections. Ovídio abstained from the meetings, as such giving expression to a different operational style from Creuza. As I showed in chapter 3, Ovídio stayed more aloof of state-designed programmes and formal bureaucratic procedures, while remaining involved in many issues through his own – more informal – personal connections. As such, when Ovídio occasionally attended a meeting of Prometrópole, it was with a personal agenda not concerned with Prometrópole but with talking to some politicians or officials present.

Zezinho: enthusiastic about Prometrópole

'84 million dollars from the United States!' Zezinho exclaimed with reverence for the amount of money involved in Prometrópole.[5] In contrast with Creuza, who held a critical stance towards the programme and dealt with it in a deliberate way, Zezinho was basically impressed and unconditionally content with the programme's plans. Unlike Ovídio, he was not cynical, but passionately inflamed by the programme and gullibly happy with its promises of progress. He talked contentedly about the roads, viaducts, bridges and other benefits that the programme would bring and unquestioningly called it an excellent programme.

He did not care about possible negative consequences for those who had to move to another place. According to him, they knew that they would have to move out one day, as they illegally occupied the place. He argued in favour of urbanisation which was progress in his opinion. He declared: 'Removal and urbanisation are the same thing.'

He attended most district meetings of Prometrópole. Especially from 2004 and onwards, when he became *titular* of the Comul, he was present at all meetings. Here he kept silent all the time, standing up at the end and putting forth an idea that would – in his opinion – solve many of the current problems. The coordinators and consultants had difficulty communicating with him as he was unable to translate their jargon – the technical discourse – into his knowledge of the area. This resulted in long discussions between a coordinator pointing at different colours at a map without really knowing the area and Zezinho asking if a certain shop or street corner was included in a particular *obra*. However, in spite of, or perhaps even because of his naïveté, Zezinho managed to establish connections with those involved in Prometrópole. Moreover, he gained prestige as a leader among his fellow slum dwellers, as he narrated in meetings how he moved from a makeshift shack to a house in the resettlement of Chão de Estrelas and was now 'willing to fight for you, to achieve dwellings for you!'

Prometrópole and electoral politics

Avoiding accusations of self-interest and contamination

Through Prometrópole, Creuza established connections with people from different public bodies and the consultancy agency. She also connected with politicians who were involved with the workings of the programme, and tried to lay claim to its results. However, her activities entailed the risk of being accused of self-interest. Chapter 2 demonstrated how slum dwellers relate to two different conceptions of electoral politics. On the one hand, they conceive of electoral politics in terms of its spectacular attractions, and as potential access to innumerable resources and prestige derived from dealing with politicians. On the other hand, they conceive of electoral politics as devious and contaminating. As such, Creuza risked losing the confidence of her fellows by dealing so intimately with Prometrópole.

At the meeting in the Catholic school, Creuza had ardently argued to those present: 'Prometrópole does not have anything to do with the elections. This is not a political project.' Many times she publicly denied the presence of stakes held by the different political parties involved in the programme. She anticipated possible accusations of contamination, specifically of withholding money meant for the community or earning money by 'doing politics'. Since Prometrópole was so publicly saturated with electoral politics and so much money was involved, Creuza had to wash her hands of it more often than in other projects she dealt with.

Rumours filled the air about politicians fighting with each other over the programme, or begrudging each other the possibility to pocket the gain in terms of popularity at the next elections. During conversations with officials, coordinators, consultants and directors, it became clear that electoral politics had become part and parcel of Prometrópole, not only between parties but between individual politicians, officials and executives. These conversations were filled with accusations, rumours about who was impeding the process for what reasons and references to political campaigns in which Prometrópole should function as a showcase. Slum dwellers alleged that politicians did not care about their needs. Some argued that politicians only used Prometrópole in order to assume or maintain power, causing the enormous delay of the programme. Meanwhile, those living in precarious shacks in areas like Chão de Estrelas were kept waiting for benefits.

Creuza steered clear of being accused of involvement in electoral politics by publicly pointing her finger at the politicians for being slow and neglectful. Furthermore, before a Prometrópole meeting which she had arranged with Zezinho, she publicly blamed him for not understanding that Prometrópole could not be entangled with electoral politics. She said indignantly: 'We wanted to put a *carro de som* for inviting the residents. Zezinho said that he could arrange a *carro de som* from his councillor, with his name painted on the car. I said "What is this, Zezinho? You cannot do that!" He wanted to put

a *carro de som* with the name of the councillor. But how is that? I said: "You could do this if it were a meeting of your own, but not of Prometrópole." You cannot involve politics in this!'

Creuza denied any political interest in Prometrópole. Nevertheless, she took a stance in electoral politics while involved in the programme. Her emphasis that Prometrópole was a victory of the Comul should be partly understood in this way. As explained in chapter 1, the PT preferred OP over Prezeis, which was represented by the Comul. Hence, the claim of Creuza, who was *titular* of the Comul and did not favour the PT, was a way of taking away the honour of the PT.

She would become even more entangled in electoral politics. Between 2004 and 2006, despite the aversion she initially expressed, Creuza made a move towards the PT. This was very much related to Prometrópole. In fact it appeared that she had never completely shut the door on the PT.

Connectivity: leaving all doors ajar

Creuza, although she regularly criticised the PT, had always left a passageway open to the party. Despite fulminating against the OP, she had been elected *delegada* for gender issues immediately on its implementation in 2000. Despite expressing disbelief in the workings of the OP, she participated in most district meetings and went to theme meetings on gender and health. In addition, she was present at meetings with PT mayor João Paulo and attended events organised by municipal bodies.

It is commonplace for community leaders to maintain open connections with various parties as Creuza did. They express their political preferences, but remain open to other opportunities. Doing so, they show themselves to be skilful operators with a refined aptitude for grasping opportunities in the electoral political field. Moreover, it illustrates their need and capacity to maintain a high level of connectivity.

In addition, Creuza was sought after by PT officials. They, as part of the attempt to make Prometrópole a showcase initiative, needed local leaders in the area where Prometrópole would be carried out for feedback and control. They knew of Creuza's influential position and tried to gain her support. During these years, Creuza's name was specifically mentioned in reports of OP meetings, while other community leaders and *delegados* passed unmentioned.[6] Creuza's move to the PT should be viewed against the background of these processes related to Prometrópole.

As the OP was the PT's main channel of communication to the people, Prometrópole became an important issue at OP district meetings. Increasingly, Prometrópole merged with the PT and the OP, perhaps not as an institute, but in terms of how it was perceived by slum dwellers. This was especially evident in how its consultants, officials and coordinators became like one mob of people who appeared at meetings together, carried out surveys and also changed jobs from one body to another. In addition,

Prometrópole workers and OP-*delegados* had T-shirts in the same red colour as the PT campaign shirts. As such, together they resembled a "red army", a term that I coined and that was gratefully adopted by some slum dwellers.

One of the members of the "Prometrópole/OP/PT mob" Creuza was connected to was Ana-Paula, a young official who was first OP coordinator and later became director of the team responsible for Prometrópole on behalf of the municipality. Ana-Paula – working at the intersection between Prometrópole, OP and PT – would become an important contact for Creuza. But this is getting ahead of the story. First, some details are needed on Creuza's move towards Prometrópole and the PT.

Creuza moving towards Prometrópole and the PT

In February 2005, almost a year after and a few hundred meters away from the Prometrópole meeting that had ended in utter chaos, Creuza held another meeting about the programme. In an abandoned discotheque she welcomed the representatives of all bodies involved and the public. Facing the audience, she was flanked by the director of Prometrópole, Barbara, and two of Barbara's colleagues. Creuza welcomed the director with a cloyingly sweet smile as 'our friend Barbara' and invited Ana-Paula and other OP coordinators to sit in front as well. In addition, she invited the present Comul members to come to the fore, as the meeting had been organised by the Comul. Zezinho, who now was Creuza's fellow *titular*, sat down, dreamy as usual, in the front.

Creuza read aloud a recent newspaper cutting, telling the audience that the *obras* of Prometrópole would soon begin in Chão de Estrelas. She gave the floor to the programme's director, who confirmed that Prometrópole was in progress. However, the director invalidated the information in the paper, explaining that it would take longer before the *obras* in the area would begin, citing technical reasons for delay. She then opened the floor to the audience.

People came to the microphone and raised different issues. Would they get new houses or financial compensation? Would only owners get a new house or also tenants? In reaction to stories about two-floor apartment buildings as substitute dwellings, some people asked if they would be able to keep their front window shops, livestock and other sources of income. And when would the fallen bridge over the canal be repaired?

The director responded, without being specific, assisted by Creuza, who clarified some terms. She was followed by Ana-Paula, who held a speech centred upon 'working together'.

During the meeting nobody grumbled about the programme's delay. Moreover, nobody criticised the officials and coordinators present. Even Creuza, who during meetings like these would often be rabble-rousing, did not voice any critique. The meeting ended with her expressing gratefulness to all representatives from Prometrópole, the OP and the Comul. Outside, holding a writing pad that gave her a

professional demeanour, she remained close to Ana-Paula. They were approached by some women who complained about the miserable conditions of the place they lived in, describing a problem with the sewage system and the illnesses this caused. They requested a solution from Ana-Paula, who argued: 'Everything will be done, but only when Prometrópole starts here.' She promised to visit their area with representatives of other public bodies.

During the long process of Prometrópole – still without any tangible *obras* – Creuza had increasingly presented herself as a person who knew the details of the programme. While maintaining a critical stance towards Prometrópole, she seemed to feel more at ease with the consultants and representatives involved. After dealing with them many times, she developed less conflicted and more cordial relations with them. The meeting that she chaired was an example of this, as she sided – literally and figuratively – with officials, coordinators and the director of Prometrópole, sitting opposite her fellow slum dwellers.

Creuza's current operating close to Prometrópole led some slum dwellers to think that she was part of the programme. Although Creuza did not have a job with them, it was not unusual for programmes like this to offer work to community leaders, often related to communication with the area's residents. Jobs like these, involving a small remuneration, were based on gentlemen's agreements between organisers of the programme and a community leader.[7] The leader had to communicate certain information to the people of the area and keep consultants or officials posted about the people's opinions.

Slum dwellers thought Creuza had a job like this. Some stated matter-of-factly that Creuza was 'from Prometrópole' and approached her with questions about the programme, while others criticised her for having become detached from community needs and being self-interested.

In the 2006 elections Creuza supported PT candidates for state and federal positions. Viewed from a the perspective of electoral politics, this was a radical shift, as in 2004 Creuza had fervently campaigned in favour of the biggest opponent of PT candidate João Paulo for mayor. She told me that she had become PT-ista because she chose sides with those 'who work', meaning those who do something for the people. Fellow slum dwellers considered it a logical step. Their ideas boiled down to the maxim, 'you should not bite the hand that feeds you', hinting at Creuza's job as a health agent, which gave her a salary from the PT-ruled municipality.

In addition, all the candidates Creuza had supported in 2004 lost the elections. The councillor that she had worked with for a long time[8], now without a position, discharged her and Creuza started to look around for new connections. The fact that she, after ten years, lost her position as *titular* of the Comul, was another reason for changing her original stance on the PT, as she was now no longer directly involved in the conflict between the Comul and the PT. Shortly before the 2006 elections she allied to

PT-candidates, for which she temporarily received a remuneration. This remuneration was important for Creuza. Indeed, making a living and connectivity were, as shown on other occasions, important dimensions of slum politics. In the last year Creuza's financial situation had worsened since her unemployed husband had returned to her and depended on her income (see chapter 3). Creuza, as I come to show, tried to employ him in Prometrópole.

Making a living with Prometrópole

A job for Creuza's husband

Creuza turned to her connections in order to investigate job opportunities for her husband in Prometrópole as part of the *mão de obra local. Mão de obra* local, meaning 'local work force', was a common phenomenon, in which local residents were paid to work for a company contracted by the public authorities. In this way the authorities could reduce their budget as the company made use of cheap labour. Additionally, it created gratefulness among residents that might one day be translated into votes.

The question of local work force was always one of the most important aspects of the execution of *obras* in slums. Many people – mainly men – were attracted to the possibility of a temporary income. As soon as the municipality introduced the possibility of hiring a local work force, people started investigating in order to be sure of a job. It was known that personal contacts were of great importance for the selection procedure of labourers, so people looked for personal entry points. In due time, they knew a temporary office would be arranged in a local building or site hut, where people would queue up in long lines. Inside the office they would be asked about their credentials and job experience. Finally, only a very small percentage of all those who applied obtained a job. Likewise, Creuza turned to a municipal official she knew. The latter later confided in me that she did not think Creuza's husband would make a good worker, as he did not like to work. Nevertheless, she told Creuza to go to Ana-Paula and arrange things with her.

On the day of the registration for workers a long queue had formed in front of the site hut that functioned as an office. Men of all kind and conditions – an official described them as 'junkies, loafers and workers' – were hopefully waiting for a job. Creuza or her husband did not queue up. Creuza reasoned that her man did not like these kinds of things. Instead, she went directly to Ana-Paula and asked her to employ her husband. She requested that he not work as a regular labourer, but as a foreman. Later, Creuza discussed the matter with Ana-Paula's superior.

In 2007, at a ceremonial meeting in Chão de Estrelas meant to inaugurate the beginning of the *obras*, Creuza was invited to the stage. Standing next to PT mayor João Paulo, she was honoured for being a local representative who had struggled for the

improvement of the community. This was an important display of Creuza's connections. She, tears in her eyes, addressed those present: 'For all of us, the start of these *obras* is a reason for great excitement. I am in the project since its beginning, studying and discussing with the experts of the municipality. Now, we go forward!'[9] In the meantime, Creuza, was appointed chief *delegada* of the OP for the whole district. Moreover, when the implementation of *obras* began in 2007, Creuza's husband got a job as a foreman. Also then, engaged with the PT and no longer *titular*, Creuza left all doors ajar, as she continued to attend the meetings of the Comul. For a slum dweller, doors should never be closed.

Conclusions and critical considerations

The programme becoming real in heterogeneous modernity

This chapter analysed how Prometrópole's long preamble affected the population of Chão de Estrelas. The programme, I showed, became real, in the sense of becoming part of people's imagination of order, without presenting anything tangible or visible. Drawing from the ideas of Bruno Latour, I argued that the ambiguity that surrounded the programme pointed at the existence of an object. The centripetal forces of different opinions circle around a vacuum in which an object is created. Furthermore, I argued that a project creates a context in which it becomes real, through rumours and 'little solidities' (Latour 1996:45), like meetings, surveys, maps, aerial photographs, offices, brochures, registers, maps, surveyors and their reports and census stickers. I argued that the ways in which slum dwellers perceived of the "hard facts" of the programme resonate with Latour's notion of the *factish*. For slum dwellers, no distinction was made between "hard facts" and rumours, gossip, or other social fabrications. The crux is that in the uncertainty and provisionality of life in the slum, "hard facts" are converted into an ephemeral and unpredictable category as both social fabrications and "hard facts" generated by governmental programmes are constantly subject to change. Creuza's performance of leadership can be viewed as acting upon this perception of "facts" as she never took a position of a preference for houses or financial compensation. and, instead, claimed that every victory was the result of her diligent labour. For her, what was at stake were not the "facts", but rather articulating her fellow slum dwellers' needs and aspirations while presenting herself as a good community leader.

Returning to the notion of heterogeneous modernity, I showed how the slum upgrading programme, through Foucauldian techniques of government (Dean 1999), introduced modern and utopian aspirations to the margins of the political order. It presented a redemptive message of bringing progress and a homogenised kind of beauty after a short period of affliction.

The programme, as a vehicle of modernity, struck responsive chords in slum

dwellers' different discursive registers, which filled them simultaneously with hope, cynicism and despair. I demonstrated how slum upgrading affects slum dwellers in their most vulnerable places: their homes, neighbourhoods and possibilities for work. As a consequence, feelings of despair, touching upon being ignored as a person with specific needs and aspirations, hit the lives of marginalised slum dwellers with great force.

Slum politics and Prometrópole

Dealing with Prometrópole, Creuza had given expression to slum politics. She articulated and consolidated her fellow slum dwellers' needs for jargon-free explanations and a strong representative. Moreover, she managed to gain recognition for the people of Jacarezinho and their needs, as she played a key role in the inclusion of this area in Prometrópole. This can be viewed as an act against the abandonment of this group of slum dwellers. Meanwhile, Creuza established and maintained many connections – with both outsiders involved in Prometrópole and with fellow slum dwellers affected by it – and thereby gained prestige as a community leader. Regarding her connections, I showed the importance of leaving all doors ajar: to never disconnect completely from anybody.

Simultaneously, Creuza made a living through Prometrópole. Through her connections, she managed to improve her financial situation at home as she obtained a job for her husband. Doing so, however, implied that she had to deal with the tension that emerged between different expectations of good leadership. Apart from her constant emphasis on how hard she worked for the community (see chapter 3), in dealing with Prometrópole Creuza repeatedly and publicly claimed her abstinence from electoral politics. I argued that she managed to find a balance between unconditional love for the community and self-interest, and between prestige and possibilities through connections and contamination by electoral politics.

Manifestation of marginalisation

Having demonstrated how community leaders dealt with Prometrópole and how it worked as a vehicle of modernity entering into the heterogeneous modernity of the slum, I feel compelled to make several critical observations regarding urban development. These observations point at the predicaments slum dwellers face in processes of urban development, which, I hope, have become fleshed out in this chapter. I contend that, ultimately, Prometrópole can be viewed as another instance in which pro-poor promises were not delivered and the marginalisation of slum dwellers continued.

The programme, I argue, was not pro-poor but pro-politicking. It propagated the

message of redemption to the poor, while in practice serving the purposes of electoral political power and the career moves of politicians and officials in search of better positions and a constituency. Furthermore, consultants made good profits lengthily researching the area over and over again. Prometrópole, a significant project in terms of money and political prestige, became the most celebrated showcase initiative for the "Prometrópole/OP/PT mob", while the state government also tried to lay claim to part of its achievements. Between and within political parties, the programme was used to scapegoat and trip up rivals. This is not the place to discuss in detail the political alliances, career moves, appointments and dismissals that were part and parcel of Prometrópole, but it was clear that the programme provided a forum for much commotion among politicians and officials. All these practices took place in the shadow of the programme's self-proclaimed *raison-d'être* of development for the urban poor. Hence, as is so often the case, politicking was disguised as "doing good" while those in need were left in the margins once more.

It remains extremely doubtful whether this programme will actually alleviate poverty or solve the problems of the poor. Many of its "beneficiaries" – especially the poorest – will sell their houses as soon as they receive them. They cannot afford to pay real estate taxes and electricity and water bills and will thus move to other parts of the city to live in shacks again, perhaps in a new land occupation (Nuijten *forthcoming*). This means that those who are already better off will only become more so, while the misery of the poorest increases, as they are uprooted from their homes.

In the case of the resettlement of Chão de Estrelas, Ovídio had been an important driving force behind mobilising the residents of the then founded community and representing their needs and aspirations. In the case of those transferred under the banner of Prometrópole, no such strong mobilisation of the people happened. Creuza – while presenting herself as a strong articulator of needs and aspirations – did not mobilise people into a strong opposition. Perhaps Ovídio was right when he resentfully noted that current participatory programmes merely create an image of working with the people, thus circumventing opposition, while carrying out plans designed by the government. Under the guise of articulating the needs of slum dwellers, Prometrópole fulfilled the needs of the officials, consultants, managers and politicians involved.

I also argue that the participatory aspect of Prometrópole only served as a continuation of the marginalisation of slum dwellers. The programme was introduced without any say from the people who would be affected. It had never been a question if they wanted the programme or not. Residents of Jacarezinho and many others simply had to be removed. Officials involved argued that the programme was participatory, as household surveys had been conducted and plans had been time and again discussed with the people. Indeed, residents had been involved in the process, but only at the margins: they could ask questions to which they received "factual" answers that were constantly subject to sudden alterations. As with many other programmes, although it

was presented as participatory with the support of the affected population, Prometrópole was in fact forced upon the people (cf Ferguson 1990).

When the *obras* finally started and new houses were built, there were not enough houses for all those uprooted. Although explanations were never publicly given, through officials I came to know that a certain rate of "loss" of people during the process – who would move to other areas or pass away – was always estimated in programmes like this. As such, a smaller number of houses were built. I learnt from similar programmes that this meant that families were forced to live permanently with housing aid in temporary housing.

Prometrópole: an excuse for not carrying out anything

Looking at the past again, in the run-up to Prometrópole, the execution of all other *obras* was abandoned or severely procrastinated. The first tangible effect of the promise of urban development in Chão de Estrelas was the suspension of all urban development. Although some *obras* were finally carried out, for a long time Prometrópole had been the excuse for not doing anything in Chão de Estrelas and the other slums it promised to benefit. In April 2004, Zezinho argued that the municipality had not carried anything out lately, as they were waiting for Prometrópole. With a fatalist note in his voice he continued: 'It is like this. I will not believe in anything anymore. I will only believe in Prometrópole. This should solve everything, but if not…' He did not finish his sentence, but fiercely gestured as if throwing something far away.

Creuza – in March 2004, when she still had a critical stance towards Prometrópole – explained the situation to me in similar terms, relating it to her work in the Comul: 'The Comul manages to bring more improvement to the neighbourhood. But now, in the last two years, the municipality prioritises Prometrópole. The big *obras* do not arrive, because the municipality wants to wait for what Prometrópole is going to do.' She told me about a survey on living conditions that had been conducted in 2002, but did not have any follow-up, since the municipality argued that 'it was better to wait for Prometrópole,' and decided to transfer the budget to a project in another area. Creuza argued that she could understand these choices, but insisted that it was unfair: 'It makes sense, does it not? They do not want to spend their money here when Prometrópole will do the same with funding from abroad. But until now, nothing has been done.' She mentioned that one of the few *obras* carried out in the last few years was the reconstruction of the fallen bridge which, she grumbled, had soon collapsed.

Planned *obras* that were to be executed on behalf of the OP, Prezeis or with the personal budget of some councillor were all cancelled. Only when the elections were close at hand, in the second half of 2004, were some *obras* carried out, like finishing the sewage system, with clear electoral political motives. The logics behind the cancellation of *obras* was repeatedly explained by the officials and consultants involved in

Prometrópole: the programme would cover all *obras* in the near future, so it would be a waste of time to carry them out now. Moreover, Prometrópole had included these *obras* in its estimate, with money lent from the World Bank, so the municipality or state government did not need to spend their budgets on them. Moreover, through the years many slums were excluded from the programme's plans due to a purported lack of money.

Studying the plans for *obras* in the city at the municipal urban planning department, I found out that the execution of the *obras* within Prezeis had been cancelled. Moreover, I observed that none of the neighbourhoods in the area supposed to be covered by Prometrópole – among the most precarious of the city – had plans for *obras,* in contrast to all other ZEIS areas where public activities were planned or being carried out. With regard to the *obras* of the OP, nothing new was carried out. Instead, the aforementioned "Prometrópole/OP/PT mob" adopted Prometrópole as a grand OP achievement. Hence, not only had Prometrópole not yet carried out anything tangible, it even caused the delay and cancellation of other *obras*. The situation resembles the problems of the yearly floods, about which Cabral cries out in despair: 'How long does the population need to wait for a solution? May such urgent needs remain at the mercy of projects like these?' (Cabral 2004:150).

Politicking and participatory decision-making leading to marginalisation

When it comes to improving the living environment of slum dwellers – in spite of the existing strong emphasis on participatory decision-making – the voices of the urban poor are barely heard or taken seriously. Harking back to Latour's "little solidities" and Foucault's techniques of government, I argue that the participatory decision-making inherent in Prometrópole did not serve the purpose of articulating slum dwellers' needs and aspirations, but of making the programme real and imposing it on them.

If one proceeds from the Latourian idea of a project creating its own context, the situation becomes more legible. This view opposes the participatory policy discourse, which rests on the idea that through participatory decision-making a project comes to fit a given context. Instead, Prometrópole's participatory meetings cannot be seen as attempts to fit the programme to the context, but instead as "little solidities" creating a context for the programme to become "real". Moreover, from a Foucauldian perspective, these "participatory" meetings can be seen as techniques of government through which authority is constituted and rule accomplished.

In addition, apart from creating a context for the programme, the participatory design was basically used as a way of keeping people at ease. Elsewhere, I refer to the Janus-face of large "participatory" programmes that are alleged to benefit the population (Koster 2002). On the one hand these programmes establish a connection between state and population that did not otherwise exist. On the other hand, as became

clear during the meetings presented in this chapter, they produce a discourse centred on the need to 'be calm, wait and cooperate', thereby controlling the population by labelling non-cooperation a dead-end. In effect, urban development as represented by Prometrópole is not a pro-poor project; rather, it is an instrument of preserving a system of dominance in which the marginalisation of slum dwellers persists. Community leaders certainly do not directly oppose this marginalisation. Nevertheless, they engage in attempts to obtain recognition and remain connected, embodying slum dwellers' acting against abandonment.

Notes

[1] See chapter 4.

[2] Until 2006, the governor of the state of Pernambuco was PMDB-*ista*.

[3] This department is called URB.

[4] Not yet Zezinho at the time.

[5] Not all of the $84 million came from the USA, that is, the World Bank. Three municipalities and the state government of Pernambuco also contributed. However, generally speaking the whole budget was often said to come from the USA. The World Bank had indeed been responsible for the final approval, and the contracts had been signed in the USA.

[6] Source: several items on Boletim Diario da Secretaria de Comunicação da PCR at censo2001.recife.pe.gov.br/

pr/secfinancas/emprel/publica/ index.php, accessed on 15-10-07

[7] A fellow community leader had indeed obtained paid work, communicating the programme to the area's residents.

[8] Compare to Ovídio's work for the *deputado estadual* Pedro Eurico (chapter 6).

[9] Source: Boletim Diário da Secretaria de Comunicação da PCR at censo2001.recife.pe.gov.br/pr/secfinancas/emprel/

publica/ index.php, accessed on 15-10-07

8

Violence, identity cards and the police

He was born in a slum. Slums are breeding grounds for criminals.
- 12 angry men, 1957

Introduction

This chapter deals with how life in the slum is framed by violence. It shows the violence present in Chão de Estrelas and the ways in which people cope with it on a daily basis. The community is an extremely violent area where fights, assaults and shoot-outs, often related to the drug trade, are the ingredients of everyday life. Moreover, structural and symbolic violence are present in the fundamental discrimination of slum dwellers. Analysing these types of violence, I show how violence is experienced as both extraordinary and normal. Furthermore, I argue that, whereas actual violence happens at random, "potential violence" structures life in the slum. Adjusting their lives as to avoid actual violence, slum dwellers cope. Part of this coping is how they ban violence discursively from their personal lives. They do this by depicting it as related to 'elsewhere' and 'the other'. As the dying of violent others is considered a good thing, these persons can be viewed as "dying twice", as human beings and as bodies. Yet, I come to show that, "othering" crime and violence reaches its limits when it penetrates into people's personal lives.

Moreover, this chapter shows how violence is unleashed upon slum dwellers in the form of the state-designed project of registered citizenship. The symbol of Brazilian citizenship materialises in the object of the identity card, which is compulsory for every Brazilian over 18 years old to carry. The card is used to identify the person carrying it and thus include her or him within the nation-state. Yet this state project translates into a negative force for slum dwellers by emphasising their position at the margins of the political order. It implies a form of structural and symbolic violence unleashed on them, not so much in the sense of Foucauldian biopolitical control, but in the form of high financial costs for acquiring a card and coercive and condescending control by the police.

Finally, I show how slum dwellers, facilitated by community leaders, use the identity card also for establishing personal connections with state representatives when trying to obtain cards for free outside of official procedures. In this way, the chapter shows how slum politics is entwined with governmental politics, but is also different

from it. I argue that the notion of citizenship, as emphasised in governmental programmes and regulations, does not resonate with the reality of disenfranchised slum dwellers. I contend that slum dwellers' aspirations are not aimed at citizenship in the sense of being included in the nation-state, but rather at being recognised as persons.

Coping with violence in Chão de Estrelas

A nightmare of drugs and fear

'And he was running, running'. Maria's granddaughter, sitting on the couch, told her grandmother about a dream she had had. The nine-year-old girl had dreamt that she saw her brother running, afraid of something. The otherwise shy girl sometimes had these outbursts during which she rapidly and vivaciously told her grandmother about a certain event. I sat on the floor – I lived in Maria's house at the time – and my thoughts wandered away while I glanced at the television. After some time I heard the end of her dream, which had apparently been a nightmare: 'When I opened the sack, it was full of marijuana. Then I woke up, sweating all over.' Although I missed part of her story, I understood that her dream was on violence and the drug trade. Marijuana and other drugs are common items in Chão de Estrelas and even young children are aware of the existence of drug trafficking. Everybody knows where *bocas de fumo* (drug selling points) are located. Drugs are seen as related to crime, fear and armed violence.

Maria was afraid that her grandson, the one running in the dream, would get involved in the present drug trade. The boy, at fourteen, was repeating classes at primary school, and had recently been expelled because he had, after a long history of bad behaviour, lit fireworks on the playground. Now he was "fooling around", according to Maria. She complained that his parents were never at home. His mother worked as a domestic worker in a rich neighbourhood on the other side of the city. When she arrived home she went to services of the Jehovah's witnesses. His father, Maria's son, was an alcoholic, supporting his drinking through temporary jobs as a mason and borrowing money all over the place. He was never at home, except when stone-drunk. Currently, her grandson spent his time in the street and in the homes of both his grandmothers, who were neighbours. Maria was afraid that he would opt for the lure of quick and easy money in drug trafficking, especially as he was 'crazy for money'. She argued that the only reason that her grandson was not yet involved in '*coisas erradas*' (wrong things) was because she and her daughter repeatedly warned him. She firmly stated: 'I also say that when he uses, he does not enter here anymore.'

Maria's son lived with his wife and two children at the riverside, in an area notorious for its *bocas de fumo*. The boys and men hanging around the *bocas de fumo* were said to be armed. However, there was no ostentatious possession of arms as in Rio de Janeiro (cf Alvito 2001, Oosterbaan 2006). The times I wandered through these alleyways

– always accompanied by a resident or community leader – I never saw weapons, although sometimes bumps in pockets of shorts left little to the imagination.

In general, the difference with Rio de Janeiro is that in Recife drug trade is smaller and less organised. Apart from historical and political events that led to a prosperous drug trade in Rio, which go beyond the scope of this book (see e.g. Arias 2006), one important reason for the difference between the cities is that Recife is much poorer than Rio. A lower proportion of the city is middle class, translating into a smaller market for drugs.

In Chão de Estrelas, people from outside the neighbourhood come to the *bocas* by car or motorcycle, both night and day. People refer to them as *comediantes* (comedians), meaning people who do not live there, but who come for some kind of business. With *comediantes* around, people remain alert. Maria commented: 'They buy or provide. When they are armed, it is *bronca* (a problem, rebuke).' Young boys get involved in the drug trade at an early age. Before they become traders, they act as *aviões*. They stand on guard close to the *bocas de fumo* and 'fly' for deliveries or warnings when the police arrive. They are paid small amounts of money, providing a little income for themselves or their families. Maria, referring to two young boys at the end of her street, stated: 'If they sit there, they have it [drugs]. If they do not sit there, they do not have it. If the police arrive, one stays and the other quickly goes into the alleyway to warn.'

Some numbers on violence

The sunny promise of quick and easy money in *tráfico* and the masculine allure of weapons and illegality have a dark side: many young boys are killed by competing gang members, the police or a combination of both. This happens because of debts, betrayals, financial losses or unwanted quitting. Armed violence is the main cause of unnatural death in Recife. A study shows that in 1997 93.8% of deaths among youth between 0 and 19 years due to aggression was caused by firearms (BR 2003)[1]. In recent years, these numbers have earned the city the ambiguous honour of competing with Rio de Janeiro for the top position of the most violent urban environment in Brazil. The municipality of Recife, with its one and a half million inhabitants, registers more than eight hundred homicides a year.[2] In the Metropolitan Area, including 3.5 million inhabitants, an average of 2.500 victims of homicides are registered each year (Ministério da Justiça 2007). For the metropolitan area this results in an average homicide rate of 75.6 per 100.000 residents in the period of 1998-2002. Of these victims, almost 90% are due to firearms (idem). Most victims are young boys and men. In 2002 43% of all victims of homicide were men aged between 15 and 24, and 30% were men aged between 25 and 34 (Ministério da Justiça 2007). Most of these victims come from slums. It is here that the highest violence rates can be found, in areas like Chão de Estrelas.

Violence and the drug trade

In Chão de Estrelas, violence is a part of everyday life. Gunshots can be heard frequently. Now and then shoot-outs between drug gangs or between a drug gang and the police take place by day or night, sometimes resulting in death. During police raids, heavily-armed officers advance through the narrow alleyways, with or without helicopter assistance, searching for criminals, stolen goods, drugs and weapons. In the community, a sense of insecurity is invoked by the high walls and fences people build around their houses, as well as bolted gates and doors with several padlocks. When shoot-outs occur people quickly move into their houses, although many remain at their gates, trying to get a glimpse of what is happening. Mothers tuck in their children at night with their heads pointed away from the outside walls, afraid of bullets that may hit the walls. The *bala perdida* – stray bullet – has become part of Brazil's most basic vocabulary. Newspapers frequently picture wounded or dead persons, struck down by shots not meant for them.

Not only is the drug trade viewed as related to armed violence, but the other way around also holds true. When people in Chão de Estrelas talk about assaults or homicides, they immediately relate this to the *tráfico.* A robber is thought to use the money he stole for buying drugs, a shoot-out is explained by referring to competing drug gangs, and a homicide by stating that the victim probably had a debt due to trafficking. In Chão de Estrelas, as in other slums, trading and consuming drugs always had a negative connotation. Slum dwellers' perception of drugs is different from the bohemian view on drug use, which is more common among middle class people. An eighteen-year-old boy from Chão de Estrelas expressed a common sentiment when he said that he did not even think of smoking marijuana, since that implied that he would have to visit one of the *bocas de fumo* (Goldstein discusses a similar situation, see 2003:179).

Everybody knows that the value of the lives of those involved in the drug trade is very little for both *tráfico* competitors and the police. A general worry for women in the slum like Maria, is that their (grand)sons may end up in trafficking, attracted by the possibility of making quick money, and running a high risk of being killed at a very young age. Many slum dwellers have a victim in their family – some with lethal consequences – of physical violence. Some were victims of armed assaults, others were involved in crime and were attacked by police, competing traffickers or hired mercenaries.

Community leaders and violence

Community leaders eschew crime and violence. They are confronted with it, on the same daily basis as their fellow slum dwellers. Creuza, who in her position as a health agent treated injured people, lamented the damage. Yet, people approach community

leaders with requests that touch upon the world of crime. Mothers regularly asked Ovídio if he could arrange – through a lawyer or otherwise – to have their sons set free from prison. Ovídio always refused. On one occasion, a mother came to ask him to have her son moved to another city, as he was threatened with death in Recife. Ovídio told her that he did not want to get involved. Moreover, he argued, the boy did not stand a chance as his persecutors would not let him escape. The boy came to Ovídio, who bought him a soft drink. Trembling, he stated that it was his last soft drink. He said he had received a phone call, saying: 'You will die. You can choose if it will happen here in Chão de Estrelas or outside of it.' The next day he was killed.

Community leaders do not mingle with drug traders and do not hinder their business, as to do so would cause them insuperable troubles. They steer clear of one another, as such providing a kind of balance in the slum. Zezinho argued that the *traficantes* 'only want to do their things, rob and kill.' I truly believe the community leaders of Chão de Estrelas do not meddle with traficantes. This is not only because I came to know them well and never found any clue pointing in this direction, but also because their fellow slum dwellers never hinted at this. Community leaders are often criticised and accused, but never of cooperating with *traficantes*. They are considered to be against violence and drugs. They represent the "peace function" (*gravitas*) of responsible leadership, as opposed to the "war function" (*celeritas*) of ruthless leadership (Hansen 2005). Their position is thus different from gang leaders and other influential but violent persons whom I come to introduce.

Curfew

At night, while Maria watched her soap series, several gunshots cracked through the air. She pointed her finger in the air and mumbled: 'It started.' For over a week, gang members called everybody inside with warning shots like these. Maria got up and closed the gate of her porch with two padlocks. The gate to the street was already bolted and locked. She closed the door of the house, switched off the lights, briefly remained watching television in the dark and then went to bed early.

Gang members had called upon people to stay out of the streets in some parts of the neighbourhood, from nightfall until morning. At night, usually around 22.00h but sometimes as early as 19.30h, they passed through certain parts of the area and shot into the air. On hearing this, people knew that they had to go inside. People jokingly referred to it as a *toque de recolher*, a curfew, recalling a similar phenomenon during the military regime. The streets, otherwise filled with adults and children until late at night, were completely empty. The curfew started with the killing of two gang members, followed by the killing of two bystanders who had witnessed the murders. The latter was referred to as *queima de arquivo*, "burning archives". Rumours spread through the neighbourhood and everybody knew about the murders. Different stories about additional murders

went around, but without much coherence. During this period, police presence was higher than usual, contributing to the violence as shoot-outs occurred between gangs and police.

In Chão de Estrelas, violence was always present on a level that was thought of as "normal". At first I had a hard job distinguishing between the sound of gunshots and fireworks, which were lit year-round for birthdays, soccer victories and less-defined occasions. After some time I learnt that the sound of shots was "dryer". An easy way of telling was to look out on the street immediately after explosive sounds: if people were still in the street, it had been fireworks; if everybody had entered their homes, it had been gunshots. Often single shots were fired, referred to by slum dwellers as merely warnings or play by traficantes. Sometimes, mostly at night, series or exchanges of shots sounded through the air. The next day people would say that '*deu bronca*' (there has been a rebuke), sometimes noting the number of deaths. When I asked more about the case, people could tell me – already early in the morning – what had happened, although often different stories went around. After a few days, nobody talked about it anymore. Rumours about acts of violence circulated rapidly and then seemed to be forgotten. Sometimes there were periods of increased violence, like during the curfew.

The incidents shook the neighbourhood when they began. Yet, on the whole, the curfew passed without leaving much of an imprint on the neighbourhood. It did not appear as a very exceptional, as everyday life continued with some minor changes. People went into their homes early, and watched television instead of chatting outside with neighbours or family members. Street vendors and front window shop owners suffered the most, as they had to close earlier. Stories had it that one street vendor, who ignored the curfew, had been aggressively approached by gang members who made him jump over a wall in order to get out of the streets. Rumours went around, but remained on the margins of everyday conversation. When the curfew was still invoked daily by gunshots, people did not talk about it except when I brought it up. Then they talked about it and repeated some of the rumours. But it was not a big item, so to speak. Going through my fieldnotes, I noticed that in that period I also started to pay less attention to it, getting used to the phenomenon and coming home early, spending the nights working at my computer, reading, talking to Maria, with whom I lived at the time, or watching television.

Obeying the curfew was one way of coping. Others coped in different ways. Several people did not obey to the curfew as they had to leave or return at dusk or dawn for their work. One of Maria's sons, father of her granddaughter who had the nightmare, told me that he had gone one night with his motorcycle to fetch his wife from church after the curfew. Returning at 22.30h, he encountered eight police officers in his street who stopped him and made him remove his helmet. He regretted this experience, but stated that it happened often and that the best thing to do was to make a detour: 'When you see that there is trouble in one street, you take the next one. There is always a street

that you can get through.' His brother – working as a guard for a security company – also had to ignore the curfew. He said: 'I leave home at 4.30h in the morning and return at 21.00h. So that is not a good time.' He did not like to go out at these hours but did not show great fear. About the rumours of people who ignored the curfew and were threatened, he said that 'there are always stories.'

The curfew lasted for several weeks and then faded away. In the first two weeks after the murders, shots sounded almost every night and people were inside their homes. Later, shots could be heard less frequently, and people started to remain out in the streets until later. After some weeks, street life was back to normal, meaning there was much activity until 22.00h, and until much later on Fridays and Saturdays.

Another outburst of violence occurred when Naldo[3] was killed. This man, a dismissed police officer, had lived in Chão de Estrelas for many years. He had entered into an agreement with local *bocas de fumo* about protecting a part of the community at night against competing gangs. Although people like Naldo, from a middle-class perspective, tend to fit into exotic, lawless images of violent slums, for the residents of Chão de Estrelas he was a part of normal life. Some thought that he was not a *traficante*, but a mercenary, while others argued that he was the owner of several *bocas de fumo*. In any case, everybody agreed that he saw to it that no competing gang members incited shoot-outs in that part of the community, which they considered a good thing. Maria's son-in-law, who often arrived home late at night with his motorcycle, told me he always greeted Naldo and that his presence gave him a sense of security. Then Naldo was shot, but survived. He stayed in the hospital, followed by a short stay in prison. A week after he came home, two young boys entered his house and killed him. Everybody assumed these boys had not acted on their own, but were sent by a competing gang leader. With Naldo killed, for some time nightly theft and assaults occurred on a large scale in the streets he used to protect. People recalled nostalgically how Naldo had kept peace in the neighbourhood. After some time, these crimes diminished as a balance was re-established – or a vacuum filled – and life in the neighbourhood returned to normal.

Researching violence

Towards the end of my fieldwork I wanted to find out more about violence. At first I had avoided the subject for reasons of safety. What I mean by this is twofold. Firstly, I had to avoid being perceived as related to a police investigation by anyone in the slum. Researching about robberies, assaults, murders and the drug trade would surely attract undesired attention from gang members. Secondly, I did not want to know the details about the violence as this would certainly frighten my wife and myself. I was trying to feel safe in the slum. In order to live there comfortably, we tried to shun the issue of violence as much as possible.

After some time, once aware of the "do's and don'ts", used to the violent

environment and feeling relatively safe, I tried to understand the influence of violence on life in the slum. I realised that the topic only rarely emerged in conversations with people. Although until then I had hardly ever explicitly raised the subject, I had many records of everyday life in people's homes or in the street in which I had been like a fly on the wall. In very few of them specific acts of violence were mentioned. People referred to violence in general terms – saying 'There is a lot of violence here' or complaining about 'So much violence!' when looking at crime programmes on television – but hardly ever commented on specific acts. *Tráfico* – the main "cause" of violence – was also rarely mentioned in specific terms.

What was going on? Was violence part of everyday life? Was it considered normal or still extraordinary? In order to answer these questions, I will first try to come to grips with the violence that takes place in Chão de Estrelas.

Theorising violence

In Brazil, high rates of physical violence in slums, including homicide rates, are socially accepted. Acts of violence in slums receive little or no media coverage – although garish newspaper supplements and television programmes zoom in on its sensational aspects, producing a 'pornography of violence' (Bourgois 2001). *Globo*, the largest television channel, pays scant attention to deaths in slums in the daily Pernambuco state news, while acts of violence in rich neighbourhoods lead the news for days.

Apart from the social acceptance of these forms of direct aggression, other kinds of socially accepted violence are present in the severe discrimination of slum dwellers within the political order. Slum dwellers earn extremely low wages for dirty and dangerous work, their houses lack basic infrastructural services and more *obras* are executed in rich neighbourhoods than in poor ones. Children of poor families receive poor public education, making it nearly impossible for them to ever reach the level necessary to enter advanced public education institutions. Slums dwellers die of curable diseases due to lack of medicines and bad living conditions. As such, slum dwellers do not only suffer from physical violence, but, moreover, from forms of accepted violence that are deeply ingrained in the capillary structures of domination. Structural violence, 'chronic, historically-entrenched political-economic oppression and social inequality' (Bourgois 2001:8, cf Scheper-Hughes & Bourgois 2004)[4], is expressed in phenomena 'ranging from exploitative international terms of trade to abusive local working conditions and high infant mortality rates' (ibid). Structural violence affects both material (salaries, infrastructure) and socio-psychological (dignity, pride, self-esteem) aspects of life.

In the same vein, Bourdieu coined the concept of symbolic violence, defining it as 'violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity' (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992:167). Symbolic violence is socially accepted and permitted as it is based

on misrecognition of violence as something else. People consider it completely natural as it belongs to their *doxa*. Bourdieu states that: 'their mind is constructed according to cognitive structures that are issued out of the very structures of the world' (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992:168). Symbolic violence is the way structural violence is normalised, legitimised, and internalised (Bourgois 2002). Bourgois, in his studies of inner-city violence in the US, documents how symbolic violence normalises the structural violence of neoliberalism as it 'assigns the everyday interpersonal and delinquent violence that the poor visit on each other to their alleged character flaws', dichotomising humanity into worthy and unworthy people (2002:222). He continues: 'symbolic violence … persuades victims that their own actions are the cause of their own predicaments and that their subordination is the logical outcome of the natural order of things' (idem: 223).

Hence, both symbolic and structural violence in the slum result in a *doxa* that includes elements of domination, inequality, exploitation and everyday exposure to acts of direct aggression. This *doxa* is deeply rooted in hegemonic historical factors (cf Goldstein 2003, Scheper-Hughes 1992) and also reproduced by those who suffer most from it – slum dwellers themselves – as they consider it part of their everyday life.

Most studies of violence are limited to issues of fear, memory, trauma, reconciliation, and comparisons of situations before and after violent incidents. Only a few focus on the very experience of violence itself. Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1992) deals with this experience, analysing structural, symbolic and physical violence among the poor in Brazil. She shifts the focus from violence as a kind of external force to violence as a lived experience. By doing so, she illuminates violence as the human, suffering, face of those who bear the burden of the 'daily practices and expressions of violence on a micro-interactional level: interpersonal, domestic and delinquent' (Bourgois 2001:8). More specifically, one can think of the suffering of 'burglaries, robberies, assaults' and the violence people inflict upon their own bodies like 'substance abuse' (2001:11), but also 'infant mortality, slow starvation, disease, despair, and humiliation' (Scheper-Hughes & Bourgois 2004:2). Everyday violence includes forms 'ranging from poverty to racism [that] become *embodied* as individual experience' (Farmer 2004:281).

Violence as part of everyday life

Violence: extraordinary and normal

The first time I visited Chão de Estrelas and its adjacent slums, a ten-year-old boy followed me and kept on repeating two things: he asked for money and wanted to know whether in my country there were also death and violence. Apparently, violence was one of his main concerns in life. It was normal for him. Yet, the fact that he mentioned violence, isolated it, and lifted it up out of the broad stream of experiences and thoughts that he had, made it clear that violence was also extraordinary for him. It was not part of

the routine of life, for the very fact that he reflected upon it. I contend that violence cannot be part of everyday life as it is a subject to which special attention is paid (Abrahams 1986, Lewis 1999). I agree with Lewis who, referring to violence and sex, argues: 'The very objectification of these categories – their qualification – removes them somewhat from an unmarked background position (i.e. from the everyday)' (Lewis 1999:542). The very fact that violence is mentioned and reflected upon – be it in minute ways – puts it apart from ordinary experiences as 'the process of reflecting on *one* (named, isolated) aspect of ordinary experience removes it from the subliminal stream, marks it, and makes that aspect, ipso facto, extra-ordinary' (Abrahams 1986:539).

Acts of violence, like fights, murders and other violent acts, were extraordinary as they were remarked upon – although mostly only briefly or in minute ways – and considered undesirable. The often-expressed aspiration to live without violence illustrates the extraordinariness of the phenomenon. People reflected that violence should not belong to normal life. Maria nostalgically recalled: 'When I arrived here there was no *tráfico*. I could safely walk home from Olinda at night'.

Monique, the twenty-one-year-old mother of one daughter, gave expression to the extraordinariness of violence, when talking about the future of the community and the possibilities for her daughter: 'Oh boy, a future like that. Look at the violence. If they occupied the adolescents with creative things, programmes and therapies for them, perhaps then the violence would diminish. But it is like we see: the youth, all dying early, engaging themselves in what is no good. I see the future like that, not good, do you understand? Because you see that all these youngsters and children enter into violence and banditry'. She added that she was worried for the future of her little daughter. In these aspirations for a life without violence, the extraordinariness of violence also becomes clear. Indeed, violence is part of everyday life, but also set apart from it. It is normal, as experienced on a daily basis and structuring life, but also extraordinary as it is reflected upon as undesirable.

Furthermore, violence is often depicted as disruptive (Koonings & Kruijt 2004, Restrepo 2004, Leeds 1996). Indeed, when people lose children or friends to violence, or when people become handicapped for life or are hospitalised for a long time, thus losing their income, this severely disrupts the lives of those involved. Allen Feldman (1995) argues that violence is directed against the structure of everyday life as it forms an obstacle to the reproduction of experience. According to him, it is impossible to analyse violence itself, as it disrupts and destructs categories needed for analysis. While not denying the disruptive dimension of violence, I will show how violence, to a certain extent, is not experienced as disruptive, as it is normal and structures the everyday life of slum dwellers.

In Chão de Estrelas, violence is common. Most people have been robbed at least once in their lives, have witnessed fights with knives or firearms and have hidden when shoot-outs occurred. People do not talk much about violence, and when they do they

express themselves in ways that seemed dispassionate. They say in general terms that there is a lot of violence in the neighbourhood or in the city. In interviews they mentioned violence as a negative aspect of the area when I asked them whether or not they liked to live in Chão de Estrelas. They regretfully muttered, 'Oh, a lot of violence' after some incident had occurred. However, specific acts of violence in the area were hardly mentioned. In public, this was related to fear. People whispered when occasionally talking about acts of violence that happened in the neighbourhood, glancing suspiciously around (cf Goldstein 2003). Also inside the – open, not soundproof – houses, people demonstrated a fear of talking about acts of violence. Yet even inside "safe spaces" like closed rooms or far away places – like the beach or on trips outside the city – acts of violence were not a much elaborated topic. In general, they went without saying. In a way, violence was dealt with like a fever: undesirable but a part of life.

The fact that in stories about the past people would not make a clear distinction between non-violent episodes and violent events supports this idea. Dona Mercês' life story was full of acts of violence, but she did not pay any special attention to them (see chapter 4). Maria, when talking about the history of the neighbourhood, also added stories about the beating-up of people without giving it much thought.

One night Zezinho's oldest son was robbed. When he returned at night from an adjacent neighbourhood, two guys on a motorcycle had approached him. They switched off their headlight and forced him at gunpoint to stand against a wall. They took his new cell phone. Zezinho's son was disappointed – it had been a brand new phone – but did not talk about the robbery as an important, let alone traumatic, event. His younger brothers grinned mockingly about the incident. Marilene, their mother, took it as a common, unpleasant part of life. She sighed: 'I warned him many times. "Take care when you go out at night". But he thought, "It will not happen to me".' She said it was a pity the money spent on the cell phone was wasted. From the next day on, nobody in the house talked about it again. Another night I returned from a party with Zezinho at 1.00 am when two guys on a motorcycle passed into another street. Zezinho said it was *bronca*, sounding resentful and unemotional at the same time: 'Motorcycle at this time means problems.' Many occasions like this formed examples of how violence was highly integrated into everyday life.

It seemed that people were not traumatised by the high rates of violence, both expressed in structural ways and as forms of direct aggression. It resembles the indifference to child deaths Scheper-Hughes encountered when studying infant mortality in North-East Brazil (1992). When depressing phenomena occur so often, people develop a kind of defence mechanism that allows them to live on in circumstances of great distress. Sometimes this translates into an indifferent way of dealing with violence, sometimes in a particularly light-hearted manner. The latter was the case with the armed bus assault I experienced with some slum residents.

The assault and its aftermath

The boy pointed his gun at the head of the bus conductor. The conductor, remaining dead calm, opened his box with a gesture that expressed both routine and resentment. The boy nervously took out the money and stuffed his pockets with it.

This was one of the many armed assaults on buses that take place in Recife: according to bus companies five cases per day occur in the Metropolitan Area (Globo 2007). Buses are desired targets, as many fares are paid in cash. Raquel, her adopted son, his godmother, BJ and I were in the bus together. At a bus stop two boys, about sixteen and eight years of age, entered at the front. The oldest pulled a revolver from under his clothes and forced the conductor to give him the fare money.

BJ, sitting next to me at the back of the bus, calmly said: '*Eita* (hey), an assault.' The driver pulled over on the side of the street. The youngest boy, trembling, passed by all passengers with a plastic bag. It popped into my mind that, if the older boy were not armed, it resembled an innocent collection. All of the passengers handed over money or other possessions to the boy. When the boy arrived at our seats, BJ calmly took his wallet, pulled out some notes and put them in the bag. I also put money in. The other boy had lowered the gun and remained waiting with a tense expression on his face. When the youngest boy had passed everybody, the driver opened the doors and the boys moved out of the bus, into the crowded street, the oldest one still busy putting the weapon back into his shorts.

I told BJ that it was the first time I had been assaulted. He smiled and shook my hand while saying: 'For me, too.' Then he grumbled: 'I worked so much for this money and now it went away.' For Raquel, who took the bus every working day, it was the second assault in a week. Everybody in the bus started talking to each other. A young woman took out her cell phone – apparently she did not give it to the robbers – and made a call. She looked around with a triumphant smile and people started laughing. Other passengers showed each other their cell phones and watches.

The conductor asked if they stole anybody's documents. This had not happened. Although BJ and others requested the driver to continue the trip, he stated he would stop at the closest police station for a report.[5] Raquel, BJ, Fernando and I remained at the police office, as the conductor asked for witnesses to the crime. At the office, the officer who dealt with the case was evidently annoyed by our visit and took some obligatory notes. Finally, we continued our trip in another bus hailed by the bus driver.

In the days that followed, I brought up the story of the assault several times to different people. I, quite upset by the incident, was surprised by the, in my eyes, moderate reactions of the slum dwellers. Zezinho only wanted to know where it happened. When I said it was in the adjacent neighbourhood, he closed the case with an affirmative murmur. Marilene, not looking up from the television, reacted calmly: 'You see? It is very dangerous, my God.' Maria wanted to know where it happened and how

much they had stolen. When I answered that it had occurred in the adjacent neighbourhood and that they had only taken a little money, she seemed to lose interest in the matter. She only laughed when I recalled BJ's calm remark of '*Eita*, an assault'. BJ's family also reacted with the same laughter to the dry remark. A twelve year old niece, smiling all over, asked me time and again 'What was it again that BJ said?' I consider their light-hearted way of dealing with violence as a way of coping. Humour, in this way, takes shape both in spite of suffering and because of it. 'Humour is one way of bearing witness to the tragic realities of life and an expression of discontent' (Goldstein 2003:16). It is a 'laughter directly into the teeth of suffering' (ibid), as such taking a discursive distance from that violence.

The structuring effects of potential violence

Besides being an integrated part of everyday life, violence also has structuring effects on it. I argue that, whereas *actual* violence may be disruptive – although slum dwellers develop ways to cope with it – *potential* violence structures the lives of those living in a violent environment (cf Caldeira 2000 on crime). As people try to predict when and where violence will happen and to whom (cf Feldman 1995), potential violence is something people anticipate. Whereas actual violence takes place at random, potential violence is structured and structuring. Actual violence, as I see it, transforms or "fades" into potential violence with time, as people categorise acts of violence into their understandings of the possibilities of violence.

Potential violence translates into a kind of routine in the lives of those who experience it. Slum dwellers recognise risks and adjust their lives in order to avoid them. To put it bluntly: *tráfico* and the related violence create "do's and don'ts" like traffic. As with traffic – in the sense of automobile traffic – one does not walk on the highway as this might be a harmful experience. With regard to violence – related to *tráfico* – one does not walk through certain alleyways at night.

Potential violence structures the ways in which slum dwellers relate to each other. Before including someone in one's circle of close friends, one had to figure out if that person was not involved in crime and violence. People sometimes warned myself or others to refrain from having close contact with a certain person, as he was a killer or a thief. Marilene explained: 'They say there is a lot of violence here. And there is. But it depends on the persons with whom you make friendships, does it not? If you come here and you connect with bad people, then it is dangerous. But if you connect with good people, make friendships with good people, then it is not dangerous here.'

Another structuring effect of violence lies in the way people protect their goods and money. Each month Maria goes to the marketplace. This involves over half an hour of walking through alleys of an adjacent neighbourhood considered dangerous by residents of Chão de Estrelas. Some of them have been robbed there. When Maria goes,

she carries about R$80, a relatively large amount of money. She has even carried R$900 in cash to that area before, when she bought a bed and sofa. Anticipating a potential robbery, Maria divides the money in different places: some in her bra, some in pockets sown inside her skirt and some in a shopping bag. In this way, she stated, she goes *liso*, meaning both flat and broke. She clarified: 'A person who walks with money has volume, a person who walks without money is *liso*. If you spread money over three places, you can no longer see from the outside that you carry it. Then you are *liso*.' When we went to the market together, she asked to carry my money as well, reasoning: 'A thief does not search a woman, he leaves a woman in peace, he only searches the man.'

The dividing up of money was a common practice when people went to other neighbourhoods or to the centre, on foot or by bus. Women often put money or other valuable items like cell phones in their bras, because this was considered the place least likely to be reached by pickpockets or robbers. Similarly, a friend from another slum happily showed me a new cell phone case which, attached to his belt, did not show from underneath his shirt. Precious objects were hidden. Some people advised me to take off my wedding ring when taking a bus or walking through some neighbourhoods.

Another structuring effect of violence lay in the way it influenced people's movement through the community and the rest of the city. Maria – like many people – used to make detours. She avoided – certainly when alone – the alleyways on the riverside, although these provided shortcuts to the bridge or to the house of her eldest daughter. She considered these parts dangerous.Going to the city centre or other parts not completely familiar to them, slum dwellers moved in a way I refer to as "streetwise". They avoided groups of men hanging around, street children sniffing glue and those who looked like drunks or drug addicts. They would sometimes brusquely turn around or take a detour in order to avoid perceived risks of being harassed or assaulted. Going out at night was also structured by potential violence. If people in Chão de Estrelas left a party late at night, they preferred not to walk home alone, but moved together as much as possible. At the beginning of my stay people accompanied my wife and me home at night when we had visited another place together. Those who arrived or left home for work between dusk and dawn, referred to this time as a dangerous hour. Additionally, a specific structuring element of violence was the unwritten rule not to run when violence occurred. The news told stories about innocent people who were shot, as they were considered suspicious for running away.

Violence happens elsewhere

'A lot of bullets. A lot of deaths. One every day. One, two, one, two. Every day.' After being back in the Netherlands for some months, I talked to Maria on the phone. To my question whether or not it was *tranquilo* (peaceful) in the neighbourhood, she replied that there was a lot of violence. I asked: 'Also in your street?' 'No,' she said, 'Thank God.

Here it is alright'.

One important aspect of how people deal with potential violence in Chão de Estrelas is how they indicate that violence happens "there" instead of "here", and that it is related to "the other". People's reconstruction of violent acts usually implies depicting these as having happened "elsewhere", or at least as having their roots "elsewhere", and labelling them a result or characteristic of "the other".

One Sunday night a man was shot to death in front the church in one of the neighbourhood's main streets. It happened shortly after the *crentes* had gone home from the evening service. When our landlady heard the shots – we lived around the corner – she locked the fence facing the street. Her mother, who lived with her, commented, glancing up at the sky: 'Thanks to God here in the street nothing has ever happened. I already live here for twenty-three years and a robbery or assault has never taken place. Yes, one time a thief entered, but he did not do anything and then left.'

Our landlady's mother expressed her gratitude to God that at least "here", in her street, violence did not occur. Likewise, Josa argued to me: 'I live in the best part of the neighbourhood. There was never any murder here.' A common feature that people in Chão de Estrelas attributed to violence was that it always happened "elsewhere". "Elsewhere" is a relative term for which the scope varies.[6] It can be defined as 'in Rio de Janeiro', 'in another neighbourhood' or – as was the case with the landlady's mother - 'in the next street'. Another common way of referring to acts of violence in Chão de Estrelas was to state that these happened '*Lá dentro* (there inside)', referring to a rather vaguely defined area of the community furthest away from its main streets.

The day after the murder, our neighbour, who owned a front window shop, commented: 'Here the neighbourhood is calm, but sometimes somebody comes from outside.' She explained that the victim was from another neighbourhood. Doing so, she placed the violence 'elsewhere', arguing those involved came from 'outside'. Zezinho argued that the victim of murder had lived in Chão de Estrelas and had only recently moved to another neighbourhood. Still, the people with whom I discussed the matter all emphasised that he was from another neighbourhood.

Relating violence to "elsewhere" sometimes resulted in remarkable situations. For example, residents of Chão de Estrelas thought a bordering neighbourhood very violent, while residents of this bordering neighbourhood thought that Chão de Estrelas was a very dangerous area. Robberies that took place on the bridge between the two neighbourhoods – which was notorious for such incidents – were by both sides explained as involving criminals from 'the other side'.

Pessoas erradas: the "othering" of violence

Talking to my neighbour with the front window shop about the murder, I asked her if she had seen the incident. She answered: 'No, I did not see it. I closed early because I

already suspected something would happen. I saw this car passing by and knew that something was about to happen.'

I inquired why the boy was shot. Her answer came in terms that I heard often: '*Foi marcado a hora deste rapaz para morrer* (The hour for this boy to die was marked, or: He was bound to die). There are many around here like him. They are all bound to die.'

I wanted to know: 'Why are they bound to die?'

She said: 'They mingle with things that they should not mingle with.' She continued whispering that in the last few years she had known many people who died in this way. She said that in the past the house facing hers was a *boca de fumo*. The '*pessoas erradas'* (bad people) who lived there had died one after another. She related violence to "the other". The expressions '*pessoas erradas*' and 'people who mingle with *coisas erradas*' (wrong things) are commonly used. The shop owner distinguished between good people and bad people. She belonged to the good people herself. Bad people, for her, equalled "the violent other".

"The violent other" was said to have certain stereotypical characteristics, allowing for discrimination inside the slum. Regarding the widespread illegal possession of firearms, residents of Chão de Estrelas argued that only *pessoas erradas* had weapons. "The violent other" was uneducated, traded and used drugs or was at least connected to the drug trade, and did not take good care of his children. In general, people referred to violence as related to *pessoas erradas*. When I asked BJ why some boys became involved in the drug trade and others did not, he replied: 'Their fathers are thieves, their mothers are thieves, so what will these boys become? Look at my son: I am a worker, Roberta is a worker, so what will he be in the future? He will be a worker.' Violence was "othered" and discursively banned from personal life.

After the murder around the corner of my street, another resident of Chão de Estrelas said: 'Here we get used to it. It is natural. It is part of the *vida marginal* (life in the margins). People live and die. If it is not a family member, you do not cry. If somebody is shot and you do not know that person, you think "That is not my business".' His wife gave a dictum that was frequently heard in the neighbourhood: 'thieves kill thieves'. As such, she and many others related violence to the 'other' and safeguarded their own existence in the slum by emphasising that they were not involved and were innocent. 'Thieves murder thieves', or 'bandits shoot bandits', gives expression to a clear division between good people and bad people. In this way, in Chão de Estrelas a discursive insider-outsider dichotomy subsisted with regard to violence (cf Goldstein 2003:183-185). Moreover, the dictum was often used in a positive way, arguing that as 'thieves kill thieves' the neighbourhood gets rid of its *pessoas erradas.* Violence is thus a means of cleansing the area. Likewise, immediately after the bus assault, BJ started telling his fellow passengers that it would have been better if the drivers were allowed to be armed, so they could shoot the assailants in the back when they got out. When I objected saying that this would only result in more bloodshed, he

argued that he could not care less, because it would only shed the blood of a thief, a *pessoa errada*.

Dying twice

To my question of why the gangs invoked the curfew, Maria's son blandly responded: 'For killing each other'. In a way, *pessoas erradas* are 'made to be the symbol of all evil and transgression that the community seeks to expunge' (Hansen 2001:218, referring to Girard 1977). They are considered 'morally inferior' and 'beyond redemption and reform' (Hansen 2006:284). In general, shedding the blood of bad people, like gang members, was deemed a good thing. They were considered 'bound to die' anyway. With drug traffickers and other criminals, violence is 'expected, routine, even justified' (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004:22). As such, *pessoas erradas* are stripped of their humanity and made socially dead before physical death. They are made invisible and therefore already wiped out from humanity (Biehl 2005). The "violent other" actually dies twice: first – not necessarily first chronologically[7] – as a human being and second as a body. Feldman, regarding political violence, argues that people may be killed by bullet and by political myth-making (1995:237). In my view, this "dying twice" happens not only in periods of political myth-making, but also through symbolic violence present in moral mechanisms that distinguish between 'good' and 'bad', and justify the killing of the 'bad'.

The limits of "othering"

Violence is depicted as related to "the other". However, "othering" has its limits. When *pessoas erradas* are relatives, neighbours or customers, crime and violence hit close to home. When I discussed *tráfico* with Maria, she related her fear that her grandson would become involved. In addition, she talked about many boys she knew, sons of people from the community, who 'got involved' and died from mingling with *coisas erradas*. Violence came close to her in an emotional way as well. She continued, telling me about a boy to whom she had been a kind of second mother. He had been shot after 'getting involved in the wrong things'. Maria visited him in the hospital and later at home, where he finally died of his injury.

It was rumoured that a woman from Chão de Estrelas had lost two of her sons due to their involvement in the drug trade. She herself admitted that one had indeed been killed, while the other had died of tuberculosis. Maria informed me that the second one was also shot, survived, but then fell ill and died. Both were in their early twenties. The woman, who took care of her little grandson who had lost his father, did not talk about what happened to her sons. She was evidently ashamed of it. As I see it, when violence comes close and "othering" is impossible, it is better to remain silent.

"The violent other" can also come close to one in business. My neighbour, the shopkeeper, said: 'I know that there are good people and bad people. Because we have this shop, we meet many people, make friendships as well, also with *these* persons.' While referring to criminals as *pessoas erradas*, she did not deny that they belonged to her clientele and that she established friendships with them (cf Ypeij 1995:80-85 on how female entrepreneurs deal with members of the Shining Path Movement in Peru).

Likewise, Dona Mercês and her granddaughter had a discussion about whether or not to accept presents from drug dealers. On the one hand they thought it better to accept, as not accepting could result in a violent reaction from the dealer. On the other hand, they thought it better not to accept, as the present was probably stolen or bought with money earned from drugs. Violence, although it took place 'elsewhere', and was inflicted by and on 'the other', was always close to home for the slum dwellers.

Identity papers: citizenship, violence and personal connections

Citizenship in the slum

As introduced in chapter 5, for slum dwellers the concept of "citizen" does not have much practical meaning. Robert Gay, regarding politics in the slum, argues that concepts like citizenship are 'attractive concepts in the abstract' but 'take on very different meanings in the course of everyday life' (Gay 1998:16). Slum dwellers sometimes use the concept, but merely as a synonym for 'somebody', as they say that 'a certain citizen' did something or went somewhere. For community leaders and others involved in governmental or NGO programmes the concept is part of the leftist discourse they sometimes use. They employ the concept instrumentally in communicating with state representatives or NGO workers in programmes centred on citizenship, but they hardly ever refer to it when talking to fellow slum dwellers. The theoretical concept of citizenship does not fit the realm of the everyday life of slum dwellers. Although under the Brazilian constitution they are citizens who are included in the nation-state, in practice they are largely excluded. According to the constitution they are granted citizen's rights, but in practice it is hard for them to claim any rights. Slum dwellers are at best considered half-citizens (Weffort 1992:198), leaving citizenship 'incomplete' and 'mutilated' (Santos 1987). Furthermore, as I explained in chapter 5, slum dwellers do not adhere to an abstract notion of "the state" in which they can be included as citizens. Still, they are eager to have an identity card that states that they are Brazilian citizens. If not for reasons of citizenship, for what reasons do they want it? Before being able to answer this question, I must provide more background on the identity card.

The "identity"

The official symbol of Brazilian citizenship is the identity card, called "identity" for short. As long as my informants could remember it had always been compulsory to carry an identity card. Every Brazilian over 18 years old is obliged to have this document made and keep it always at hand. Accordingly, most slum dwellers constantly carried their identity card. One of them commented: 'The Brazilian is so much used to going out with an identity, that when he goes out in the street and forgets his document, he would out of habit return to his house to get his document.' The plasticized card – somewhat bigger than a credit card – displays one's name, date of birth, date of issue, names of parents, photograph, signature and the fingerprint of one's right thumb. The card is issued by the state government and valid in all states of the federation.

One can be asked to identify oneself with the card in public buildings or shops, especially when buying on credit. Police have the right to demand identification at all times they consider this necessary. The card is also needed for all formal financial transactions, acquisition of a credit card, enrolment in higher education and public courses, applications for allowances, pensions and social assistance programmes, and long-distance transport by bus or airplane.

In Recife, the card is made by a civil police institute[8] and can be obtained by applying at police stations and – in recent years – at the offices of the *Expresso Cidadão* (Citizen Express), a governmental centre housing several civil services. In both cases it is the police who take care of handing out the cards. The first card is issued for free. If one loses it, a new one must be applied for, for a charge that increases with number of times of loss. The applicant needs to bring an original and copy of his birth certificate and two recent, colour photos of 3 x 4 centimetres (Expresso Cidadão 2007) One photo is put on the card and the other is kept in the archive. In addition, a marriage certificate is needed for women whose names have changed.

Besides presenting these documents, one has to buy a form at a stationer's shop, fill it in, deposit any relevant fee at a bank and show the bank receipt at the police station or the *Expresso Cidadão*. Within some days the card can be fetched. The official tariffs are: first issue for free, second issue R$10.56, third issue R$21.14 and fourth issue and above R$42.26. [9] Note that for many a slum dweller who lives on, for instance, R$120 a month, these are considerable amounts of money. Furthermore, the cost of the form at the stationer's shop and of public transport – going to the city centre at least twice – and the necessary knowledge of opening hours and filling in forms, pose other obstacles.

The identity card is connected to a register that is represented with a card, the CPF – *cadastro de pessoas físicas* (register of physical persons). Although juridically related to different issues, identity card and CPF are often referred to as the same thing. Some of my informants talked about 'carrying the identity' while others said 'carrying CPF'.

Most people had separate cards for identity and CPF, but now both can be issued on the same card. Is it not compulsory to carry CPF, but it is needed for most financial transactions.

Identity cards, violence and the police

A police officer explained to me: 'Without identification, a person goes out in the street and it is recognised that he does not have any value, that he is an unoccupied person, that the Brazilian society rejects this person.' A resident of Chão de Estrelas, likewise, argued: 'Who does not have an identity becomes marginalised'.

The most tangible object in the relationship between slum dwellers and the state is the identity card. As an object it functions as a line between citizens and non-citizens (cf Gordillo 2006). Non-citizens are considered a threat to the state and subject to state violence that aims at maintaining security. Recalling that the paradox of modern citizenship lies in the fact that the state endows its citizens with rights so as to protect them from the state itself (Hall & Held 1989), the identity card can be viewed as a materialised Hobbesian social contract which protects the one carrying it against violent death. The identity card is the tangible expression of this granted right to be protected from the state – the latter most obviously represented by its police force. Put the other way around, being unable to demonstrate one's citizenship – i.e. unable to display an identity card – results in subjection to severe state violence. This study echoes Deborah Poole's observations on the paradoxical use of identity cards among Peruvian peasants, where 'a personal identity card was simultaneously a peasant's only guarantee and his source of greatest vulnerability to the arbitrary powers of the state' (Poole 2004).

In Chão de Estrelas, a huge graffiti image shows an armed police officer standing next to his car with flashing lights, approaching two boys who are standing with their hands on their necks, while a crying woman with a baby in her arms turns away from the scene. One of the boys wears a T-shirt that says, "100% *favela*".

The police are the most visible instance of state presence in the slum. The most common encounter between the slum and the state is that of slum dweller and police officer. In Chão de Estrelas, heavily-armed officers made their rounds in a car through the slum areas or sat in front of the mobile security unit – a caravan. Every now and then, police hunted down traficantes or other criminals, resulting in shoot-outs and people fleeing into houses for cover. Other state representatives – like officials coordinating participatory programmes, health and social workers, governmental researchers or politicians – came to the slum, but police officers embodied the most regular and visible presence of the state.

Brazil has different police organisations. The two main forces – organised at the state level – are the civil police and the military police. The civil police are in charge of the judiciary and carry out administrative tasks, including all investigations. In Chão de

Estrelas, they occasionally enter the slum – often in plainclothes and heavily-armed – when trying to arrest somebody or to round up a gang. The ones present on a daily basis in the slum were the military police. They are in charge of 'ostensive and uniformed patrolling' (Caldeira 2002) and, I admit, they indisputably live up to this task.

Among slum dwellers, the image of the police is extremely negative, as officers are not trusted and accused of abuse, torture and excessive violence. Many slum dwellers argued that the police were 'just as bad as criminals'. Rumours about intimate linkages and agreements between police and drug gangs are widespread in slums (cf Goldstein 2003). BJ argued to me that an uncle of Roberta had entered the police force, but soon resigned because gangs were active inside the apparatus. When during the national disarmament campaign in 2004 and 2005 people could receive compensation for handing in firearms at police stations, many slum dwellers expressed their doubts and argued that the police would sell the weapons again to traffickers. Alongside these rumours, slum dwellers blamed the police for being lazy, for not fighting crime enough and for acting – when they did so – in an excessively violent way. As Caldeira points out, with the police, violence was a 'constant possibility' (Caldeira 2002; for a similar account on an Argentinean slum, see Auyero 2000).

In order to give an example of the attitude of the police towards slum dwellers, I present part of the treatise a police commander gave at a meeting in the office of the Residents' Union. He appealed to the responsibility of slum dwellers in fighting crime and argued that most only thought of themselves and did not care about security of others in the community. He added that somebody who deliberately did not inform against criminals was in fact helping those criminals. He gave a telephone number for anonymous denunciation and encouraged everyone to denounce criminals, even if they were friends or kin. He narrated a story about a drug dealer who died in a gunfight with other dealers. Police officers had asked his mother why she had not denounced her son, though she knew he was a dealer. 'Because he is my son and I love him' she replied. 'Well,' the commander ended the horrible story, 'there is her son, with a bullet in his head. Is that love for your son? Would it not have been better if she had reported him so that he could be arrested and treated?'

Slum dwellers avoided the police. Once Zezinho – who was one of the few slum dwellers who did not avoid the police as he worked on security issues – introduced me to the officers of the mobile unit in Chão de Estrelas. When I visited some slum residents afterwards, they expressed their dislike of my visit to the police. Marilene, Zezinho's wife, also deeply disliked her husband's dealings with the police. As Zezinho organised meetings with police representatives, she feared that criminals might take action against him or their sons. Apart from Zezinho, no slum dweller ever came close to the mobile unit or talked to the officers who sat in front of it.

However, police presence – while severely distrusted – was still generally legitimated by feelings of insecurity in the slum. Slum dwellers longed for more security

and this could legally only be offered by the police. Paradoxically, people both fear violent police action and simultaneously long for a violent police force, as the latter is necessary for fighting crime (Caldeira 2002 on São Paulo).

In the negative imagery of police and violence, the identity card forms a key object. Among the reasons slum dwellers mentioned for always carrying the identity card, the one that stood out was the possibility of getting caught by the police without it. According to my informants, any kind of police encounter without being able to show one's documents would surely lead to an arrest. During raids the police was known to body search everyone and ask for identification. At night, city buses to and from the slums were controlled by police – probably looking for weapons or drugs – who demanded passengers to display their identity cards and body searched some of them.

Nevertheless, showing one's card was not a daily activity. Although carrying it was compulsory, one was not requested to show it at every possible occasion. For example, when entering the municipality no one was asked to show his identity card, including the slum dwellers I entered with. Everybody could climb the staircase or take the elevator and visit offices without identification. Likewise in City Hall one could go to councillors' offices without being asked for identification. The same applies to entering museums or universities. In a library I had to show my identity card – and the faded copy that I carried sufficed. At the entrance of many government buildings some people showed their credentials at the counter, but many did not and passed by without being called back.

As slum dwellers rarely enter locations in which identification might be requested, showing their identity card was not part of everyday life. Most of them never or seldom enter public buildings, do not enrol in higher education, never or rarely engage in formal financial transactions, only occasionally make long distance trips on buses and never travel by airplane. They need identification when applying for social assistance programmes, like family grants. The two occasions on which they are frequently confronted with the need to have an identity card is when buying on credit in shops and when encountering the police. The latter happened not only frequently, but also made the greatest social and emotional impact.

The only place to officially apply for an identity card was with the police – be it in a police station or in an *Expresso Cidadão*. Furthermore, as the most important thing was to avoid acting suspiciously when meeting police, carrying an identity card was essential. Once Raquel, Zezinho and I watched a television show about a man who was abused by police because they thought he was involved in the drug trade. Although it was unclear whether the man did or did not have an identity card, according to Zezinho and Raquel, the story clearly pointed to the need of always carrying the card.

Maria's son-in-law, who was in his early twenties, told me about how he had been arrested by the police when unable to show his identity card. It had happened at night close to his house. 'I was there with a group of friends at the corner close to my house'.

The police arrived and were supposedly 'hunting' for criminals. 'Many times they do not request your identity. How they act greatly depends on the hour. During the day they are more polite. "Good day, we want to have a talk with you. What are you doing here?" At night they are more violent. They beat you immediately. They throw you to the wall and order you to spread your legs. They hunt, you see. During the day they are polite, but at night they are not.' That night when he was asked for his identity card, he did not have it on him. 'They shouted "Why do you not carry your identity? You can go to prison, you know that, do you not?" I said, "Because my house is here". So they ordered me to get it, I went, took my identity at my house and that was it. Another time happened at night, too. I was there with my friends, they arrived and requested identities. I said "I do not have it, I am without documents". "Why?" "I live down there". "You are arrested". Then they put us in the car and took us to [another neighbourhood]. There they set us free and we walked from there to here at night. But they beat me a lot in the car.'

Likewise, Caldeira quotes an informant from the periphery of São Paulo: 'I know of a student who, because he was not carrying his identity papers, ran away afraid from the police and he was shot and declared to be a bandit, even though he was not' (Caldeira 2002). These kinds of stories went around in Chão de Estrelas, too. The relationship between crime, police and identity cards was frequently shown on the widely-watched reality crime programmes on television. These programmes pictured arrested criminals daily, frontally displayed with their full names.

The fear of getting caught

The fear of getting caught by the police stood out as the primary reason for carrying the identity card. Slum dwellers were afraid of being stopped by the police. According to them, a person without documents would certainly be treated as a criminal. Whenever I asked someone in the slum their reason for carrying the document, they always mentioned this fear. This fear was based on experience. Slum dwellers knew what it was like to be arrested and imprisoned, from their own experience or those of relatives, friends or neighbours who suffered these difficulties. Raquel told me that her brother had been arrested. His wife had denounced him after a quarrel and he was caught possessing an illegal fire weapon. He spent one night at the police station and was transferred to prison the next day. Raquel had gone to the police station and tried to get him freed, but the police 'did not even want to know about a bail.'

Additionally, prison upheavals regularly find their way into the media, shown as overcrowded penal complexes sunk into utter violence and chaos, with both prisoners and police guards using brute force against each other. Police abuse and torture of prisoners is a recurring topic in the news. These violent pictures exacerbate fear among slum dwellers of ever being arrested.

One night in Chão de Estrelas, while enjoying Carnival festivities at the football field, I asked Zezinho about the identity card. I started the conversation by stating that since the 1st of January 2005 it was compulsory in the Netherlands to have an identity card on you, just like in Brazil.[10] Zezinho responded: 'Here it has always been compulsory. Always.'

I inquired: 'Zezinho, do you always walk around with an identity here?'

Zezinho: 'Always.'

I persisted: 'Here too? Do you have your identity on you now?'

Zezinho: 'Here too. Always.'

I asked: 'If not carrying an identity, what can happen to you?'

He replied matter-of-factly: 'You can get caught.'

I continued: 'By the police?'

With a 'yes' he took out his wallet and showed me his identity card.

In a similar conversation, two of my neighbours directly referred to crime and police intervention. They explained that with the card, the police 'can see that you are not a criminal.' I inquired: 'But how is that? A thief does not have an identity?'

One of them explained: 'He has, he has. But look, if you and a marginal[11] are caught, the police officer will trace your identity. He will see if you have a criminal past and will see that you are *not* a marginal and that the other *is*, understood?'

Some added that escaped criminals did not have documents, as these were taken from them in jail and stored away. A man explained: 'Imagine a fugitive from jail. He managed to escape, but his documents still remain locked up. So the police can see whether he is a fugitive from jail and, if he were a fugitive, catch him.' In Brazil prisoners are frequently set free on bail, under temporary conditions or other circumstances, while their documents remain locked up.[12] These persons are constantly at risk of being arrested again, since they do not have their papers.

A community leader from another slum explained that he did not have his identity card on him when close to his house. In a bar around the corner, he argued that 'if they want to see my identity here, I say that I live here and take them with me to get my identity.'

I asked: 'So here in the community you do not carry your identity?'

He replied: 'Here too. If I go to, for example, that bridge over there, there are many selling points for marijuana. If I go there, I take my identity with me. If they catch you there and you cannot show your identity…' He made a gesture with his hands as if to say: 'Then you are in trouble.'

When I asked: 'With "they" you mean the police?', he agreed.

Likewise, a young man from Chão de Estrelas clarified: 'Many people always carry their identity for reasons of fear. Fear of the repression of the police. In the past it was more like that. During the military dictatorship the police sometimes went round looting through the streets. If you did not have an identity, the police thought that you

were a *marginal*, so they caught you.' This story is echoed by Levine, who states that during the dictatorship 'police frequently stopped people randomly and arrested them or beat them if they were found to be without papers' (1997:80). At the time the poor and unemployed were often the ones who lacked papers and were considered marginal.' A person without an identity card was viewed as marginalised and thus as a criminal. Here again, the identity card marks the difference between those who deserve protection from the state and those who are to be violently acted against by the state.

As for myself, I often did not carry an identity card in Brazil. I took a copy when I had to enter a public building and the original only when travelling outside the city. Raquel, discovering this one night when she asked to see my card, confronted me about what she thought of as a great stupidity. She reacted, surprised: 'You walk around without an identity?' The tone of her voice showed that she thought this outrageous. I answered: 'I do. Because if I take it with me, it may be stolen. And I never need it.'

She asked: 'And when a police officer orders you to show your identity? What do you show!?' She turned to Zezinho who was with us and said in a theatrical and pitying voice: 'Zezinho, this boy is still very young. He walks around without an identity.' Turning back at me, she wanted to know: 'When you go to the city, do you take your identity?'

'No, only when I go to another city. Here I carry a photocopy.' I asked: 'If I walk around without an identity, what can a police officer do?' Raquel argued that the police could beat me up completely. I wanted to know: 'How many times did you have to show your identity in the city? I never had to.'

Raquel answered: 'There are good police officers and there are bad police officers. But if I were you, I would walk around with my identity. It is obligatory.'

I, recalcitrant, responded that if I were stopped, I would tell the police to come to my house in order to show them my identity there. Raquel responded scornfully: 'Yeah, right. They will surely believe you. If you, as a foreigner, tell them that you live in Chão de Estrelas, they will for sure think that you are engaged in bad business! You, living in Chão de Estrelas, would you believe it!?'

The notion of the identity card system as a flawlessly working machine able to reveal a person's defects seemed to me to be contradicted by disorder, technical errors and neglect. On television I saw images of the civil police archives, where copies of identity cards were kept: an utterly chaotic mess of ramshackle bookcases with bulging boxes full of documents.[13] However, these images did not lighten the "weight" of the identity card at all, as this weight did not stem from the technical system, but from the mechanisms of fear it was entangled with (Poole 2004). Fear, based on experiences of other slum dwellers, personal encounters with police and crime programmes on television, created the negative image of the cards. This again coincides with Poole's writings about Peru. She describes the control of passenger registries from transport trucks during the war in the late 1980s. For the soldiers, who carried out the control, the

lists with names handed over to them by the driver formed 'the only material site from which "identity" could be conjured, not through the science of reading – since, more often than not, the names and numbers on the lists meant nothing to the soldiers – but rather through the instinctual mechanisms of fear' (Poole 2004: 36).

Other reasons

The second reason that slum dwellers mentioned for carrying their cards was that, in case of an accident or a crime, the police could easily identify the injured person – or the body – and inform the family. This reason was also closely related to violence and police, albeit with a less negative image of the police. A man commented: 'If you get into an accident, you go to the hospital. You need an identity. Not that otherwise the doctor will not help you. He will help you, but it will be more difficult.'

Marta told me that she once hurried back all the way home from the long-distance bus station – an hour from Chão de Estrelas – because she had forgotten her identity card. She was not allowed to get on the bus without it. 'Only those who have an identity card get on the bus. Because, if an accident happens, my family would not know, because I would not have had my identity, so I would not have been that person.' Another man explained that 'in case of an accident, they can see your name on your identity and publish it everywhere, in the newspapers.'

A third reason mentioned was that the card was needed for many practical things, as described above: employment, opening a bank account, acquiring a credit card, buying on credit, travelling, enrolling for higher education or public courses and entering some public buildings. Marilene explained: 'You need it for everything, for working, for opening a bank account…'

No value without an identity card

The most definite expression of the identity card's value – and the negative consequences of not having one – was found in remarks that without an identity card one did not exist. This notion appeared to be strongest during the military dictatorship. Levine recalls a billboard in downtown Rio de Janeiro in 1969, that stated, "Without identity documents you do not exist" (1997). Indeed, slum dwellers who lived through the military regime were usually more serious about the need to carry an identity card than younger ones, as the older generation remembered the severe oppression of that period. Like some said: 'If you do not have an identity, you are nobody.'

According to police I spoke to, a person without an identity card had no judicial value. No credentials meant no protection from law. Without an identity card a person was thus completely vulnerable to the vagaries of state representatives. I argue that what becomes manifest here is 'the tense unity of threat and guarantee that emerges

each time' a slum dweller 'is ordered to show personal documents' (Poole 2004:59). Gaston Gordillo, in his study on the indigenous Toba and Wichí people in the Argentinean Chaco, argues that for long the lack of documents was perceived by state agents and settlers as 'an ontological condition that … deserved violent punishment', as such reducing the indigenous 'to a subhuman condition that made their murder legal' (Gordillo 2006:168). This is exactly what happened to the Jews in the Holocaust (Bauman 1989). The Toba and Wichí people valued their documents as to deflect 'threats of violence and oppression' (Gordillo 2006:172) and to show their 'innocence' (Gordillo 2006:167). According to Gordillo, this situation – present in the early 20th century – has passed, although a collective memory of the violent past still shapes the way in which the Toba and Wichí conceive of their identity papers. Likewise, I argue that for residents of Chão de Estrelas identity cards are used to deflect the threat of violence and to prove innocence.

This situation touches upon the schism between citizen and person, as described by DaMatta (1984, 1992). Here, the slum dweller may exist as a person – characterised by personal connections to other persons – and yet not exist as a citizen – characterised by existence before the law – and therefore be subject to violence. Before exploring this theme further, I need to explain more about how citizenship is measured.

Citizenship measured by two standards

Slum dwellers argued that they were more likely to be ordered to display their credentials than other residents of the city. Their experience emerged from common prejudice against slum dwellers. Citizenship was measured by two standards (see Holston 2008 on Brazil and Hansen 2006 on South Africa). In theory, it was a rigid rule to take into custody anyone who did not carry identity papers, but in practice there were many exceptions. These exceptions were based on differences in gender, race and the social prestige of the subject, especially one's employment status (Caldeira 2002). As such, the reliability and goodwill of police officers – or, to put it negatively, their caprices — are a major factor in the interplay between slum and state as constructed through the identity card. De Carvalho puts it rather boldly when he states that the constitutionally established equality is a farce, since 'who defines citizenship, in practice, is the police' (De Carvalho 1992:90).

Both the likelihood of being requested to identify oneself and the consequences if unable to do so, are subject to these exceptions. In terms of gender, although men and women are equally obliged to carry a card, men are more often subject to police requests for identification. In this sense men are "more compelled" to always have their card on them. As a young woman from Chão de Estrelas told me: 'For a man it is obligatory. For a woman too, but not so much. Because it is men that do stupidities around here, do they not?' Likewise, when I asked Raquel about the possible consequences of getting

stopped by the police without having an identity card, she said: 'Right, for me nothing because I am a woman. But for you… you could get caught.'

The Brazilian stereotype of a criminal is a man, but not only that: it is a black-skinned man. This racial prejudice – determined by skin colour – affected the rule. Maria's son-in-law who was arrested for not having a card was black-skinned. Many similar cases occurred. A young and light-skinned man from Chão de Estrelas explained to me the role racial discrimination played in identity control: 'I think that here in Brazil exists a certain prejudice against *morenos*, against persons with a dark skin. For example, I many times walk in the street at night, at two o'clock, three o'clock. Nobody ever demanded to see my identity. Once I was alone at one side of the street. At the other side was a group of six *moreno* boys. A police car passed. The police looked at me, but the car did not stop. Then they went to the other side of the street and asked the boys where they came from, what they were doing, they ordered them to show their identities, do you understand?'

Finally, social prestige affects the rule. With social prestige I mean social "merits", although it can be stretched towards non-merits like being born in a rich family. For a slum dweller, these "merits" boil down to employment and religion, as salaried workers and evangelicals are likely to be treated better than others by the police (de Carvalho 1992). De Carvalho refers to George Orwell's "Animal Farm" and argues that when it comes to citizenship in Brazil indeed "all animals are equal but some are more equal than others": the employed and the evangelicals can be argued to be "more equal than others". With regard to employment, a male slum resident told me that at a control he had been unable to show the police his identity card, but had showed the card – with a photo – of his work at a municipal institute. 'When they saw that I worked for [the institute], they let me go.' He, able to show that he had a proper job, was less likely to be taken into custody for not having an identity card than many an unemployed slum dweller. Moreover, a woman from a middle-class neighbourhood told me that for her it was sufficient to show her business card to the police, although it did not even have a photo.

Caldeira documents that 'for the police, as for many people, the boundary between the image of the poor worker and that of the criminal is very thin indeed'. She argues that workers can show the police that they are not criminals by referring to signs such as their professional identification, but that the police may ignore these signs (Caldeira 2002). Moreover, pushing Caldeira's point about the boundary between the images of the worker and the criminal, I wonder where this leaves the unemployed slum dweller. As he is not a worker, he is put on par with the criminal, as indeed happens all the time in Brazilian public opinion. These kinds of representations increase the chance of being requested to identify and of suffering the possible consequences if unable to do so. People also claimed that treatment was different after being arrested. A slum dweller explained that although 'it may formally not be so', once arrested one can send

somebody else to get the identity card or make a phone call from the police station in order to settle the matter. But again this depended on the goodwill of police officers.

Another situation came to light once when my wife and I were taking the late night bus from the city centre to Chão de Estrelas. When leaving the centre the bus was stopped by a group of heavily-armed police. Two officers entered. While one of them stood at the back of the bus, his weapon at hand, the other moved among the passengers and demanded the men to stand up. They briefly body searched the men and looked in their bags, leaving the women seated. They commanded some men to display identity cards. I was also commanded to stand up and they had a quick glance at my bag, but I was neither body searched nor asked for my credentials. In this particular situation, gender, race and social prestige clearly played a role, as women and light-skinned persons – and evident non-slum dwellers like us – were treated in a less intrusive way.

Citizenship in a zone of indistinction

I argue that in these exceptions that seem to escape the rule, the very foundations of the rule become clear. The workings of the state-designed project of citizenship, alleged to promote security, result in violent intrusions on those people who are *de facto* considered non-citizens. Although the rule appears to treat everybody equally, in practice it discriminates against slum dwellers – especially against the unemployed, coloured men from the slum. According to De Carvalho, they are 'guilty, until the opposite has been proved' (1992:92). They need to show their identity cards in order to prove their innocence. Those who are obliged – always and as a tenet of the state system – to testify that they are citizens and not criminals, are in practice always approached as non-citizens. These situations, in which citizenship is measured by two standards, can be viewed as sites of exclusion to citizenship, characterised by the 'contradictory immersion' (Gordillo 2006:162) of slum dwellers in the Brazilian nation-state. The state-designed project of registered citizenship creates margins 'where the discursive (and legal) separation of functions, persons, and offices breaks down, and where the extrajudicial, violent, or private origins of the law become visible' (Poole 2004:43).

The project of the identity cards resembles the juridical institution of *Schutzhaft*, a kind of preventative detention used by the Nazi regime in Germany, which allowed 'individuals to be "taken into custody" independently of any criminal behaviour, solely to avoid danger to the security of the state' (Agamben 1998:167). Agamben depicts the situation in which *Schutzhaft* becomes a normal institution as 'a zone of indistinction between outside and inside, exception and rule, licit and illicit, in which the very concepts of subjective right and juridical protection no longer made sense', and 'law and fact … have become indistinguishable' (Agamben 1998:170). To the police, a slum dweller without an identity card is both *de facto* – because he is a slum dweller – and *de jure* – because he has no card – stripped of his citizenship rights. This 'unidentified' slum

dweller is put on par with a criminal in popular discourse as well. Now, most slum dwellers always carry their identity cards, which confer them *de jure* with citizenship rights. Yet, *de facto,* they are measured by another standard that subjects them to the chicanery of the police.

Fear of "dirtying" the identity

Another type of fear present in slum dwellers' dealings with the identity card was what they called *sujar a identidade* (dirtying the identity). It contributed to their negative imagery of the card that symbolised their citizenship, as well as their fear of intrusive control and state repression. People were afraid of 'dirtying' their identity. Unpaid fines, debts – often a consequence of buying on credit – or the neglect of compulsory voting in the elections would all result in a 'dirty' identity card. Furthermore, committing a crime or being suspected of a transgression would also lead to a 'dirty identity'. A police officer, an official or a shop owner – whoever could legitimately ask you for identification – was believed to be able to 'read' these irregularities from your identity card, as the card granted access to personal information. Big shops had access to a computer system in which they could check one's credibility before selling on credit. A police officer explained to me that when the police carried out a spot check, they could access the identity database with a special search system in the car and solicit information about the person: if he was a criminal, if he still had unpaid fines and the like. If somebody could not show his credentials, the officer explained, they would take that person into custody and try to find out more. Nowadays, due to new technologies, these computer systems have become increasingly advanced and, according to both police and slum dwellers, finding out about a 'dirty' identity has become easier.

The fear of dirtying one's identity was widely shared. Marta once told me that the identity card could reveal all of a person's practices: 'Let us say, if you had been put in prison, you are an ex-prisoner. Now you get a job in a company without telling anything about your past. Your employer will find out with your identity card. It will reveal everything, as it is *you* who is there. It is your history.' The consequences of a "dirty" identity card were thought of as very serious and to be avoided at all times. As Marilene stated: ' Dirtying my identity… *Deus me proteja* (May God protect me). Hence, the identity card gave more reason to live in an "appropriate" way: not buying too much on credit, not neglecting to vote and not committing crime.

Using the identity card for establishing personal connections

In contrast with the intrusive state-designed project of registered citizenship, slum dwellers also used their identity cards in attempts to establish personal connections with state representatives. Countering the imagery of fear and seriousness surrounding the

identity cards, they made light of acquiring a new card. They did not enter into the official procedure, but used other means. These alternative means were not illegal. They were generally accepted and the cards acquired were officially made at the civil police institute. Alternative ways were especially easy to access when elections were approaching. As chapter 6 showed, in the period before elections, many otherwise time-consuming procedures are streamlined and completed more quickly. Political candidates, through contacts in the civil police, directed programmes for issuing free identity cards to the poor. Free issuing also occurred under the banner of governmental "citizenship enhancement" programmes. Besides being free, these options avoided a rather complicated procedure. Community leaders were requested to be local coordinators of these programmes.

Registering for a free identity card in the office of the Residents' Union

Zezinho was known for having arranged identity papers for many people in Chão de Estrelas and beyond. Several times he had people over from the civil police institute to the Residents' Union in order to issue free identity cards, often as part of a citizenship enhancement campaign. In 2006, Zezinho successfully submitted a petition in which he

requested the Residents' Union be included in such a campaign. In the weeks before the campaign, the news quickly spread that 'Zezinho was arranging identities'. Many people approached Zezinho and asked how they could apply.

Three men from the institute came to the office and sat behind a desk. They would register everybody's data, collect the necessary documents and have the identity papers delivered a month later. Early in the morning, people queued up in front of the office. Zezinho emphasised to them that they had to have two pictures, their birth certificate and a copy. Inside, one of the men took fingerprints with an ink cushion. Zezinho offered everybody to wash their hands in his house afterwards.

Afterwards, people thanked Zezinho for the new cards. One woman said: 'Thanks a lot, Zezinho. This is a very good job that you are doing.' Most emphasised that it was important to economise on costs. About the free cards, Maria said: 'This is an important thing here, because the people do not have money for these things.' Besides, it was easier than the official procedure as no trip to the city centre was needed and forms – that were hard to understand for many slum dwellers – were filled in by people from the civil police institute or by assisting community leaders.

Talking to the people queuing up, I found that some needed a new card because they lost their old one. Others still had old ones, but they were worn out, mostly because of the damp during the rainy season. Pictures had become unrecognisable and fingerprints had faded. One girl wanted a new card because, she argued, she did not look good in the picture on the old one. Some confided in me that they had a good card, but wanted a second one in case they lost the first one. Raquel, with a big smile, told me how she obtained two identity cards without paying tariffs. When I reacted in surprise, she responded with a 'ssssssst' and a naughty look in her eyes. She explained that she acquired the first one for free at a police station where she knew an officer. Quickly slapping her hands together twice, she indicated that it was easily arranged. Later, she had a new one made in a campaign coordinated by a candidate councillor who had invited people from the civil police institute. She smiled with mischief as she explained that she had applied for a new one as she thought she had lost the old one: 'I thought I lost it, but then I discovered it in my book.' She showed both cards and stated that she preferred to carry the old one, because the picture was nicer.[14]

In addition to these light-hearted attitudes, slum dwellers often acted in nonchalant and even joking ways with regard to their cards. A male, black-skinned slum dweller, in his forties, still had the card he received at 18, with a photo that was now completely unrecognisable. He showed the card to me with a teasing smile and laughed when I could not recognise him in the picture. He told me how he had once been stopped by a police officer, who, looking at his card, had commanded him to get a new card since the picture did not resemble him any more. However, although he could now obtain one for free, because he had not lost the old one, he did not want to and stuck to the old one.

Errors on cards occurred. Sometimes the requirement of filling in names of parents

was not met, due to mistakes of the official who made the card or because children did not know who their father was and only carried their mother's surname. The youngest daughter of Maria did not have a fingerprint on her card. However, she did not for a moment consider getting a new card, even if it was for free. Although others said that it was probably invalid, she did not seem to care about the "incomplete" card.

In these practices of obtaining cards through alternative ways, joking and nonchalance, there seemed to be no trace of the fear that was so manifest in people's declarations about the importance of the identity card. The situation resembles the hilarious situations Poole writes about, when Peruvian peasant truck travellers called out names of film stars and politicians when asked for personal data for lists that had to be handed in at military checkpoints (2004). Both obedience to and mockery of authority were simultaneously present in these practices.

The alternative ways were not part of the cold and formal realm of institutions, desks and unknown officials, but of the realm of personalised relations, or what Brazilians refer to as *intimidade*, ("intimacy"; see chapter 3). I argue that the personalised ways of obtaining identity cards give expression to a preference for intimate relations, as opposed to official institutionalised procedures. Slum dwellers would refer to the candidate who organised a free issuing or to the community leader who coordinated it by saying, 'he arranged my document'.

Moreover, I argue that the preference for personalised connections, present when slum dwellers turn to community leaders, is also a way to steer clear of known and unknown places and situations that cause fear. If a slum dweller enters into the official procedure for obtaining an identity card, he has to go to a police station or an *Expresso Cidadão*. In both cases he is subject to the caprices of the police, who slum dwellers fear from the outset. Next, obtaining an identity card through the formal procedure requires certain knowledge of opening hours of offices, how to fill in forms, and other formalities. Most of these things are unknown to slum dwellers and might touch upon their fears. For this reason, applying for a card with a community leader or somebody else with whom they have *intimidade* is preferable.

Conclusions

This chapter documented how life in the slum is framed by violence. Slum dwellers, living in an extremely violent environment, cope with violence on a daily basis. Next to the symbolic and structural violence presented in severe discrimination, they face everyday acts of violence in the community, like fights, assaults and shoot-outs, often related to the present drug trade. I argued that community leaders and drug traders maintain an unspoken balance in which they steer clear of contact with one another. Slum dwellers, I showed, define violence as extraordinary by mentioning it, reflecting upon it, avoiding it and expressing desires for a life without violence. At the same time,

violence is considered normal, as it is part of their everyday life experience, which they sometimes deal with in light-hearted ways. Furthermore, I argued that, whereas actual violence occurs at random, potential violence is structured and structuring. Acknowledging potential violence, slum dwellers adjust their lives in order to avoid actual violence. Dealing with potential violence, I showed how slum dwellers actively ban violence discursively from their personal lives by depicting it as related to 'the other' and 'elsewhere'. They adhere to moral categories that define those who die from violence as evil, and judge their deaths positively as they rid the community of wrong-doers. Yet, I argue that the paradox of violence being both extraordinary and normal remains, especially when violence and crime penetrate into private lives and possibilities of "othering" become limited.

Further, this chapter showed the intrusive workings of the state-designed project of citizenship in which slum dwellers are faced with the police who violently measure their citizenship by different standards. The project, which obliges people to carry an identity card, translates for slum dwellers into a fear of police encounters, being arrested and imprisoned. This is not fear of a cold state apparatus, but rather a fear based in personal experiences. Slum dwellers are subjected to the caprices of police officers, who approach them as being guilty until proven innocent through an identity card. The idea of control as related to 'dirtying the identity' added up to the negative imagery that surrounded the concept of citizenship for slum dwellers.

Meanwhile, slum dwellers employed the identity card in attempts to remain connected to state representatives. To acquire cards, they turned to personal contacts, such as politicians, officials and police officers – often facilitated by community leaders – instead of to procedures and forms. Documents were still needed, as a copy of the birth certificate had to be handed in, but these were now given to a well-known person, instead of to a distant bureaucrat behind a desk. The loss of an identity card and the acquisition of a new one were treated light-heartedly as obtaining a new one happened through personal relationships.

To conclude, I return to the schism between citizen and person (DaMatta 1984, 1992). With the identity card, the notion of a *citizen* boils down to everyone with a card. As such, everybody is permanently at risk of becoming a criminal if unable to show a "clean" card. In contrast, the idea of a *person* boils down to everyone who maintains personal, intimate relations, as evidenced in the alternative, personalised ways of obtaining an identity card. This schism, embodied in the lives of slum dwellers in Brazil, touches upon the essential paradox of their position in the political order and displays the significance of community leaders as important facilitators of personalised contact with the political order. The personalised ways of obtaining an identity card can be viewed as a denunciation of state-designed citizenship. DaMatta argues that citizenship 'sociologically signifies an absence of relations' (DaMatta 1992:7). However, the personalised ways described here centre exactly upon relations. Slum dwellers acquire

their identity card as the symbol of citizenship – characterised by the absence of personal connections – through processes in which personal connections are *sine qua non*. They engage in a slum politics which does not yearn for citizenship, but expresses utopian aspirations for a better life in a better world in which they are not stigmatised.

Notes

[1] BR (2003) refers to a study of the *Instituto Materno Infantil de Pernambuco* conducted in 1997.

[2] Numbers on homicide vary considerably. A reason for this may be that some are based on police registers and others on medical reports from the Ministry of Health. In 2003 it was announced on television that the Fundação Getulio Vargas counted 834 cases of homicide in the municipality of Recife – I do not know on what criteria this is based. In the same year Globo news reported 888 deaths, based on police statistics. Note that there may be more cases of homicide as not all of them are registered.

[3] Pseudonym

[4] Bourgois borrows the concept from Johan Galtung (1969,1975), who introduced a triangle with three sides: direct, cultural and structural violence. However, the difference between cultural and structural violence is not clear to me. Moroever, I contend that the notion of cultural violence easily leads to conclusions about one culture being more violent than another.

[5] Drivers and conductors suffer from robberies, as the stolen money is deducted from their salaries. Reporting the crime to the police could work to their advantage, although most cases are never solved.

[6] This resembles Taussig's idea that violence is always happening elsewhere (in Scheper-Hughes & Bourgois 2004). Indeed, although Taussig refers to the distancing of violence and terror to exceptional places in the current world order, similarities exist between this and the depicting of the 'elsewhere' of violence by slum dwellers.

[7] Bourgois provides an example in which a man was first killed as a body and later as a human being, in the sense of a social construct, by divulging a negative image of him (2001:21-22 and 2002:229).

[8] Instituto de Identificação Tavares Buril (IITB); Institute of Identification Tavares Buril

[9] Tariffs at 29-06-05 in Expresso Cidadão of Recife

[10] Strictly speaking, in the Netherlands one is obliged to be able to show one's identity card when requested, not to carry it all the time.

[11] *Marginal* in this sense means delinquent, as explained in chapter 1.

[12] This is common practice as lawyers, politicians and other politically influential people try to release (poor) prisoners for reasons of claimed innocence of the detainee, political gain or both.

[13] Images of the IITB broadcasted at Globo TV news.

[14] In accordance with formal procedures this old card is made invalid. The police might find this out when they enter the register and date of issue of Raquel's identity in their system. Probably Raquel did not know this. Moreover, searching for people's data in the computer system is only done occasionally.

9

Conclusions

There is no feeling like rejection coupled with abandonment
- Dave Eggers, 2006

Introduction

In the beginning of this book, I stated that this work set out to contribute to the pursuit of 'making nonpersons full human beings' (Boff & Boff: 1987:8). I argued that slum dwellers should not be misrecognised as "the other", as different from "normal" citizens, because of their marginalisation.

This book shows how the slum is, in fact, an eminently knowable world, full of disavowed potential. I provided insights in the lives of residents of the slum of Chão de Estrelas in Recife, Brazil. I showed how slum dwellers, directed by community leaders, strive for material and intangible resources, and engage in utopian projects. I argued that the needs and aspirations of these people, who are at constant risk of being ignored, disconnected, and abandoned, emerge from their yearnings for recognition and connectivity, and a fear of abandonment. In order to come to grips with this life in the slum, I focused on the ways slum dwellers attempt to cater to their needs and aspirations, modes of operating which I call "slum politics". This notion of slum politics draws upon Partha Chatterjee's theorising of popular politics and "political society" (2004).

Here, by means of conclusion, I revisit the main arguments of this book. I take up the challenge once more to demystify the slum dweller and present her or him as the full human being whom she or he is. I do so by distancing slum dwellers from currently fashionable theorisations of marginalisation and exclusion, which are grounded in the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben's concept of *homo sacer* (1998, 2005).

Main arguments of the book

This book defined slum politics as grounded in the needs and aspirations of those who live in the margins. Drawing on the work of Oscar Lewis (1959, 1965), it analysed how life in the slum, through stigmatisation and a long history of marginalisation, is reproduced in ways that are fundamentally different from middle- and upper-class life. This difference, expressed in particular needs and aspirations, is not generated because

slum dwellers are a different kind of people, but because they have been structurally segregated within the dominant political and economic order.

While I am highly critical of Lewis' notion of the 'culture of poverty' as too homogenising and deterministic, I follow his larger argument that life in the slum has its own dynamics, not in and of itself, but as a result of exploitation and marginalisation by the political and economic order. I showed how slum dwellers maintain many connections to the political and economic order – though they are often of a precarious, tenuous, and exploitative nature. The book documents how, in Brazil, processes of severe marginalisation of slums and its residents have persisted over time, even though governmental programmes that formerly aimed at exclusion of slums and its residents have more recently adopted more democratic and inclusionary discourses.

The book documented how life in the slum is characterised by certain needs and aspirations which, although not solely held by slum dwellers, are more emphatically and urgently present in their lives in the margins of the political and economic order. These needs and aspirations have material, intangible, and utopian dimensions. Material needs exist, for instance, for money, food, and employment. Intangible, or social, needs can be viewed in attempts to establish connections to all kinds of people and to gain prestige. Utopian aspirations find their expression in slum dwellers' cravings for solidarity, a better environment, and a desire to be connected to the world instead of being ignored and abandoned.

I coined the concept of slum politics as the ongoing and never finished endeavour of slum dwellers of creating connections and possibilities which break off all the time. Central to its workings is the notion of connectivity, the intricate face-to-face relations between persons which need to be constantly maintained, and a fear of abandonment, which means being forsaken and excluded by everybody. Slum politics is driven by slum dwellers' attempts to be connected to the political and economic order, against this fear of abandonment that they experience on daily basis.

Slum dwellers themselves do not always see slum politics as "politics", which they think of as electoral politics. Slum politics extends outside electoral politics to ways of organising life in a broad sense, including family life, making a living, and dreaming about the future. Yet, I represent slum politics as profoundly political, given that it is about struggle and a striving to connect the margins to the political and economic order.

In the book, I distinguish the approach taken here from other approaches that have been developed and employed for studying life in the slum. Most of these approaches focus on only few aspects of life in the slum, like racial issues, drug trade, kinship and gender, electoral or administrative political divisions, and economic categories, while losing sight of its complexity. However, the notion of slum politics incorporates some of the more valuable insights produced by these different approaches.

After explaining the difference between slum, shantytown and ghetto and why I prefer to use the term slum above *favela*, I presented a historical overview of the

marginalisation of slums.

The book provides a portrait of community leadership, showing how community leaders are the main facilitators of slum politics, as they articulate and consolidate their fellow slum dwellers' needs and aspirations. Community leadership was analysed from different perspectives, from that of fellow slum dwellers and academic literature to government discourses, though according to the latter, officially community leaders do not exist.

Community leaders are first among equals, they are not elevated above "the masses". Being slum dwellers themselves, they know the needs and aspirations of slum residents. Their connections to fellow slum dwellers are of a changeable and tenuous character, as they are not able to form stable groups of followers. Their position is of an informal nature. They often have formal positions on the board of grassroots organisations and in government programmes, but these are effects of their prestige rather than the foundation of their leadership. Community leaders distinguish themselves from other slum dwellers by their talent to establish and maintain myriad connections, both to other slum dwellers and people outside the slum. Through these connections, they attempt to create access to material and intangible resources, to gain prestige, and arrive at recognition of their needs, and those of their fellow slum dwellers. I pointed at the importance of *conhecimento*, a *savoir-faire* of which strings to pull, which people to approach and in what way in order to achieve things. Community leaders are evaluated through their achievements by their fellow slum dwellers. However, even attempts to achieve things without tangible results are appreciated, as slum dwellers acknowledge that initiatives commonly fail, given the provisionality of life in the margins.

Community leaders also need their connections in order to make a living. They engage in the realm of electoral politics looking for resources and prestige. Yet, their practices inevitably implicate them in particular tensions between opposing dimensions. Fellow slum dwellers often simultaneously draw upon diverging discursive registers, modalities to give meaning, when approaching and judging community leaders. As a result, community leaders, who maintain connections to outsiders, and, cater to the needs of fellow slum dwellers, are confronted with slum dwellers' diverging expectations. These oppose the expectation that the leader will work unconditionally for the community against the leaders' need – acknowledged by fellow slum dwellers – to make a living, which results in a tension between love for the community and self-interest. Another tension emerges around the expectation that community leaders derive prestige and resources through electoral politics as opposed to the accusation that they become contaminated by electoral politics. The latter is related to slum dwellers' conception of electoral politics. On the one hand, slum dwellers are attracted by its opulence and possibilities beyond compare for prestige and resources. On the other hand, they distrust electoral politics and consider it repugnant, as it seemingly

only generates self-interest and does not correspond with community interests. They argue that electoral politics is polluting work as it marginalises community issues in favour of assuming and maintaining public positions and making money.

This study introduced three community leaders, Ovídio, Creuza, and Zezinho. It provided ethnographies of their personalities and their projects. It paid attention to how these community leaders articulate and consolidate needs and aspirations of their fellow slum dwellers, and, operate between these tensions of love for the community versus self-interest, and the need to have connections in order to gain prestige and access to resources versus the contamination that emerges from contacts within the murky world of electoral politics. Each leader's trajectory towards becoming a leader is presented. Their historical record of achievements is pivotal to this trajectory. The study showed how each community leader evolves a particular thematic interest. This thematic focus, comprising several issues in which they specialise, allows them to establish and maintain connections with people around specific topics. Another way to distinguish between community leaders is through examining their operational styles, the personal ways in which they deal with people and set out to achieve their goals. An important dimension of their operational style lies in their ways of laying claim to achievements which add to their historical record and, hence, their prestige.

I also present the competition between community leaders when they engage in attempts to derive material and intangible resources for themselves and fellow slum dwellers. Furthermore, I show how they compete in establishing connections, gaining prestige, and being recognised as a leader, both within and outside the community. Different kinds of slum dwellers appeal to each community leader, although none of the community leaders establishes defined groups of followers. Three case studies were presented, one on each community leader, closely examining how they give shape to slum politics in their projects.

The book discusses how ordinary life in the slum is lived, through narrating histories of how four families in the slum organise their lives. These stories shed light on the way the economy is lived in a site where unemployment is high, self-employment often the only way to make a living, and allowances form a great part of the money coming into the slum. Furthermore, I showed a particular economic dynamic, where much of the money remains circulating within the slum. I discuss the gendered labour division in the slum, in which it seems that it becomes increasingly more difficult for men than for women to find employment. I concluded that the thriving drug trade has little effect on the local economy of Chão de Estrelas, as the money involved runs off to middle-class areas.

I argue that connections are highly important in the economy of the slum. The life histories of slum dwellers show how they organise their lives through engaging in connections to fellow slum dwellers, community leaders, and outsiders. Gift giving is important in order to maintain these connections, whilst money was employed in a

social way. This emphasis on connections, gift-giving, and a social use of money, points at a different way of living the economy than prevailing theories would suggest, which envision money as instrumental for saving and spending.

The book set out to analyse how slum politics is intertwined with, but different from, electoral and governmental politics. I argue that most studies of politics in Brazilian slums employ an externalist and scholastic point of view (Bourdieu 1990), as they explain politics in the slum through electoral and governmental politics, and notions of clientelism. With regard to the latter, slum politics certainly contains clientelist practices, but cannot be explained according to conventional clientelist notions which imply a rigid hierarchical nature.

Explaining how slum politics overlaps with, but is distinct from, electoral and governmental politics, I follow Partha Chatterjee's theorising on popular politics, conceptualised as those 'contrary mobilisations' that may have 'transformative effects … among the supposedly unenlightened sections of the population' (idem:49). Chatterjee sees the realm of popular politics as, what he calls, "political society". Those who are not considered 'proper members of civil society and are not regarded as such by the institutions of the state' (idem:38) enter political society, defined as 'the terrain of the heterogeneous social, where multiple and flexible policies were put into operation, producing multiple and strategic responses from population groups seeking to adapt to, cope with, or make use of these [governmental] policies' (idem:137). In an attempt to come to an understanding of 'the politics of the governed', Chatterjee distinguishes the politics of marginalised people from the politics of the state apparatus and the government. In his view, popular politics should not be understood as "pre-political" and backward, but as a politics with its own parameters and logics, 'different from that of the elite' (idem:39). Popular politics does 'not necessarily presume any particular institutional form' although it is often 'conditioned by the functions and activities of modern governmental systems that have now become part of the expected functions of government anywhere' (2004:3). Following Chatterjee, I positioned slum politics in heterogeneous time of modernity, emerging from the encounter with modernity (Chatterjee 2004:7, 8). I located slum politics in the intersections between, on the one hand, modern needs for progress and, on the other hand, intricate needs and aspirations directed towards projects of solidarity, care, and the desire to counter processes of abandonment.

My reservation to Chatterjee's theorisations is that he presents popular politics as a residual category, defined as derived from governmental politics. I argued instead that slum politics is not primarily reactive to or derived from governmental politics, but co-exists with it as it is constituted in slum dwellers' needs and aspirations. This is clear when one examines the absence of an abstract notion of "the state" in slum dwellers' ways of talking about and imagining power.

Zeroing in on the 2004 municipal elections as a critical event, this book showed the

overlap between slum politics and electoral politics. I document how electoral politics penetrates into the slum and contaminates slum politics. Electoral politics offers opportunities for slum dwellers to strive for their needs and aspirations, as politicians and candidates actively look for connections with slum dwellers. Community leaders employ this moment to negotiate with candidates to garner resources for the community and themselves. However, electoral politics entails the possible risk of steering away from community interests into issues of self-interested yearnings for power and money. Two case studies showed how attempts of community leaders to manoeuvre in the realm of electoral politics in such ways as to also make money, cater to needs and aspirations of fellow slum dwellers, and steer clear of accusations of being self-interested. The community leaders worked as *cabos eleitorais*, political canvassers, for political candidates, while trying to keep up an image of working purely for the community. In addition, I show the spectacular nature of politics, as festivities and images of influence, affluence, and opulence, orchestrated by politicians and community leaders, are part of the attractive dimension of electoral politics.

The book also presents a case study of encounters between slum politics and governmental politics. Parts of Chão de Estrelas were planned to be regenerated by a large World Bank funded slum upgrading programme. I analyse the preamble of the programme and how it affected the population of the slum. I studied how the programme became real, in the sense of becoming part of people's imagination of order, without presenting anything tangible or visible. With reference to Bruno Latour's work, I argue that the ambiguity which existed around the programme actually called it into existence. The centripetal forces of rumours and different opinions circulating, construct a vacuum in which an object is created. I argued that a project creates a context in which it becomes real, through rumours and 'little solidities' (Latour 1996:45), like meetings, surveys, maps, aerial photographs, offices, brochures, registers, maps, surveyors and their reports, and census stickers. I also argued that the ways in which slum dwellers perceived of, what I saw as, "hard facts" of the programme resonate with Latour's notion of the *factish*. For slum dwellers, no difference exists between "hard facts" and rumours, gossip, or other social fabrications. The crux of the matter is that, for slum dwellers, both social fabrications and the "hard facts" generated by programmes like the slum upgrading programme, are constantly subject to change. In the uncertainty and provisionality of life in the slum, "hard facts" are converted into an ephemeral and unpredictable category.

Returning to the notion of heterogeneous modernity, I showed how the slum upgrading programme, through Foucauldian techniques of government, introduced modern and utopian aspirations to the margins of the political order. The programme presented redemptive messages of bringing progress and a homogenised kind of beauty, after a period of suffering. In addition, it struck responsive chords in different discursive registers of slum dwellers, who approached it simultaneously with hope,

cynicism and despair. I argued that the modern project of slum upgrading affected slum dwellers in their most vulnerable places: their homes, neighbourhoods, and possibilities for work. As a consequence, feelings of despair, evoking fears of being ignored as a person with specific needs and aspirations, hit hard in the lives of marginalised slum dwellers.

I also examine how community leaders deal with the programme. I demonstrate how they employed the slum upgrading programme as an opportunity to perform their leadership, gain prestige, establish connections, articulate their fellow slum dwellers' needs and aspirations, and generate a personal income.

As the slum is an extremely violent environment, this book also analyses how slum dwellers coped with violence. Next to the symbolic and structural violence of severe discrimination, slum dwellers face acts of violence on a daily basis, like fights, assaults, and shoot-outs, often related to drug trade. Community leaders and drug traders maintain a tacit balance by which they steer clear of contact with each other. Slum dwellers, I showed, perceive of violence as extra-ordinary through acts of mentioning it, reflecting upon it, avoiding it, and expressing aspirations for a life without it. In contrast, they also see violence as normal, as it is an everyday life experience with which they deal in sometimes light-hearted ways.

Furthermore, I argued that, whereas actual violence occurs at random, potential violence is structured and structuring. Acknowledging potential violence, slum dwellers adapt their lives in order to avoid actual violence. With time, events of actual violence "fade" into potential violence as people categorise acts of violence in their understandings of the possibilities of violence. Dealing with potential violence, I showed how slum dwellers ban violence discursively from their personal lives by depicting it as related to 'the other' and 'elsewhere'. In addition, they adhere to moral categories which define those who die from violence as evil, as such seeing their death as a good thing which rids the community of wrong-doers. I concluded that the paradox of violence being both extraordinary and normal remains, especially when violence and crime penetrate into private lives and possibilities of "othering" become limited.

Turning again to the intersection between slum politics and governmental politics, I argue that the concept of citizenship does not resonate with the lives of slum dwellers who reside in sites where citizenship rights per definition do not hold. Part of the violence slum dwellers face is related to the intrusive workings of the state-designed project of registered citizenship, which centres on the compulsory carrying of identity cards. This project, set up under the label of enhancing citizenship and security, had opposite results for slum dwellers. Instead of being recognised as citizens and connected to the state through their identity cards, they are discriminated and approached in violent ways by the police who consider them, not as citizens, but as criminals. In contrast to their general fear of the police, slum dwellers establish intimate connections through their identity cards by turning to known politicians, officials, police officers,

and other state representatives in attempts to obtain cards for free. Community leaders, organising meetings with politicians and police officers where identity cards are dealt out for free, play a key role in facilitating and articulating this manifestation of slum politics.

Homo sacer and the slum dweller

"Sacred man"

Analysing the practices of slum dwellers and the predicaments that they face in their everyday lives, displays many similarities with Giorgio Agamben's description of the figure of *homo sacer* (1998). However, the risk in connecting philosophical arguments to empirical realities is that of mystifying empirical reality with a veil of abstractions. Whilst not denying the analytical strength and rightly unsettling insights provided by Agamben's theorisations, I distance myself from a fashionable reading of this work which equates the philosophical category of *homo sacer* and the empirical reality of slum dwellers. I argue that making slum dwellers and *homo sacer* equivalent results in yet another attempt to depict slum dwellers as "the other". In doing so, this view of slum dwellers coincides to a large extent with the stigmatising perceptions of middle class people on slum dwellers as "the other" fundamentally different from "us". Before taking this argument further, I present a summary of the debate on *homo sacer.*

Homo sacer, "sacred man", is a figure from archaic Roman law. He is the man that 'may be killed and yet not sacrificed' (Agamben 1998:2). One can kill *homo sacer* without being prosecuted, as such *homo sacer* is "banned" from the protection of laws and the political order, the *ius humanum*. In addition, *homo sacer* cannot be used for ritual sacrifice, he is devoid of any value for the gods according to the *ius divinum*. He cannot be sacrificed as 'he is not worthy of this gesture of honour before the divine' (Hansen & Stepputat 2005:17). Agamben re-constitutes the value of this figure, showing how in today's world many people are "sacred" (cf Diken & Laustsen 2005). *Homo sacer* is man who is abandoned by law, outlawed so to speak, and as such no longer under the protection of law. This is man who is allowed to be killed, or allowed to let die (Biehl 2005, Hansen & Stepputat 2006).

Inclusionary exclusion

Agamben shows how *homo sacer* is not simply excluded from the law and the political order, but still included in it by being the manifestation of its antithesis. He turns to the Greek concepts of *zoē* and *bios*. Although both concepts can be translated as 'life', they imply an important difference. *Zoē* expresses 'the simple fact of living common to all living beings (animals, men, or gods)' (Agamben 1998:1). It is the simple natural life or, a concept Agamben often uses, 'bare life'. *Bios*, on the other hand, is 'the form or way of

living proper to an individual or group' (Agamben 1998:1) consisting of more qualities than bare life. *Bios* is political life.

The modern, Western, political order, based in the polis, the 'city of men' with its politically qualified life, is founded in the exclusion of bare life. However, simultaneously, bare life (*zoē*) is still related to the political life (*bios*), because the latter exists in pointing at what it is not, its antithesis, namely bare life. Moreover, as political life is a qualified form of bare life, bare life is always included in it. Hence, while bare life is excluded by the modern political order, it simultaneously forms its foundation. Bare life is expelled from law but still "under the spell" of law by representing its exception (Agamben 1998). Veena Das and Deborah Poole, following this line of reasoning, argue that the political order 'is imagined as an always incomplete project that must constantly be spoken of – and imagined – through an invocation of the wilderness, lawlessness, and savagery that not only lies outside its jurisdiction but also threatens it from within' (2004:7). As such, *homo sacer*, embodying bare life, relates to the political order through an inclusionary exclusion. The law still relates to him, but only in the abandonment by this very law. *Homo sacer*'s excluded position is included in the political order as the antithesis of a citizen, as they are presented as "killable" bodies (Das & Poole 2004, Biehl 2005).

Why slum dwellers are not homines sacri

It may be argued that the heavy stigmatisation of slum dwellers, viewing them as dangerous and criminal people and even making them nonpersons, judges them devoid of any value. They become a kind of "living dead" (Lemke 2005:3). This is what João Biehl, writing about Brazilian poor with AIDS, refers to as 'the continuous local production of social death' (2005:250). The stigmatisation renders the very existence of the urban poor undesirable. From Agamben's theories, it seems indeed a small step to depict slum dwellers as the concrete and physical expression of the notion of *lebensunwertes Leben*, life unworthy of being lived, a political category actively articulated under Nazi rule during the Second World War, with terrible consequences. In this line of thought, the foremost example of *homo sacer* is the Jew in a concentration camp. Jews were officially stripped of their civil rights before being slaughtered, considered as nonpersons who could be killed without being punished or feeling guilty (Bauman 1989). Jews were considered a cancer that had to be cut out in order to maintain a healthy body of the people (*Volkskörper*). In chapter 1, I documented how similar views formed the base for slum eradication which was supposed to "cure" the city as a whole.

Whereas in Roman times *homines sacri* were primarily located outside of the gates of the polis, coinciding with barbarians, in modern times they became situated in the midst of the polis, bordered-off in camps (cf Agamben 1998, Diken and Laustsen 2005). Yet, I

argue that the slum cannot be put on a par with a concentration camp. I am highly critical of authors such as Diken and Laustsen, for example, who perceive the slum as a site 'in which it is easy enough to recognise the camp' (2005:9). Diken and Laustsen take up the paradigm of the camp as introduced by Agamben and look for its manifestations in the current world. However, I contend, they all too easily switch from abstract philosophical paradigms to empirical anecdotes and back again. Lemke warns against depicting the camp as a 'homogenous zone where differences collapse' (2005:8), and blames Agamben for comprehending the border between bare life and political life, hence between those excluded and those included, as a line – although a gradually moving one (Agamben 1998:122). I agree with Lemke that this border should better be understood as a 'staggered zone' (2005:8) instead of a line and share his worries that Agamben's categorisation leaves no room for internal differentiations or classifications. Further, I argue that we cannot justify putting slum dwellers on a par with *homo sacer*.

I present six reasons why Brazilian slum dwellers do not coincide with *homo sacer*. Firstly, slum dwellers are not officially abandoned by law. They are *de jure* considered citizens, communicated in laws, identity cards, and participatory programmes (see chapter 8). They can claim certain legal guarantees and formal procedures (cf Lemke 2005). Of course, in practice, applying for the protection of the law is often hard for the disenfranchised as consequence of thriving institutionalised discrimination which uses a double standard to measure citizenship. It is true that the killing of slum dwellers often does not result in any prosecution of the perpetrator, which is similar to the situation of *homo sacer*. As I show, the police are known to take an attitude which implies that each slum dweller killed is one less problem, and slum dwellers use moral categories that clearly allow certain persons to die. 'Thieves murder thieves', commonly heard after a homicide, presents this death in a positive light, arguing that the community gets rid of "bad persons". However, arguments in favour of a coincidence between slum dwellers and *homo sacer* on this point, pass over the fact that slum dwellers are not completely stripped of their citizenship rights like Jews in Auschwitz. The discrepancy which they experience between their *de jure* and *de facto* status may make their situation all the more poignant, but they cannot be considered *homines sacri*. They are not completely and officially abandoned by law. Likewise, they are not completely abandoned by middle-class and elite through personal connections, the second point of difference.

Secondly, next to their recognition by law, slum dwellers cannot be considered *homo sacer* because of the connections they establish and maintain with outsiders. Whereas *homo sacer* is completely cut off from the city of men, slum dwellers establish and maintain a certain rate of connectivity with the world outside the slum. Through personal connections, often through community leaders, they are being recognised as persons. This is different from *homo sacer* who, according to Agamben, was considered a wolf that lived outside the city (1998).

The third reason is related to the second. The dominant image of the slum dweller is

as a dangerous criminal (see chapters 1 and 8). Slum dwellers are considered enemies who are feared. This contradicts the definition of *homo sacer*, who is de-humanised and converted into a nonperson. *Homo sacer* coincides with the Jew whose humanity was stripped off in the Holocaust. As he was not produced as an enemy, but as debris, it was deemed completely rational to destroy him as he was already made into a "nothing" with which no relation existed. This book showed that similar images are experienced by slum dwellers as they often find themselves at the edge of being ignored and abandoned. However, these images are countered by the image of the slum dweller as the enemy. Whereas *homo sacer* is harmless, the enemy is feared as he is dangerous. Whereas *homo sacer* is a nonperson, the enemy has a real and threatening presence (cf Bauman 1989).

The fourth reason why slum dwellers do not coincide with the bare life of *homo sacer*, is that they embody a form of politically qualified life, or *bios*. Their slum politics, I showed in this book, present its own dynamics and centres on needs and aspirations which emerge in the slum. Through slum politics, slum dwellers strive to be connected and recognised, and act against abandonment. They relate to governmental and electoral politics in attempts to create access to material and intangible resources and achieve – even if piecemeal – recognition for who they are, and for their needs and aspirations. As the potential of slum politics is disavowed in the current political order, the political qualities it confers to life in the slum are of a fundamentally different order. Yet, it cannot be denied that through slum politics a political quality is assigned to life in the slum, which makes it not just *zoē*, but *bios*.

Fifthly, slum dwellers occupy a different position from *homo sacer* in the political and economic spheres of the "city of men". Whereas *homo sacer* is completely redundant, slum dwellers are needed in the workings of the political system and the economy. Politically, slum dwellers are necessary to legitimate programmes, to render votes to politicians, and to give shape to a "constituency" and to, what is considered as, a body of "citizens". Economically, they still form an enormous pool of potential cheap labour. Although unemployment rates are sky-high and the economy in the slum increasingly has its own dynamics – as chapter 4 showed – slum dwellers are still needed to keep the wider economy going. Next to the indispensable – although personally replaceable – participation in large enterprises, their 'petty commerce, small-scale manufacturing and personal services' are of great importance to the well-functioning of the economy at large (Roberts 1995:2).

Finally, slum dwellers are, unlike *homo sacer*, not a small minority in the political order. On the contrary, looking at the city of Recife, they form a majority, as they consist of over half of the city's population. Similarly, when Mike Davis writes about the "planet of slums" (2006), he is not writing about an interesting but relatively small phenomenon, instead, he is writing about 'the fastest growing, and most unprecedented, social class on earth' (2006:178). It is exactly at the cross-point between

marginalisation and the ever increasing numbers of the marginalised that I have located slum politics. Against Chatterjee (2004), I argue that slum dwellers cannot be depicted as a residual category of life, living in a residual time. Slums are not Foucauldian "empty zones" where abnormality reigns (cf Diken & Laustsen 2005). This perception coincides with the middle class view on slums and only serves to "other" slum dwellers by making them different from "normal" citizens. Instead, as I showed in this book, slums are full of human needs and aspirations, full of politically qualified life, and active strivings against abandonment.

Slum dwellers: part of the multitude?

This book also shows that slum dwellers cannot be viewed as part of *homo sacer*'s active double, the multitude (Hardt & Negri 2000). The multitude, the Spinozan concept reworked by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, is the broad category of denizens all over the world 'whose labour is directly or indirectly exploited by and subjected to capitalist modes of production and reproduction" (Hardt & Negri: 2000:52). Notwithstanding the attraction of their attempt to revitalise Marxist approaches, slum dwellers cannot be regarded part of the multitude. Whereas the multitude, as the 'power that naked life could become' (Hardt & Negri 2000:366) or 'the potentiality of naked life' (Diken & Laustsen 2005: 151) establishes its revolutionary potential through disconnecting from the political order, slum dwellers establish themselves through their strivings for connections and recognition. While 'the multitude is a form of disorganisation … defined by its singularity, its exteriority to the state and society' (Diken & Laustsen 2005: 153), slum dwellers organise themselves through slum politics which act against a fear of abandonment. Moreover, the multitude, like *homo sacer*, tends to be a residual concept, a container in which everyone exploited and marginalised is stacked up and, optimistically, attributed with revolutionary potential. In contrast, slum politics does not aim at a physical confrontation with the political system which, echoing Agamben, sets out to leave slum dwellers downtrodden for its own reproduction. I do not aggrandise the revolutionary potential of slum politics, as this book showed that the goal of residents of Chão de Estrelas, 'is not *resistance* but simply *existence*' (Scheper-Hughes 1992:533).

Towards an ethnography of political possibility

In Agamben's wake, many anthropologists have started viewing the margins of the political order as camps and those who dwell there as *homo sacer*, while zeroing in on the processes that create these margins. A detrimental consequence of this is that it tends to move anthropology away from what it is good at, namely showing what is at stake for people of flesh and blood and how they organise their lives. Focusing on large mechanisms of exclusion in the political system, anthropology tends to ignore the

practices, needs, and aspirations of the people subjected to them. In other words, anthropology's attention runs a risk of being distracted from the ways in which those labelled *homo sacer* organise their lives and shape their politics, into depicting them as poor and defenceless (cf Collins 2008). However, I argue, anthropology should exactly be taking up the task of showing the politics of the marginalised.

I emphasise that slum politics, grounded in needs and aspirations of marginalised people, in its difference from and creative entwinement with governmental and electoral politics, opens up spaces in which a political and economic order is made thinkable in ways previously unthinkable (cf Escobar 2001, Gibson-Graham 2005). Slum politics stretches out to political horizons disavowed and neglected by the dominant political system. Although the current exclusionary political system may be unyielding in the short term, it is my contention that the spaces that are being created through slum politics carry a potential for political possibilities. Slum politics foregrounds different imaginings of the political and economic order.

If anthropology studies the potential present in the margins, expressed in mundane practices and utopian aspirations, it can contribute to political possibilities in which slum dwellers, currently discriminated against and excluded, are recognised as 'full human beings' (Boff & Boff 1987:8). Perhaps the protagonists of this book, the community leaders, from the provisionality and precariousness of the margins, can help find a way to imagine novel political possibilities.

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Summary

This book sets out to contribute to the pursuit of 'making nonpersons full human beings' (Boff & Boff:1987:8). It provides insights in the lives of residents of the slum of "Chão de Estrelas" in Recife, Brazil. I argue that slum dwellers should not be mystified and misrecognised as "the other", as different from "normal" citizens, because of their marginalised position. I show that the slum is, in fact, an eminently knowable world. This book presents how slum dwellers, directed by local *líderes comunitários*, community leaders, strive for material and intangible resources and engage in utopian projects. I argue that the needs and aspirations of these people, who are at constant risk of being ignored, disconnected, and abandoned, emerge from their yearnings for recognition and connectivity, and a fear of abandonment. To understand this life in the slum, I focus on the ways slum dwellers attempt to realise their needs and aspirations, modes of operating which I call "slum politics".

Chapter 1 defines slum politics as grounded in the needs and aspirations of those who live in the margins. Drawing on the work of Oscar Lewis (1959, 1965), it analyses how life in the slum, through stigmatisation and a long history of marginalisation, is reproduced in ways that are fundamentally different from middle- and upper-class people. This difference, expressed in particular needs and aspirations, is not generated because slum dwellers are a different kind of people, but because have they been structurally segregated in the dominant political and economic order. This chapter documents how these particular needs and aspirations, although not solely held by slum dwellers, are more emphatically and urgently present in their lives in the margins of the political and economic order, and have material, intangible and utopian dimensions. Material needs exist, for instance, for money, food, and employment. Intangible, or social, needs can be viewed in attempts to establish connections to all kinds of people and to gain prestige. Utopian aspirations find their expression in slum dwellers' cravings for solidarity, a better environment, and a desire to be connected to the world instead of being ignored by it.

This chapter coins the concept of slum politics as the ongoing and never finished endeavour of slum dwellers of creating connections and possibilities which break off all the time. Slum politics, driven by attempts to be connected to the political and economic order, centres on the notion of connectivity, the intricate face-to-face relations between persons which need to be constantly maintained, and a fear abandonment, which means being forsaken and excluded by everybody. It includes practices in the realms of family life, making a living, and dreaming about the future.

Chapter 2 provides a portrait of community leadership. It shows how community leaders are the main facilitators of slum politics, as they articulate and consolidate needs and aspirations of their fellow slum dwellers, which they, being slum dwellers

themselves, know well. Community leaders distinguish themselves from other slum dwellers by their talent to establish and maintain myriad connections, both to other slum dwellers and people outside the slum. Through these connections they attempt to create access to resources, to gain prestige, and arrive at recognition of their needs and those of their fellow slum dwellers.

Community leaders also need their connections in order to make a living. They engage in the realm of electoral politics, looking for resources and prestige. Yet, their practices inevitably implicate them in particular tensions between opposing dimensions. They are confronted with the diverging expectations of fellow slum dwellers. This results in tensions of love for the community versus self-interest, and between the expectation that community leaders derive prestige and resources through electoral politics and the accusation that they are contaminated by electoral political interests. Slum dwellers are attracted by electoral politics' image of opulence and possibilities beyond compare. Meanwhile, they distrust involvement in it, as it seemingly marginalises community issues in favour of assuming and maintaining public positions and making money.

Chapter 3 introduces the community leaders Ovídio, Creuza, and Zezinho, their personalities, their projects, their operational styles, and their competition. It pays attention to how they articulate and consolidate needs and aspirations of their fellow slum dwellers, and operate between the tensions introduced in chapter 2. Each leader's trajectory towards becoming a leader is presented, including their historical record of achievements and their thematic interests, comprising issues in which they specialise, which allow them to establish connections with people around specific topics. Three case studies are presented, one on each community leader, closely examining how they give shape to slum politics in their projects.

Chapter 4 discusses how ordinary life in the slum is lived, through narrating histories of how four families in the slum organise their lives. These stories shed light on the way the economy is lived in a site where unemployment is high, self-employment often the only way to make a living, and allowances form a great part of the money coming in. I show a particular economic dynamic, where much of the money remains circulating within the slum, with a specific gendered labour division, an emphasis on connections, gift-giving, and a social use of money.

In Chapter 5, I analyse how slum politics is intertwined with, but different from, electoral and governmental politics. I follow Partha Chatterjee's theorising on popular politics, conceptualised as those 'contrary mobilisations' that may have 'transformative effects … among the supposedly unenlightened sections of the population' (2004:49). Chatterjee distinguishes the politics of marginalised people from the politics of the state apparatus and the government, and argues that the former should not be understood as "pre-political" and backward, but as a politics with its own parameters and logics, 'different from that of the elite' (idem:39). My reservation to Chatterjee's theorisations is

that he presents popular politics as a residual category, derived from governmental politics. I argue instead that slum politics is not primarily reactive to or derived from governmental politics, but co-exists with it as it is constituted in the needs and aspirations of slum dwellers.

Chapter 6, zeroing in on the 2004 municipal elections, shows the overlap between slum politics and electoral politics. It documents how electoral politics penetrates into the slum and contaminates slum politics. Community leaders employ the moment of the elections to negotiate with candidates to garner resources for the community and themselves. However, electoral politics entails the possible risk of steering away from community interests into issues of self-interested yearnings for power and money. Two case studies show attempts of community leaders, as political canvassers, to manoeuvre in the realm of electoral politics in such ways as to also make money, cater to needs and aspirations of fellow slum dwellers, and steer clear of accusations of being self-interested.

Chapter 7 presents a case study of encounters between slum politics and governmental politics. Parts of Chão de Estrelas were planned to be regenerated by a large World Bank funded slum upgrading programme. I analyse the preamble of the programme, how it affected the population of the slum, and how community leaders dealt with it. With reference to Bruno Latour's work, I argue that the ambiguity which existed around the programme actually called it into existence. I contend that a project creates a context in which it becomes real, through rumours and 'little solidities' (Latour 1996:45), like meetings, surveys, maps, aerial photographs, offices, brochures, registers, maps, surveyors and their reports, and census stickers.

I also argue that the programme affected slum dwellers in their most vulnerable places: their homes, neighbourhoods, and possibilities for work. As a consequence, feelings of despair, evoking fears of being ignored as a person with specific needs and aspirations, hit hard in the lives of slum dwellers.

Chapter 8 analyses how life in the slum is framed by violence. Next to the symbolic and structural violence of discrimination, slum dwellers face acts of violence on a daily basis, like fights, assaults and shoot-outs, often related to drug trade. Community leaders and drug traders maintain a tacit balance by which they steer clear of contact with each other. Slum dwellers, I show, perceive of violence as extraordinary through acts of mentioning it, reflecting upon it, avoiding it, and expressing aspirations for a life without it. In contrast, they also see violence as normal, as it is an everyday life experience.

Furthermore, this chapter argues that, whereas actual violence occurs at random, potential violence is structured and structuring. Dealing with potential violence, slum dwellers ban violence discursively from their personal lives by depicting it as related to 'the other' and 'elsewhere'. In addition, they adhere to moral categories which define those who die from violence as evil, as such seeing their death as a good thing which

rids the community of wrong-doers.

Turning again to the intersection between slum politics and governmental politics, the chapter argues that the concept of citizenship does not resonate with the lives of slum dwellers who reside in sites where citizenship rights per definition do not hold. Part of the violence slum dwellers face is related to the intrusive workings of the state-designed project of registered citizenship, which centres on the compulsory carrying of identity cards. Slum dwellers, instead of being recognised as citizens through their identity cards, are discriminated and approached in violent ways by the police who consider them as criminals.

Chapter 9, as a conclusion, argues once more against the mystification and "othering" of slum dwellers, and distances them from the philosopher Giorgio Agamben's notion of *homo sacer* (1998, 2005). Slum dwellers do not coincide with *homo sacer*, as they are not officially abandoned by law and maintain personal connections with people outside the slum. Further, the dominant image of the slum dweller as a dangerous criminal separates him from *homo sacer*, who is harmless. Moreover, slum politics assigns a political quality to life in the slum, which makes it a politically qualified life (*bios*) instead of the bare life (*zoē*) of *homo sacer*. Slum dwellers' position in the political and economic order, although marginalised, is different from the position of *homo sacer*, who exists outside of the order. Finally, in contrast to *homo sacer*, slum dwellers are not a minority, but a fast growing social class which will soon exist of more than half of the world's population. I incite anthropologists to study not only the general exclusionary workings of political systems, but also the mundane practices and utopian aspirations of people living in the margins, as an analysis of these may help to imagine novel political possibilities.

Samenvatting

Dit boek streeft ernaar bij te dragen aan de poging om 'van non-personen hele mensen te maken' (Boff & Boff: 1987:8). Het biedt inzicht in de levens van bewoners van de sloppenwijk "Chão de Estrelas" in Recife, Brazilië. Ik stel dat deze mensen niet gemistificeerd en miskend moeten worden als "de ander", als anders dan "normale" burgers, vanwege hun gemarginaliseerde positie. Ik toon aan dat een sloppenwijk in feite een in hoge mate kenbare wereld is. Dit boek laat zien hoe wijkbewoners, geleid door lokale *líderes comunitários*, gemeenschaps-leiders, zich inspannen om materiële en immateriële middelen te verkrijgen en deelnemen aan utopische projecten. Ik beweer dat de behoeften en aspiraties van deze mensen, die in een continu risico verkeren om te worden genegeerd, "ontkoppeld" en in de steek gelaten, voortvloeien uit hun verlangens naar erkenning en "connectiviteit" en een angst om verlaten te worden. Om dit leven in een sloppenwijk te kunnen begrijpen, focus ik op de manieren waarin sloppenwijkbewoners proberen hun behoeften en aspiraties te realiseren, handelwijzen die ik "sloppen-politiek" noem.

Hoofdstuk 1 definieert sloppen-politiek als gegrond in the behoeften en aspiraties van hen die in de marges leven. Gebruik makend van het werk van Oscar Lewis (1959, 1965), analyseert het hoe het leven in de sloppenwijk, door stigmatisering en een lange geschiedenis van marginalisatie, wordt gereproduceerd op manieren die fundamenteel anders zijn dan die van de middenklasse en de elite. Dit verschil, uitgedrukt in specifieke behoeften en aspiraties, wordt niet gegenereerd omdat sloppenwijk-bewoners een ander soort mensen zijn, maar omdat ze structureel afgezonderd zijn in de dominante politieke en economische orde. Dit hoofdstuk maakt duidelijk hoe deze specifieke behoeften en aspiraties, hoewel niet slechts aanwezig onder sloppenwijkbewoners, nadrukkelijker en pregnanter aanwezig zijn in hun levens in de marges van de politieke en economische orde. Deze behoeften en aspiraties hebben materiële, immateriële en utopische dimensies. Materiële behoeften zijn er, bijvoorbeeld, voor geld, voedsel en werkgelegenheid. Immateriële, of sociale, behoeften bestaan in pogingen om verbindingen aan te gaan met allerlei soorten mensen en prestige te verwerven. Utopische aspiraties zijn uitgedrukt in de verlangens van sloppenwijkbewoners naar solidariteit, een beter milieu en naar een verbinding met de wereld in plaats van te worden genegeerd. Dit hoofdstuk introduceert het concept van sloppen-politiek als de doorlopende en nooit afgeronde onderneming van sloppenwijkbewoners om verbindingen en mogelijkheden te creëren die telkens weer afbrokkelen. Sloppen-politiek, gedreven door pogingen tot verbinding met de politieke en economische orde, concentreert zich op de notie van connectiviteit, de complexe relaties van aangezicht tot aangezicht die constant onderhouden dienen te worden, en een angst om uitgesloten en verlaten te worden door iedereen. Het bevat praktijken

gerelateerd aan het familie-leven, het verwerven van een inkomen en dromen over de toekomst.

Hoofdstuk 2 schetst een portret van gemeenschaps-leiderschap. Het toont hoe gemeenschapsleiders in belangrijke mate sloppen-politiek vorm geven, doordat zij de behoeften en aspiraties van hun mede-wijkbewoners articuleren en consolideren. Ze kennen deze behoeften en aspiraties goed, aangezien ze zelf in de sloppenwijk wonen. Gemeenschapsleiders onderscheiden zich van andere wijkbewoners door hun talent om velerlei verbindingen aan te gaan en te onderhouden, zowel met mede-wijkbewoners als met mensen buiten de wijk. Door deze contacten pogen zij toegang te creëren tot bepaalde middelen, prestige op te bouwen en erkenning te krijgen voor de behoeften en aspiraties van henzelf en hun mede-wijkbewoners. Gemeenschapsleiders hebben hun contacten ook nodig om een inkomen te verwerven. Ze zijn actief op het gebied van electorale politiek, op zoek naar de nodige middelen en prestige. Echter, hun praktijken plaatsen hen onherroepelijk in bepaalde spanningsvelden tussen contrasterende dimensies. Ze worden geconfronteerd met de uiteenlpende verwachtingen van hun mede-wijkbewoners. Dit resulteert in spanningsvelden tussen liefde voor de gemeenschap enerzijds en eigenbelang anderzijds en tussen de verwachting dat gemeenschapsleiders prestige en de nodige middelen verkrijgen door electorale politiek enerzijds en de beschuldiging dat ze besmet zijn met electoraal politieke belangen anderzijds. Sloppenwijkbewoners weten zich aangetrokken tot het beeld van de rijkdommen en onvoorstelbare mogelijkheden die electorale politiek biedt. Tegelijkertijd wantrouwen ze ieder raakvlak ermee, omdat het de belangen van de gemeenschap ondergeschikt lijkt te maken aan zaken die betrekking hebben op het verkrijgen en behouden van publieke posities en het verdienen van geld.

Hoofdstuk 3 introduceert de gemeenschapsleiders Ovídio, Creuza en Zezinho en hun persoonlijkheden, projecten, operationele stijlen en onderlinge competitie. Het besteedt aandacht aan hoe zij de behoeften en aspiraties van hun mede-wijkbewoners articuleren en consolideren en hoe ze opereren in de spanningsvelden zoals genoemd in hoofdstuk 2. Het leiderschapstraject van iedere leider wordt gepresenteerd met een overzicht van hun prestaties en hun thematische interesses, bestaande uit zaken waarin ze zich specialiseren en hen in de gelegenheid stellen verbindingen aan te gaan met mensen rondom specifieke onderwerpen. In drie cases, een over iedere gemeenschapsleider, wordt in detail getoond hoe zij vorm geven aan sloppen-politiek in hun projecten.

Hoofdstuk 4 bespreekt hoe het "gewone" leven in de sloppenwijk wordt geleefd, door middel van verhalen over hoe vier families in de sloppenwijk hun leven organiseren. Deze verhalen bieden inzicht in de manier waarop de economie wordt geleefd op een plek waar werkloosheid hoog is, "voor jezelf beginnen" vaak de enige manier is om wat te verdienen en uitkeringen een groot deel vormen van het binnenvloeiende geld. Ik wijs op een typische economische dynamiek, waarin veel geld

blijft circuleren in de wijk, met een specifieke man-vrouw verdeling van de arbeid, een nadruk op connecties, het geven van geschenken en een sociaal gebruik van geld.

In hoofdstuk 5 analyseer ik hoe sloppen-politiek verweven is met, maar verschillend van, electorale en gouvernementele politiek. Ik volg Partha Chatterjee's theorie over volks-politiek, geconceptualiseerd als de 'tegengestelde mobilisaties' welke 'transformatieve effecten' kunnen hebben 'onder de zogenaamd onverlichte delen van de bevolking' (2004:49). Chatterjee maakt onderscheid tussen the politiek van gemarginaliseerde mensen enerzijds en de politiek van staatsapparaat en overheid anderzijds. Hij stelt dat de eerste niet begrepen moet worden als "pre-politiek" en achterlijk, maar als een vorm van politiek met haar eigen parameters en logica, 'anders dan die van de elite' (idem:39). Ik ben terughoudend ten opzichte van Chatterjee's theorie wanneer hij volks-politiek presenteert als een rest-categorie, afgeleid van gouvernementele politiek. In plaats hiervan stel ik dat sloppen-politiek niet primair een reactie op of afgeleide is van gouvernementele politiek, maar, gegrond in de behoeften en aspiraties van sloppenwijk-bewoners, met haar co-existeert.

Hoofdstuk 6 richt zich op de gemeentelijke verkiezingen van 2004. Het toont de overlap tussen sloppen-politiek en electorale politiek. Het beschrijft hoe electorale politiek penetreert in de wijk en sloppen-politiek besmet. Gemeenschapsleider grijpen het moment van de verkiezingen aan om met kandidaten te onderhandelen over benodigde middelen voor de gemeenschap en voor henzelf. Echter, electorale politiek draagt het risico in zich om af te drijven van de belangen van de gemeenschap naar eigenbelang in termen van macht en geld. Twee cases laten pogingen zien van gemeenschapsleiders om, als politieke colporteurs, dusdanig te manoeuvreren in het electoraal politieke domein dat ze geld verdienen, inspelen op de behoeften en aspiraties van hun medebewoners en gevrijwaard blijven van beschuldigingen van eigenbelang.

Hoofdstuk 7 presenteert een case over het raakvlak tussen sloppen-politiek en gouvernementele politiek. Delen van Chão de Estrelas zouden worden opgeknapt middels een groot, door de Wereldbank gefinancierd, herstructureringsprogramma. Ik analyseer het voortraject van het programma, haar invloed op de inwoners van de wijk en de handelwijzen van de gemeenschapsleiders. Refererend aan het werk van Bruno Latour maak ik duidelijk dat de ambiguiteit die bestond rondom het programma eigenlijk het programma tot stand bracht. Ik ben van mening dat een project een context creëert waarin het werkelijkheid wordt, door geruchten en 'kleine soliditeiten' (Latour 1996:45), zoals vergaderingen, onderzoeken, plattegronden, luchtfoto's, kantoren, brochures, registraties, onderzoekers en hun rapporten en census-stickers. Ik ben ook van mening dat het programma de inwoners van de wijk heeft geraakt in hun meest kwetsbare plaatsen: hun thuis, hun buurt en hun werkgelegenheid. Gevoelens van wanhoop, teweeg gebracht door de angst om te worden genegeerd als een mens met bepaalde behoeften en aspiraties, zijn pijnlijk aanwezig in hun levens.

Hoofdstuk 8 toont hoe het leven in een sloppenwijk wordt gevormd door geweld. Behalve met het symbolische en structurele geweld van discriminatie, worden sloppenwijk-bewoners dagelijks geconfronteerd met gewelddadige praktijken zoals ruzies, overvallen en vuurgevechten, vaak gerelateerd aan drugshandel. Gemeenschapsleiders en drugshandelaren onderhouden een stilzwijgend evenwicht waarin ze contact met elkaar vermijden. Sloppenwijk-bewoners zien geweld als abnormaal, wat duidelijk wordt in de manier waarop ze het benoemen, erop reflecteren, het vermijden, en de wens uitspreken voor een leven zonder geweld. In contrast hiermee zien ze geweld ook als iets normaals, omdat het een alledaagse ervaring voor ze is. Verder toont dit hoofdstuk dat, terwijl daadwerkelijk geweld lukraak plaatsvindt, potentieel geweld juist gestructuurd en structurerend is. In de omgang met potentieel geweld verbannen sloppenwijkbewoners geweld op discursieve wijze naar 'de ander' en 'ergens anders'. Daarnaast hanteren zij morele categorieën die hen die sterven door geweld als slecht bestempelen, waardoor zij hun dood zien als iets goeds wat de gemeenschap verlost van onrechtplegers. Terugkerend naar het raakvlak tussen sloppen-politiek en gouvernementele politiek stelt dit hoofdstuk dat het burgerschaps-concept geen weerklank vindt in de levens van sloppenwijkbewoners die leven in plaatsen waar burgerschapsrechten per definitie met voeten worden getreden. Een deel van het geweld waarmee zij worden geconfronteerd is gerelateerd aan de indringende werking van het staatsproject van geregistreerd burgerschap, dat zich richt op het verplicht dragen van identiteitsbewijzen. Sloppenwijkbewoners, in plaats van door hun identiteitsbewijzen te worden erkend als burgers, worden gediscrimineerd en op gewelddadige wijze benaderd door de politie die hen beschouwt als criminelen.

Hoofdstuk 9, als conclusie, gaat nogmaals in tegen de mystificatie van sloppenwijk-bewoners en het idee dat ze "anders" zijn, door in te gaan tegen de vergelijking met *homo sacer*, zoals geschetst door de filosoof Giorgio Agamben (1998, 2005). Sloppenwijk-bewoners zijn niet gelijk aan *homo sacer*, omdat ze niet officieel zijn verlaten door de wet en omdat ze persoonlijke verbindingen hebben met mensen van buiten de wijk. Verder, het dominante beeld van de sloppenwijkbewoner als een gevaarlijke crimineel scheidt hem van *homo sacer*, welke ongevaarlijk is. Bovendien, door sloppen-politiek krijgt het leven in de sloppenwijk een politieke kwaliteit, door welke het wordt tot een politiek gekwalificeerd leven (*bios*) in plaats van het naakte leven (*zoē*) van *homo sacer*. De positie van sloppenwijkbewoners in de politieke en economische orde, hoewel in de marges, is anders dan die van *homo sacer*, die buiten die orde staat. Tenslotte, in tegenstelling tot *homo sacer* vormen sloppenwijkbewoners geen minderheid, maar zijn zij een een snel groeiende sociale klasse, die binnenkort zal bestaan uit meer dan de helft van de wereldbevolking. Ik roep antropologen op om niet alleen de algemene mechanismen van uitsluiting van politieke systemen te bestuderen, maar ook de alledaagse praktijken en de utopische aspiraties van mensen die in de marge leven, omdat een analyse hiervan kan helpen om nieuwe politieke mogelijkheden in kaart te brengen.

Resumo

Este livro destina-se na busca de 'fazer non-persona em completos seres humanos' (Boff & Boff:1987:8). Ele fornece idéias sobre a vida dos moradores da comunidade de "Chão de Estrelas" no Recife, Brasil. Eu argumento que moradores de comunidades carentes (favelas) não deviam ser mistificados e reconhecido erradamente como "o outro", como ser diferente de cidadãos "normais", por causa da sua posição marginalizada. Eu mostro que a comunidade carente, de fato, é um mundo que possa ser eminentamente conhecido. Este livro apresenta como moradores de comunidades carentes, dirigidos por líderes comunitários locais, lutam por recursos materiais e intangíveis e se envolvem em projetos utópicos. Eu argumento que as necessidades e as aspirações daquelas pessoas, que sempre estão em risco de serem ignoradas, desconectadas e abandonadas, surgem a apartir de seus anseios de reconhecimento e de conectividade, e o medo do abandono. Para entender esta vida na comunidade carente, eu concentro a atenção na maneira como os moradores tentam concretizar as suas necessidades e aspirações, que são modos de operar que eu chamo "política do povo".*

Capítulo 1 define política do povo como baseada nas necessidades e aspirações daquelas pessoas que vivem marginalizadas. Baseado na obra de Oscar Lewis (1959, 1965), o capítulo analisa como a vida na comunidade carente é reproduzida, através de estigmatização e uma longa história de marginalização, em maneiras fundamentalmente diferentes das pessoas da classe média e alta. Esta diferença, expressa em necessidades e aspirações particulares, não é provocada porque os moradores da comunidade carente são um tipo de gente diferente, mas porque eles foram segregados estruturalmente no sistema político e econômico dominante. Aquelas necessidades e aspirações particulares não são somente possuídas pelos moradores de favelas, mas mesmo assim este capítulo descreve como estão presentes mais enfaticamente e urgentemente em suas vidas nas margens do sistema político e econômico, e como têm dimenções materiais, intangiveis e utópicas. Existem, por exemplo, necessidades materiais por dinheiro, alimentação e emprego. Intangivelmente ou socialmente, as necessidades podem ser vistas como tentativas de estabilizar conexões com todos os tipos de pessoas e de ganhar prestígio. As aspirações utópicas encontram suas expressões na ansiedade dos moradores por solidariedade, um ambiente melhor e o desejo de ser conectado ao mundo em vez de ser ignorado por ele.

Este capítulo cria o conceito de política do povo como a tentativa contínua dos moradores de criar relações e possibilidades quais, toda hora, derretam-se. A política do povo, que é dirigida pelas tentativas de ser conectado ao sistema político e econômico, centraliza-se na noção da conectividade, nas relações pessoais intricadas que precisam ser mantidas constantamente, e no medo de abandono, que significa ser deixado na mão e excluido por todo o mundo. Isto inclui práticas nos domínios da família, ganhando a

vida e sonhando com o futuro.

Capítulo 2 oferece um retrato de liderança comunitária. Mostra como os líderes principalmente capacitam a política do povo, porque articulam e consolidam as necessidades e aspirações de seus companheiros, que eles conhecem bem, porque eles mesmos são moradores da comunidade. Líderes comunitários se destacam dos outros moradores na sua capacidade de estabelecer e manter inúmeros contatos com outros moradores e com pessoas de fora da favela. Através desses contatos eles tentam criar acessos a recursos, ganhar prestígio e chegar a um reconhecimento de suas necessidades e dos seus companheiros.

Líderes comunitários precisam também das suas conexões para poder ganhar a vida. Eles se envolvem no domínio da política eleitoral, procurando recursos e prestígio. Porém, as suas práticas inevitavelmente implicam tensões entre dimensões opostas. Eles são confrontados com expectativas divergentes dos companheiros moradores. Isto resulta em tensões entre o amor pela comunidade versus um interesse próprio, e também entre as expectativas que os líderes comunitários ganham prestígio e recursos através da política eleitoral e as acusões que eles são contaminados pelos interesses da política eleitoral. Os moradores da comunidade carente são atraidos pela imagem da política eleitoral de opulência e possibilidades inimagináveis. Ao mesmo tempo, eles desconfiam se envolver nela, porque ela parece marginalizar as questões comunitárias favorecendo assumir e manter posições públicas e ganhar dinheiro.

Capítulo 3 introduz os líderes comunitários Ovídio, Creuza e Zezinho, as suas personalidades, os seus projetos, os seus estilos operacionais bem como a sua concorrência. O capítulo presta atenção a forma como eles articulam e consolidam necessidades e aspirações dos seus companheiros moradores, e como eles operam entre as tensões que foram introduzidas no capítulo 2. É apresentado a trajetória de de cada um em se tornar líder, incluindo a sua história de conquista e seus interesses temáticos, abrangendo questões constituídas nas quais eles se especializam que lhes permite estabelecer conexões com as pessoas em torno de temas específicos. São apresentados três estudos de caso, um de cada líder comunitário, examinando atentamente como eles formaram a política do povo nos seus projetos.

Capítulo 4 debate a vida comum nas comunidades carentes, através da narrativa da história de como quatro famílias organizam as suas vidas na comunidade. Estas histórias mostram a forma como a economia é vivida num lugar onde o desemprego é elevado, onde frequentamente a única maneira de ganhar a vida é de trabalhar por conta própria e onde as pessoas em grande parte vivem dos subsídios. Eu mostro uma dinâmica econômica particular, onde grande parte do dinheiro fica circulando dentro da comunidade, com uma divisão específica de trabalho por gênero, com ênfase nas relações, troca de favores e no uso social do dinheiro.

No capítulo 5 eu analiso como a política do povo é misturado com, mas diferente da, política eleitoral e governamental. Eu sigo a teorização de Partha Chatterjee sobre a

política popular, conceitualizando a politica como 'mobilizações contrárias' que podem ter 'efeitos transformativos ... entre as camadas supostamente ignorantes da população' (2004:49). Chatterjee distingue a política de povo marginalizado da política do governo e argumenta que a primeira não deve ser entendida como "pré-política" e atrasado, mas como uma política com os seus prórios parâmetros e lógica, 'diferentes daquele da elite' (idem:39). A minha reserva em relação a teorização de Chatterjee é que ele apresenta a política popular como uma categoria residual, derivada de políticas governamentais. Eu argumento ao contrário que política do povo não é primeiramente uma reação ou uma derivação da política governamental, mas que existe ao lado dela, pois é constituída das necessidades e aspirações dos moradores da comunidade.

Capítulo 6 mostra como a política do povo coincide com a política eleitoral, focando nas eleições municipais de 2004. Descreve como a política eleitoral penetra na comunidade e contamina a política do povo. Líderes comunitários utilizam o momento das eleições para negociar com os candidatos para conseguir recursos para a comunidade e para eles mesmos. Contudo, a política eleitoral implica o possível risco de se afastar de interesses da comunidade para questões de interesse próprio como anseios de poder e dinheiro. Dois estudos de caso mostram as tentativas de líderes comunitários de manobrar no domínio da política eleitoral, de tal maneira para ganhar dinheiro, responder às necessidades e aspirações dos moradores companheiros e ficar livre de acusações de ter interesses próprios.

Capítulo 7 apresenta um estudo de caso do encontro da política do povo com a política governamental. Uma parte de Chão de Estrelas foi planejada para ser recuperada por um programa de grande desenvolvimento urbano, financiado pelo Banco Mundial. Eu analiso o preâmbulo do programa, como ele afetou a população da comunidade, e como líderes comunitários lidaram com isto. Me referindo à obra de Bruno Latour, eu argumento que a ambiguidade que existe em torno do programa atual, fundou-o. Eu alego que um projeto cria um contexto no qual ele se torna real, através de boatos e 'pequenas consistências' (Latour 1996:45), como reuniões, levantamentos, fotografias aéreas, oficinas, folhetos, registros, mapas, pesquisadores e os seus relatos, e adesivos de censo.

Eu também argumento que o programa afeta os moradores da comunidade nos seus pontos mais vulneráveis: as suas casas, vizinhanças e possibilidades de trabalho. Como consequência, surgem nas vidas dos moradores sentimentos de desespero, provocando medo de ser ignorado como pessoa com certas necessidades e aspirações.

Capítulo 8 analisa como a vida na comunidade carente é cercada por violência. Além da violência simbólica e contínua de discriminação, os moradores encaram atos de violência diariamente, como brigas, assaltos e tiroteios, frequentamente ligado ao tráfico de drogas. Líderes comunitários e traficantes mantêm um balanço tácito em que eles ficam livre de contato entre eles. Eu mostro que os moradores da comunidade percebem a violência como extraordinário, através de atos de mencioná-la, refleti-la, evitá-la, e

expressar aspirações de uma vida sem ela. Em contrapartida eles também veem violência como normal, como é uma experiência da vida cotidiana.

Além disso, este capítulo argumenta que, enquanto a violência real ocorre aleatoriamente, a violência potencial é estruturada e estruturante. Para lidar com a violência potencial, os moradores afastam a violência discursivamente de suas vidas pessoais, retratando-a como relacionada com 'o outro' e ´em outro lugar'. Além disso, eles aderem a catogarias morais que definem aqueles que morrem de violência como maus, vendo assim a morte deles como uma coisa boa que limpa a comunidade de malfeitores.

Voltando à interseção entre a política do povo e a política governamental, o capítulo argumenta que o conceito de cidadania não ressoa com a vidas dos moradores da favela, que residem em lugares onde direitos de cidadenia não são mantidos. Parte da violência que os moradores encaram está ligada às operações introsivas do projeto desempenhado pelo Estado de cidadania registrada, que incide na porta obrigatória de cartões de identidade. Em vez de ser reconhecidos como cidadões por seus cartões de identidade, os moradores da comunidade são discriminados e abordados de maneira violenta pela polícia que os considera como criminosos.

Como conclusão, capítulo 9 argumenta de novo contra a mistificação dos moradores de comunidades carentes, distanciando os da noção de *homo sacer* do filósofo Giorgio Agamben (1998, 2005). Moradores não coincidem com homo sacer, porque não são oficialmente abandonados pela lei e ainda mantêm conexões pessoais com pessoas de fora da comunidade. Além disso, a imagem dominante dos moradores, como marginais criminosos perigosos, separe-os do homo sacer que é inofensivo. Além do mais, política de povo designa uma qualidade política na vida na comunidade, que faz a vida politicamente qualificada (*bios*) em vez de uma vida nua (*zoē*) de *homo sacer*. Mesmo sendo marginalizado, a posição dos moradores no sistema político e econômico é diferente da posição de homo sacer, que existe fora do sistema. Finalmente, ao contrário de *homo sacer*, os moradores não são uma minoria, mas uma classe social rapidamente crescendo, que em pouco tempo consistirá em mais da metade da população mundial. Eu incito antropólogos em não somente estudar as operações gerais de exclusão dos sistemas políticos, mas também as práticas triviais e as aspirações utópicas das pessoas que vivem nas margens, porque uma análise daqueles poderia ajudar em imaginar novas possibilidades políticas.

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* Escolhei a tradução "política do povo" em vez de "política da favela", porque a palavra favela inclui uma conotação negativa (veja Capítulo 1).

Glossary

of frequently used Portuguese words and acronyms

Words

apoio	help
assessor	adviser
assessoria	advising
atender ao povo	"heeding the people"
aviões	"airplanes"; young boys involved in drug trade
bairro	neighbourhood
barraca	(front window) shop
bem de vida	"better-off"
bico	odd job
biscate	odd job
boca de fumo	drugs selling point
Bolsa Família	(programme of) family stipends
bronca	problem, rebuke
cabo eleitoral	political canvasser
cachaça	Brazilian rum
Câmara dos Vereadores	City Hall
capacitação	enabling
carente	deprived, poor, lacking
carro de som	car topped with speakers for casting messages and music
carteira assinada	work card
cestas básicas	packages with basic food products, at least containing a kilo of beans, sugar, flour and pasta and a litre of soy oil
coisas erradas	wrong things (related to crime)
comerciante	trader, shop-owner
comunidade	community
conhecimento	knowledge; "know-how"
conjunto residencial	residential area; block
conscientização	conscientisation; awareness-raising
crente	Protestant, Evangelical
delegado/a	representative
deputado/a estadual	member of state parliament
deputado/a federal	member of federal parliament

dona	Mrs
empregada doméstica	domestic worker (in-living)
emprego	work, employment
emprestar	to borrow
encaminhar	to pass on, direct a person
equipe	team
falar bem	speak well
favela	slum
favelado/a	slum dweller
faxina	cleaning
faxineira	domestic worker (non in-living)
fazer favores	doing favours
fazer política	doing politics
fiado	(buying) on one's name
Fome Zero	Zero Hunger; federal programme against hunger
gente	people
gente fina	"fine people"; esteemed, well-educated people
gigolô	unemployed man sustained by his wife
intimidade	intimacy (being friends)
líder comunitário	community leader
liderança	leadership; also: a leader
madrinha	godmother
mão de obra local	local work force
moreno	a dark-skinned, not black-skinned, person
morro	hill; synonym for slum
negro	a black-skinned person
obra	public work
padre	priest
pai de família	"father of a family"; a man who makes an honest living
pessoal de gabinete	office staff (of a politician)
pessoas erradas	bad persons
pobre	poor
política	(electoral) politics
prefeito	mayor
prefeitura	municipality
prestar favores	granting favours
renda	income
santinho	"little saint"; small publicity leaflet with picture of political candidate
sede	office

ser considerado	being considered; being well-known and taken seriously
serviços gerais	general services (includes all kinds of work)
seu	Mr
sustentar a família	sustain the family, making a living
tapioca	cassava root
titular	director, title-holder
trabalho	work
tráfico	drug traffic
trazer melhoria	bringing improvement
turma	group of friends
vereador	councillor
viração	"moonlighting"

Acronyms

Comul	COMissão de Urbanização e Legalização da posse da terra	Comission for Urbanisation and Legalisation of land titling
OP	Orçamento Participativo	Participatory Budgeting
PREZEIS	Plano de REgularização das Zonas Especiais de Interesse Social	Plan for Regularisation of Special Zones of Social Interest
ZEIS	Zona Especial de Interesse Social	Special Zone of Social Interest

Brazilian minimum wage

01/04/01	R$ 180
01/04/02	R$ 200
01/04/03	R$ 240
01/05/04	R$ 260
01/05/05	R$ 300
01/04/06	R$ 350
01/04/07	R$ 380
01/03/08	R$ 415

Source: www.portalbrasil.net/salariominimo

Average value Brazilian Real

August 1st 2003
1 Brazilian Real = 0.34508 US Dollar

December 30th 2006
1 Brazilian Real = 0.46911 US Dollar

Average value 1 Brazilian Real (August 2003 - December 2006): 0,40236 US Dollar*

Brazilian Real (R$)	US Dollar ($)
1	0,40
2	0,80
3	1,21
4	1,61
5	2,01
6	2,41
7	2,82
8	3,22
9	3,62
10	4,02
20	8,05
30	12,07
40	16,09
50	20,12
100	40,24
200	80,47
300	120,71
400	160,94
500	201,18
1000	402,36

* This is the value of the Brazilian Real during the period of my fieldwork (www.oanda.com)

Curriculum Vitae

Martijn Koster was born in Rotterdam on 13 November 1978. He took his MSc in Rural Development Sociology at Wageningen University. He graduated in 2003 on the thesis "*The struggle for land and public services: organisation and participation in a Cochabamba shantytown*" for which he did research on popular participation and local organisations in slums in Bolivia.

After his graduation he started a PhD in Rural Development Sociology. Between 2003 and 2006 he stayed for 21 months in Recife, Brazil, to do fieldwork. Between 2006 and 2008, he taught the MSc course "Methods, techniques and data analysis for field research" for three years, at Wageningen University. He has presented his work at several international conferences.

Currently, he is a lecturer at the Utrecht School of Governance, Utrecht University, where he teaches in sociology and organisation studies and is engaged in a research programme on urban development in Utrecht.

Completed Training and Supervision Plan, Martijn Koster

Description	Department/Institute	Month/year	Credits
I. General			
- CERES orientation programme	CERES, Utrecht	2006	5
- CERES presentation tutorials	CERES, Utrecht	2006	5
II. Research Methods and Techniques and Domain Specific Theories			
- Research Seminars Rural Development Sociology Group	WUR	2003-2008	5
III. Academic Skills			
- Convening panel 'Alternative Economies, Alternative Politics'	CERES Summerschool, Wageningen	2006	2
- Teaching Methods, Techniques and Data Analysis of Field Research	WUR	2006-2008	2
- PhD writing skills-group	WUR	2005-2006	5
IV. Presentations of research results			
- Networking community leaders in a Recife *favela* (Brazil): an ethnography on social capital	Amidst seminar, UvA, Amsterdam	2005	2
- Methodology: conducting a case study	CERES methodology workshop with Christian Lund, WUR	2005	3
- Slum politics: broker's livelihoods and political projects in a Recife *favela*	CERES Summerschool, Wageningen	2006	3
- Slum politics: community leaders, political projects and 'unofficial citizenship' in a Recife *favela* (written with Pieter de Vries)	ICA conference, Sevilla, Spain	2006	3
- Living with everyday violence in a Recife *favela*	CERES Seminar, 'Looking Through the Lens of Crisis', WUR	2007	3
- Introduction	'Exploring Alternative Modernities and Alternatives to Modernity', CERES workshop with Arturo Escobar, WUR	2007	2
- From the culture of poverty to a different ontology	CERES PhD workshop with Arturo Escobar, WUR	2007	2
- Homo sacer in the *favela*. Or not? Community leaders countering exclusion in Recife, Brazil	AAA conference, Washington DC, USA	2007	4
- Muddling along: studying the mud of urban development from a muddy river bank slum in Recife, Brazil	NALACS conference, Amsterdam	2009	3
Total			49