

The Politics of the Nobodies

Theorizing Slum Politics through a Political Ethnography of a community leader in Coque, Recife

Major thesis written by Sven da Silva as part of his Research Master in International Development Studies.

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To Jessica, Jucelia, and Suzanne who all
knew that I was full of
saudade [yearning] and *amor* [love]

*Porque a sua ira dura
só um momento;
no seu favor está a vida.
O choro pode durar uma noite,
mas a alegria vem pela manhã.
_____Salmos 30:5*

Written on wooden board next
to the door in house of residence during fieldwork

*For his anger lasts
only a moment,
but his favour lasts a lifetime;
weeping may stay for the night,
but rejoicing comes in the morning.
___Psalm 30:5*

New International Version

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

“Vocês som pra torar!”¹

“*Tchau Iesfeng* [my name in Portuguese], *Tchau*” said *Emanuel*. We just got out of the car at the airport. I laughed and said “Wait *Emanuel*, wait, I am not leaving yet”. “Wait *Emanuel*” *Jessica*, his mother, repeated while somewhat imitating my Portuguese. “*Emanuel* was shaking when he saw the airplane”, his father *Claudio* said. I guess he was a bit afraid that I would take him, the four year old, with me, as people in *Coque* where often joking that I would take him with me.

“He [me] is already crying”, said *Jessica* to the others a bit later. “No I am not!” I replied, trying to keep myself cool. I was keeping inside what I was thinking and feeling, and at the same time, I was nervous whether everything would go well at the airport, since I had no copy of the new ticket of my postponed flight.

Although this thesis is not yet finished, I believe this is the best moment to start writing the acknowledgements since I can now, sitting in the airplane, write and express myself from the heart. I am thinking about the people I am leaving behind me; the good and bad moments. Thankful for some moments and people I could meet, but also still in a shock of this ‘traumatic encounter with “The Other” as philosopher Žižek would say. It is *complicado* [complicated]. In two months, I have seen a lot and gotten *enrolado* [entangled] in *slum politics*. Perhaps this was the right time to leave.

I started thinking back at the moment *Emanuel* said goodbye, because I was trying to laugh a bit. The tears just started to get out of my eyes at a moment I did not expect them to come; in the tunnel towards the plane. I did not expect to see *Aderbal* – the grandfather of *Emanuel* and the main character of the *novela* that this thesis was – crying when saying goodbye. By doing this – laughing in difficult moments – I was doing something I had learned during my stay at the house of *Coque’s líder comunitário*.

The *Santa Cruz Futebol Clube* shirt I am wearing – a present from *Aderbal* – and *Havaianas* slippers in my luggage – a present from *Jessica*, which jokingly made me a “real Brazilian” – I now suddenly realized, are symbols; I am taking their stories with me. These stories are now also my stories to tell you the reader of this report. Having lived for two months in *Coque*, I am feeling uncomfortable in this plane full of middleclass and rich people with Germany shirts complaining about the World Cup organisation. Between these people, I feel like a mixed *Coqueiro* [someone from *Coque*]. I was – and most probably will stay – *enrolado* there. As someone from the *Comunidade Interdisciplinar de Ação Pesquisa e Aprendizagem* [CIAPA] in which I participated said, “you are now *Sven* from *Coque*”. If I could not live for two months in the house and street of *Aderbal*, I could also not experience living in *Coque* while conducting fieldwork.

However, it all started, and I could never have experienced this, if it was not for my girlfriend Suzanne. She supported me in my study and dreams, in preparation for the journey towards Brazil, and in most difficult times during my fieldwork. I value a lot the relation I have with Suzanne and I am very thankful she became my neighbour when living in Wageningen.

Next I want to thank community leader *Aderbal*, who told me a lot about his live and politics during the shared consumption of a litre of *Skol* beer, which would then become more and more litres. It was *Aderbal* and his “*doida mais legal* [crazy but nice]” family members, who put the door open for me to stay for two months with them. Although I will probably never *really*

understand him and the things he does I thank him for showing so much of his life to me. He brought me with his car to different places while telling about his work. He showed a lot about how politics in the community works, often untiringly repeating such that I could better understand.

It was his wife, *Jucelia*, whom I have also to thank a lot for many things. She made sure that I had a *bariga cheia* [a full stomach] every day, washed my clothes (while that was not necessary), and she showed me the role of religion in the lives of poor people. Through her, I witnessed how women organise their livelihood. She made sure that I was always safe and took care of me as if I was a son of her.

In addition, I have to thank *Jessica* for many nice moments. While making pizzas, she told me more about religion and her personal perspectives on a number of issues; issues their family daily face in *Coque*. Each time I helped her to make pizzas I have gotten to know her, and life in *Coque*, better. Although he probably cannot read this, it was cool playing football with *Emanuel*, my *amiguinho* [little friend]. At times, he made me feel a child again. Although it was often him who wanted to play, I have to thank him for the time of *joga* [playing] “*bola*” [football], “*piqui esconde*” [hide and seek], “*pego-pego*” [play tag], and for all the times we sang the song about the butterfly who was making chocolate [*borboletinha ta na cozinha, fazendo chocolate, amaradinha, potchi potchi* etc.]. I think *Claudio*, his father can be proud of his son. I have to thank *Claudio* for showing me the market at *Afogados* [the Drowned], for explaining some crucial slang words, and for a number of chats we had. I thank *Nino* for taking me to the *futsal* to hear all the *palavrões* [cursing] and relax at the same time. I want to thank *Anderson* and Daniela [*Dédé*] for having us [the *gringos*] at their place to watch the unexpected *chocolate* [whip] Brazil got from Germany; an example of the hospitality I noticed while staying there.

Furthermore, I have to thank *Luis de la Mora*. If it was not for him I would have slept in another place, maybe by myself, and this would not have provided me the facilities to study the things I find interesting. He passionately told me a lot about the *PREZEIS*, the history of popular mobilization, and many other topics. I want to thank everyone else of the *CLAPA*, especially *Karine*, *Daniella* and *Cynthia*, for their support and the exchange of ideas. I want to thank *Rildo* for showing me the *Ponto di Cultura*, and for the group interview that he gave to us [the students of *CLAPA*] together with *Matuto*. They both told passionately about their work, the problems they face and their plans for the future.

I thank Pieter de Vries for being a pleasant supervisor. He never told me what I should do, only what I may do, providing me with the freedom to write about my own interests. Although in this way it stays difficult to focus on a specific thing, I am thankful that he gave me the idea that this was my thesis and no one else's. Likewise, I thank Elisabet Rasch for functioning as second reader, and as such, going through the many pages of this thesis.

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Last, but certainly not least, I thank my parents. If it was not for their support I would not have gotten where I stand (or fly) now. They have put their own lives at the backstage such that we, their children, got enough attention and care. They have set examples for me as parents.

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GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATIONS

- Pernambuco: State in North-eastern Brazil.
- Recife: City in Pernambuco; 5th largest metropolitan area in Brazil.
- Olinda: Town north of Recife.
- Paulista: Town northwest of *Olinda*; parents of *Jucelia* live here.
- Ilha *Joana Bezerra*: “Island” in the centre of Recife; has a metro station.
- Capibaribe River: River stream in *Pernambuco*, its southern arm passes *Afogados*
- Ilha do Leite: “Island” north of *Ilha Joana Bezerra* bordering the *Capibaribe River*.
- Ilha do Zeca: Small Island west of *Ilha Joana Bezerra*; Naturally protected (ZEPA) area; previously named *Pitangera*.
- Coque: Slum of residence in the centre of Recife; largely a ZEIS area.
- Rua Camdoi: Street of residence in *Coque*.
- Avenida Martin Luther King: Main street to enter *Coque*, near the football field.
- Areinha: Sub-area in *Coque* (trans. plain land); Rua Camdoi is located in this sub-area.
- Rua da Zoada: Sub-area in *Coque* (trans. noisy road); distribution point located here.
- Rua Cabo Eutropio: Main street in *Coque*; bar and school are located on this street.
- Afogados (drowned): Neighbourhood bordering *Ilha Joana Bezerra* on the west side; has a big marketplace.
- Instituto Cultural Renascer do Coque: *Aderbal’s* institute (trans. Cultural Institute Rebirth of Coque) located at Rua Camdoi.
- *Ponto di Cultura Espaço Livre do Coque*: Institute from the community leaders from *Ponto de Culura* (trans. Cultural Point Free Space of *Coque*) located near the metro station of *Joanna Bezerra*.
- Cais Apollo: government building in the centre of Recife; first protest took place here
- UR-10: Slum area located outside Recife’s centre; residents of *Coque* have been replaced to this location.
- Boa Viagem: Rich area in the centre of Recife; *URB*, from the *PREZEIS*, is located here.
- Portuguesa: Large (sport) hall where it is possible to organize festivities; Eduardo Campos gave a speech here and Geraldo Julio had a party here.
- Rua Imperial: Main road separating *Ilha Joana Bezerra* and the neighbourhood of *Cabanga* (south); people have invaded land here.
- Avenida Sul: Main road parallel with *Rua Imperial*.

GLOSSARY²

<i>(em)borra</i>	leaving
<i>Amigo, amiguinho</i>	friend, little friend
<i>Andar</i>	floor of building
<i>Apaixonado</i>	passionate (for); in love
<i>Arretado</i>	irritated; angry; upset; brave person
<i>Asalto</i>	burglary; murder; robbery
<i>Avião</i>	airplane; drug deliverer
<i>Babão</i>	sycophant; bootlicker
<i>Bagunça</i>	messy
<i>Barata</i>	cockroach
<i>Baratinado</i>	being high or drunk
<i>Barraco</i>	hut; cottage; refers to store that sells supplies
<i>Barriga</i>	stomach; belly
<i>Bestar</i>	walk without destiny
<i>Bicha</i>	slang for gay
<i>Bisteca</i>	steak; slang for vagina
<i>Boca di sabão</i>	someone who acts to know and talk about many topics
<i>Brega</i>	musical genre; literal meaning out-dated
<i>Brincar, brincadeira</i>	to joke, tease, play
<i>Bronca</i>	scolding
<i>Buceta</i>	vagina
<i>Bulasha</i>	cookie
<i>Bunda</i>	buttocks
<i>Cabeça</i>	head; boss
<i>Cachaça</i>	brandy; rum
<i>Café com aroma de mulher</i>	Mexican soap series; coffee with the flavour of women
<i>Cafê, tomar</i>	to have breakfast or diner
<i>Cafezinho</i>	small coffee
<i>Calcinha</i>	underwear
<i>Camarão</i>	shrimp
<i>Caraca!</i>	expression of surprise, such as “damn!”
<i>Catita</i>	little fast rat
<i>Caxirola</i>	native instrument intended to be the Brazilian <i>Vuvuzela</i>
<i>Cebola</i>	union, person who smells
<i>Certo</i>	certain; good; correct
<i>Chato</i>	<i>lousy</i>
<i>Checheiro, xexeiro</i>	person who doesn't pay his debts
<i>Cheroso</i>	good smell
<i>Chirado</i>	drunk guy
<i>Chocolaté</i>	chocolate; slang for getting a whip
<i>Colégio</i>	school
<i>Comer</i>	to eat; to experience someone sexually
<i>Compricado</i>	complicated

COMUL-----Commission of Legalization and Urbanization
 Concordo-----agree
 Corno-----man who is a cuckold
 Crenchi-----someone from the Evangelic church
 criança, filho(a) de-----foster child
 Culto-----praise for the Lord for two hours
 Dar um pitu-----to circumvent
 Delegacia-----civil police precinct
 Desce -----get down (often in Funk)
 Desenrolado-----intelligent person; connected; unwound
 Dignidade-----dignity
 Doido-----mad, crazy
 Duate-----sick
 Errado-----wrong
 Fazer programa-----prostituting
 Fechado-----closed
 Feder, fedeno-----to stink, smelly
 Feijão-----bean staple dish
 Feira-----open air market
 Feriado-----holiday
 Festa Juninbo-----the June festivities
 Fofoqueiro(a)-----person who often talks about and observes others
 Fogueteiro-----person who release rockets to warn dealers for the police
 Forró-----musical genre, comes from *forrobodo* (to party)
 Fraco-----weak
 Frango-----chicken; slang for homosexual
 Fuder-----to be the dick
 Fuleco-----World Cup mascot; slang for ass
 Fuleiragem-----worthless
 Funky-----musical genre; if said double it becomes slang for sex
 Gabiru-----big rat
 Galinha-----chicken; woman with more than one partner
 Garota-----girl
 Gata-----cat; loose and lazy woman who lives only of her beauty
 Grávida-----pregnant
 Gringo-----foreigner
 Guaraná-----brand of soft drink; could also be *Coca Cola*
 Iveja-----envy; jealousy
 Jetom-----payment of COMUL member
 Joga bola-----football
 Jogo do bicho-----animal lottery game; illegal
 Ladrão-----thief
 Lazer-----recreation
 Lepo Lepo-----popular *carnival* song with sexual insinuation
 Líder comunitário-----community leader
 Ligar-----pay attention to; call; connected with

Liso-----broke
Loja-----store
Macaquinho-----small donkey; presumably funny racist name
Macaxeira-----cassava
Maconba, maconheiro-----marijuana, pothead
Mãe-----mother
Malandro-----bad guys; thief
Mangaba-----fruit from the *mangabeira* plant which can be medicinal
Mangue-----mangrove
Maquiagem-----make up; disguise
Maquinado-----slang for homosexual
Maracujá-----passion fruit, often consumed to get calm
Massa-----cool; good; nice
Matuto-----hillbilly; person with rural origin
Meiotá-----half a bottle of rum
Menina(o)-----boy, girl
Meu pedacinho do chão----- soap series; meaning my little piece of ground
Moça-----young girl; virgin
Molhar bisquito-----slang for sex
Molinbo-----homosexual; weak person; person with erection problems
Moreno-----ambiguous colour term used to denote African descent
Muleke-----a bitchy or really dumb person
Mulher da vida-----prostitute
Namorar, namorada-----date seriously, loved one
Nega(o), negra-----black person (often derogatory)
NEIMFA-----*Núcleo Educacional Irmãos Menores de Francisco de Assis*
Nogeira-----dirt; slime
Nordestino-----someone from the North East of Brazil
Novela-----soap series
Novinha-----refers to a voluptuous girl below 18 (funk vocabulary)
Pão, pau-----bread; hard; tough, stick
Patroa (ôes)-----mistress; matron; madam; boss (plural)
Pegar-----to tie; sexual act
Pelada-----barefoot football
Perronha-----person who sucks in football
Pés no chão-----feet on the ground; stand firm
Pipoca-----popcorn
Pirangueiro-----cheap person; person with closed hands; person from a gang
Piriguete-----“easy woman” whom goes out without money trying to get any man to buy her stuff
Pitú-----shrimp; brand of rum made of juice of green sugar cane
Povo-----people, folk, nation, race
Prefeitura-----city hall
PREZEIS-----Plan for the Regularization of the Special Zones of Social Interest
Prostituta-----prostitute
Puseta-----slang for vagina
Quadrilha-----local gang, group of dancers

Quente-----hot; horny
Queso-----cheese; cocaine
Rabo-----tail; slang for penis
Raiva-----anger
Rapaz-----boy; exclamation for incomprehension
Refrigerante-----soft drink; soda
Roubar-----stealing
Ruim-----bad; ugly
Safadexa-----immoral stuff; sexual misdeeds
Safado-----shameless; trickster; screwed up; immoral person
Salchicha-----sausage; insinuation for penis
São João-----festivity in North-eastern Brazil
Sapatão-----lesbian
Saudades-----nostalgic longings
Siri-----soft crab; old; worthless
Sobe-----get up (often in Funk)
Sorvette-----ice-cream
Sucu-----juice
Tapioca-----starch from Manioc used in North-eastern dishes
Tarado-----pervert; maniac; horny
Tecno brega-----musical genre; mixed music
Tira onda----- to brag; to cause a confusion
Toddynho-----chocolate milk; slang for sperm of Afro-Brazilian
Torar, pra-----awesome; best; to break; to consume; sexual act
Torcida-----fans
Trabalho di graça-----voluntary work
Troca de confeito-----to get your change in candy
Troca de favores-----exchange of (often political) favours
Troca de oleo-----change of car oil; routine sex
Vai tomar no cú----- take it in the ass; fuck off
Vergonha-----shame; embarrassment
Via Mangue-----urban transport project in Recife
Vigilante-----security guard
Vigília Evangélica-----praise for the Lord during the whole night
Vovó-----grandmother
Vovô-----grandmother
Xiri-----slang for vagina
Xixi-----to urinate
ZEIS-----Special Zones of Social Interest
Zoada-----rowdy; noisy; confusion

SUMMARY

In this thesis I make use of the classical theorizing of the ‘*rua*’ (street), ‘*casa*’ (house) and ‘*mata*’ (literally forest but also meaning the wild-side) to first take distance t from theorizing on slum politics that takes ‘the slum’ as a homogenous entity. Second, I critique theories of life and politics in the slum that present one sided images that are either defeatist or romantic. Through a two month political ethnography that zooms in on the community of *Coque* located in the centre of Recife, Brazil, I set forth an enquiry into the distinction between three types of politics that impact on poor urban informal communities: governmental, electoral and slum politics. All three forms of politics take place in different spaces; electoral politics in de ‘*rua*’, governmental politics in the ‘offices’ and slum politics in the ‘*mata*’; the latter standing for the ‘slum/*favela* in the community’, precarious occupations inhabited by squatters, located in inhabitable areas such as wastelands and swamps, and lacking basic urban services. Likewise, slum politics is differently gendered from governmental and electoral politics, as the *mata* symbolizes the suffering of bringing up a family in extreme poverty, often the sole responsibility of women. The central argument that I make, is that slum politics does not result predominantly from a clash between the world inside and outside of the slum, but more importantly, from a spatial divide *within* the slum. I reformulate slum politics as the product of an inter-relation with governmental and electoral politics, but at the same time it has its own character. It is the outcome of outside interventions and intimate relations with a part that is both external to it, yet intimately related to the community. In Lacanian parlance, the *mata/favela* is an ‘*extimate*’ space. Specifically, I focus on three (sets of) actors: community leader *Aderbal* (main protagonist), his wife *Jucelia*, and an “anti-Aderbal” group of community leaders known as the *Ponto de Cultura*. Although all three represent different realities, they are at the same time intimately related and dependent on one another. As both *Aderbal* and *Jucelia* grew up in the *favela*, ‘*the mata*’ remains a symbolic given for them that embodies both hope and despair.

Keywords: Slum politics, community leaders, Coque, Recife, Political Ethnography, Novo Recife, sexuality, governmental politics, electoral politics, Poor People’s Politics, hope, extimate

WHO IS WHO IN COQUE?

- **Aderbal** is a hyper, *safado* [screwed up], community leader. He is 49 years old, tall and dark-skinned. He is linked to the Socialist Party [PSB]. He is non-Evangelic and likes Funk music. Moreover, he is President of *Instituto Cultural Renascer do Coque*. He distributes fruits, vegetables, milk and diapers in the neighbourhood.
- **Jucelia** is *Aderbal's* wife. She is a short, firm, 48 year old, dark-skinned, housewife. Others call her “CELIA!”. She cleans the house twice a day, washes all the clothes, cooks and Sundays she goes to the Evangelic Church. Overall, she suffers a lot from *Aderbal's* street adventures.
- **Shakira** is the ironic name of the dog that *Aderbal* and *Jucelia* keep.
- **Jessica** is their daughter. She is 25 years old, slim and dark-skinned. Like her mother she is Evangelic and works around the house. She makes pizzas every day, likes to smoke a cigarette, and dreams about winning the lottery.
- **Claudio** is *Jessica's* husband. He migrated from the rural hinterland and works in a distribution centre.
- **Emanuel** is their four year old son. He likes to eat, sing, and play.
- **Anderson** is *Jessica's* older brother. He is also Evangelic. He could wash his car twice a week.
- **Dédé** – nickname for *Daniella* – is *Anderson's* girlfriend. She has tattoos of *Guilherme's* and *Anderson's* name and likes to dedicate time on looking good. She likes to gossip once in a while and she disciplines the kids in the neighbourhood.
- **Guilherme** is their eight year old son. He likes to lit fireworks or play with marbles.
- **Niño** is a foster child from *Aderbal* and *Jucelia*. He is a son from a previous relation of *Jucelia*. He is 29 years old, muscled, brown skinned and likes playing football and driving on his motorcycle.
- **Luis de la Mora** is a Mexican professor at the Federal University of Pernambuco. He is my guide at entrance to the field.
- **Renê** is a community leader supporting *Aderbal*, but operates easily between groups of community leaders. He is short, brown/dark-skinned, and others at times refer to him as “the mouth”. He is fanatically involved in mobilising communities in favour of the *Novo Recife* Real Estate project.
- **Nado**, the shorter name for Ronaldo, is also part of the *Aderbal's* inner circle. He is firm, short, brown-skinned, and known as “*the baixinho*” [the small one]. *Nado* has contact with other community leaders, but is not a community leader himself. He works at the street light company, and helps *Aderbal* with the streetlights in *Coque*.
- **Né** – officially Nelson – is like *Aderbal* also part of the *COMUL*. He is neither short nor tall, in his beginning 40s, brown-skinned and is not active in PSB.

- **Damilo** is also part of *Aderbal's* inner circle. He is a muscled, brown-skinned man and has a large tattoo on his arm. *Damilo* helps *Aderbal* with stocking his distribution point since he owns a mini-van.
- **Pipoca**, a friend of *Niño*, is the youngest supporter of *Aderbal*. He is short, firm, dark-skinned and at the end of his 20s. *Pipoca* helps in organising around *Novo Recife*.
- **FC Madureira** is *Aderbal's* football team in *Coque*. The team is sponsored by a congressman, hereafter *deputado*. During the weekends the men get together, drink beer and tease each other.
- **Rildo** is a firm, brown-skinned, “anti-*Aderbal* type” of community leader. He has links with the university, studied psychology, and took part in the early years of the PREZEIS, linked to the Workers party (PT) and plays a central role in the *Ponto de Cultura Espaço Livre do Coque (PC)*.
- **Matuto**, whose name literally means hillbilly, is a short, slim, brown-skinned man, the youngest in *PC* and linked to *PT*. He gave me a guide through the community.
- **Moises** is involved in squatting areas near *Coque*, part of the *PC* and linked to *PT*.
- **Carlos** is involved in the heritage topic within the *PC* and linked to the *PT*.
- **Ricardo** is also part of the *PC* and *PT*.
- **Deputado**, is the congressman *Aderbal* works with. He is from the PSB, has a beer belly, and always wears a white shirt.

CHAPTER I: RETHINKING SLUM POLITICS

The need for political ethnographic research in slums

“I saw the effects of power everywhere. Its fallout was all around me. Yet I sometimes felt I had come to study the forest, only to get lost in the trees”
_____Donna Goldstein, *Laughter out of Place* (2003, 2)

1.1 Introduction

Debates on the phenomena of slums belong to the most inspiring ones since the beginning of the century. Significant contribution has been made by Mike Davis in his *Planet of Slums* (2003, 2006) that has set causes of slum growth and policy failure on the policy- and research agenda. In this book Davis portrays an apocalyptic vision of abandoned and heavily populated slums in the developing world, and in a similar vision, questions the kind of politics that can be expected in slums. The blame of continued mushrooming of slums is placed by Davis at the IMF and World Bank whose *Structural Adjustment Programs* for example required a reduction in government social expenditure. In addition, he points to cheap food imports from the First World that have destroyed local agriculture, forcing millions to flee the countryside. As a result, marginalized labourers, superfluous civil servants and ex-peasants have turned into informal wage workers, or self-employed entrepreneurs, with no adequate health or social security coverage.

These developments lead towards a future where the urban population of the earth outnumber the rural population – with slum inhabitants composing the majority of this urban population. In fact, this historical moment may have already happened given the imprecision of censuses in developing countries (Davis 2003, 5). The number of people living in the slums of the world’s developing regions has increased through the years, from 650 million in 1990 towards 760 million in the year 2000, with the latest estimate at 863 million (UN-Habitat 2013). These estimates suggest that one third of the developing world’s urban population is living in slums (Ibid). Furthermore, it has been projected that by 2030 the global number of slum dwellers will increase to about 2 billion (UN-Habitat 2003).

Only recently has it become widely acknowledged that the global number of slums and slum dwellers is so big that there is no chance to overcome the slum phenomenon, shifting the debate on the world’s slums towards consolidation and upgrading of ‘informal settlements’ that has the objective of incorporating these settlements into the ‘normal’, ‘official’ city (Nuisl and Heinrichs 2013, 105). Due to the creativity of slum dwellers in their ‘self-help’ housing, the UN even started to describe the Third World’s informal settlements as “slums of hope” (Husock 2009). Considering these policy shifts, the fact that the population of slum dwellers is rapidly increasing, and more importantly that there is still little knowledge about how slum dwellers construct livelihoods in precarious urban environments, it becomes necessary to study ethnographically what is happening in slums.

Building on the apocalyptic vision of Davis, philosopher Slavoj Žižek has taken up the question what types of politics to expect in slums, but he is more optimistic in his vision. Žižek sees

slums as sources of political struggle on the global level, and characterises the explosive growth of slums in countries all over the world as “perhaps the crucial geopolitical event of our time” (2004). According to Žižek, what we are witnessing is “the fast growth of a population outside state control, living in conditions half outside the law, in terrible need of the minimal forms of self-organization”. Like Davis, Žižek sees the existence of slums as “the true “symptom” of slogans like “Development,” “Modernization,” and “World Market” (2004).

While Žižek argues that we should not “idealize the slum dwellers into a new revolutionary class”, he points out that “it is extremely surprising how many of their features fit the old Marxist definition of the proletarian revolutionary class” (ibid). In his words,

“Even more than the classic proletariat, they are “free” in the double meaning of the word— “freed” from all substantial ties and dwelling in a free space outside state and police regulations. They are large collectives, forcibly thrown into a situation where they must invent some mode of being-together, while simultaneously deprived of any inherited ethnic and religious traditions” (Žižek 2004).

Yet, Žižek’s description of slums is very broad, if not a caricature. Žižek is a philosopher and not an anthropologist. Nevertheless, I think in the description above he holds a powerful hypothesis; slums being the symptom of processes we denominate *Development*, *Modernization* and *Globalization*, and slum dwellers being free from substantial ties and dwelling in a free space. To be sure, at an ethnographic level, Žižek’s thesis of “free” and “freed” collectives can never be substantiated. In fact, it is even wrong, as I will demonstrate in this political ethnography³.

First, regarding slum dwellers dwelling in a ‘free’ space outside state and police regulations, residents of *Coque* – the community located in the centre of Recife (Northeastern Brazil) where I did research – are very much subjected to state and police regulations. They are so mostly in the form of redevelopment schemes and police actions. Slum dwellers often have encounters with the police as they have to carry with them an identity card (Koster 2014b). People do not have identity cards and, as I will show, one of the roles of community leaders is to provide them with identity cards. In addition, what Althusser terms the “Ideological State Apparatuses” (2006, 92) (press, radio and television) is also visibly present inside of the slum, and their powers often neglected (Garmany 2009).

Second, regarding slum dweller’s substantial ties, they are still tied to each other in ‘mutual support networks’ as Javier Auyero (2001) would say. In addition, they are tied to the strategic location of the slum near the place where they for example generate an income as housekeeper, street vendor, or security guard. Furthermore, in *Coque*, kinship and other ‘substantial’ ties with what I will describe as the *mata* are important.

Still, in this thesis I wish to argue that there is a logic in the functioning of the community that resonates with Žižek’s statements in that we can speak of a collective ‘thrown into a situation where they must invent some mode of being-together’. First, regarding the ‘free space’, *Coque* is fully incorporated in the city, but it has been so under special circumstances. As I will elaborate in the next chapter, like other poor neighbourhoods, it has been incorporated outside of the formal plans

of the city, making *Coque* part of the city, but in a way that is negative and even perverse (de Vries forthcoming-c, forthcoming-b). I will provide examples in the next chapter that show how *Coque*, like other communities around it, has always been a target of evictions. It has always been described as a black spot, a problematic community, characterized by crime, promiscuity and informality. Second, regarding the role of ‘substantial’ ties, I again think there is a kernel of truth in Žižek’s assertions, since, as I intend to show throughout this thesis, it is striking how fluid and fragile political and kinship relations are.

To get to the point where the thesis particularly builds upon the work of Žižek, it is worthwhile quoting him further. According to Žižek,

“While the latter [Marxist working class] is defined in the precise terms of economic “exploitation” [...], the defining feature of the slum-dwellers is socio-political, it concerns their (non)integration into the legal space of citizenship with (most of) its incumbent rights – to put it in somewhat simplified terms, much more than a refugee, a slum-dweller is a Homo Sacer, the systemically generated “living dead” of global capitalism. He is a kind of negative of the refugee: a refugee from his own community, the one whom the power is not trying to control through concentration, where those in power do the concentrating while the refugees do the camping, but pushed into the space of the out-of-control; [...] a slum-dweller is the one with regard to whom the power renounces its right to exert full control and discipline, finding it more appropriate to let him dwell in the twilight zone of slums. What one finds in the “really-existing slums” is, of course, a mixture of improvised modes of social life, from religious “fundamentalist” groups hold together by a charismatic leader and criminal gangs up to germs of new “socialist” solidarity”(2007).

This indeed is again a highly speculative, ethnographically ungrounded, assertion about slums, and yet again, it does resonate with my experiences in *Coque*. First, the image of slum residents being ‘refugees in their own community’ is something that characterizes well the struggle of people I will introduce in this thesis. Most of *Coque*’s residents seem to be stuck in one place, but at the same, with immense strength, they are trying to escape or avoid poverty while carrying the burden of the stigma that their neighbourhood has. Because of the informal nature of *Coque*, residents enjoy a relative autonomy. They do not pay taxes and do all sorts of chores for the wealthy. Their relationship with the state usually consists of clientelist contacts with the police and politicians, mostly through mediation of community leaders.

Like the characters of the movie *Linha de Passe*⁴ by Walter Salles (2008), their lives can be described as both stagnated (see women waiting in chapter five of this thesis as metaphor) and moving in high speeds (see stories on the road in the car in chapter four of this thesis as a metaphor). They are experiencing “intense sociability amid pervasive uncertainty” (Auyero 2011, 5). Like the *Cambuí* tree, usually found at the riverside, a tree that is very durable but usually twisted, life in *Coque* felt like being in a place breathing change, with a sense of community and neighbourliness, but that same place felt like being stuck, and *raiva* [anger] and *inveja* [jealousy] were rampant. Furthermore, the image of slum dwellers as the ones with regard to whom the state ‘renounces its right to exert full control and discipline’, also captures much of everyday life in *Coque*, as well as

forms creativity and improvisation that emerge from having to deal with life in the slum, as I will show in the practices of community leaders.

Related to this creativity, it is paradoxical that Žižek's presents a negative characterization of slums – as abandoned spaces inhabited by superfluous populations, outside of the reach of the state, and with a lack of organization, and subjected to all kind of heterogeneous influences (churches, gangs, etc.) – provides elements for hope and possibility. From the above it should be clear why Žižek sees slums as spaces of possibility, for political struggle, for a revitalization of left thinking. Is there any evidence, ethnographic or historic, that this is the case? Mike Davis in his *Planet of Slums* (2006) is very doubtful about this, pointing out that there are too few answers in literature. He entertains the possibility of slums becoming the new sources of revolution (2003, 27-34), but is more inclined to see slums in a pessimist way, as spaces of despair, missing the Left, and more prone to accept religious forces than have truly political potential.

So, how to account for Žižek's redemptive belief in slums? Is this not merely a form of wishful thinking, a form of speculative utopian thinking, ungrounded in actual evidence? To deal with this deadlock, Žižek refers to the unconventional notion of hope given by Brian Massumi. According to Massumi, since “rationally there really isn't much room for hope” when thinking ahead into the future (Zournazi 2002, 211), hope should be disconnected from “an expected success”, such that it becomes “something different from optimism” (2002, 211). In doing so, Massumi searches for “a margins of manoeuvrability” (ibid, 211) that can be found in an empowering uncertainty that is provided by “a sort of vagueness surrounding the situation”, the “uncertainty about where you might be able to go” (ibid, 211). As such ‘affect’, the word Massumi uses for hope, is about “focusing on the next experimental step rather than the big utopian picture” (Ibid, 212) and in this way is “more like being right where you are – more *intensely*” (Ibid, 212). In this way, Massumi shows that the situation can both represent despair and hope at the same time. In other words, hope is where you least expect it. It is not based on rational calculation, but on a certain practice. It is not about belief, but resides in our capacity to see things that hitherto remained invisible. It is not about the future but about the now.

In this political ethnography I continue this way of thinking about hope and possibility by inquiring into the ways in which slum residents practice hope, for example in the form of their humour. As I will show, the people I encountered, in the midst of their many tragedies managed to retain the capacity to laugh (see also Goldstein 2003, 42). For outsiders, their stories may not be so funny, but the humour found in these stories gave people the strength to deal with their hardships (Goldstein 2003, 38). As a short example, violence was made fun at on the Facebook page of one of *Coque's* residents who placed a picture of someone sitting in a car full of gunshots together with the text “I went to *Coque*. I imagined it to be a quiet community”. Thus, what is striking was their insistence in looking at life from the bright side, the resistance to pessimism, the continuing fantasizing and joking about life. At the same time, they are marked by memories of suffering, of humiliation, as *Aderbal's* history of being a former evicted *favelado* will show.

So, perhaps hope is one of the major resources slum dwellers have in life and their politics, that can be characterized as being strongly marked by patron-client relations, opportunism, even lack of a defined political ideology or consciousness, manifested in the readiness to sell the vote to the

highest bidder. At the same time, people in *Coque* are very much aware of their situation, and they can be very critical. This way of standing in life and their critical stance is something that has recently also been noticed in a survey bundled into a book entitled *A Country Named Favela*, based on around 2000 interviews in 63 favelas, in 35 cities throughout Brazil. This study found that 94% of *favela* residents say they are happy (Meirelles and Athayde 2014) and two-thirds of the interviewees would not leave their neighbourhood if their income doubled. At the same time, people were still very critical about the quality of public services provided in their communities.

Back to *Coque*, people had a keen awareness of all kinds of injustices, as I show throughout this thesis in the figures of *Aderbal* and the community leaders of the *Ponto de Cultura*. In addition, as I show in the case of *Jessica* – who told me that “you have to laugh in order not to cry” – their way of practicing hope seemed naïve. Further, the conversations I had with *Aderbal* exemplify that the language they use shifted between rational calculation and the language of humour and emotions.

Hope indeed was detached from notions of optimism and pessimism, hope rather was an attitude in life. How does this hopeful attitude relate to politics? Is it possible to talk about hope as a political category? How does hope as a political category relate to phenomena typical of slums, such as the prevalence of patron-client relationships that are seen as exploitative relations that deprive slum dwellers of their political agency? Is it possible to conceive of a slum politics as a politics of hope? While going through the chapters in this thesis I will answer these central questions. In order to answer these questions it is useful to engage with ways of theorizing politics in slums.

1.2 Previous theorisation on slum politics

Javier Auyero’s *Poor People’s Politics* (2001) is a relevant starting point in theorizing slum politics, since few scholars have studied community leaders (or ‘brokers’ as he calls them) in poor Latin American neighbourhoods. In this book Auyero provides a political ethnographic account of what he calls “*problem-solving through personalized political mediation*” (Auyero 2001, 213) in Villa Paraíso, Buenos Aires; an urban shantytown hit by neoliberal austerity measures. Auyero argues that such problem-solving takes place in mutual support networks (See chapter 3 in Auyero 2001) that since the crises from the 1990s have increasingly become important. During the crises traditional survival networks employed by Argentines’ urban poor were drained of resources, making slum dwellers more reliant on state social programs like *Plan Vida*, the largest food distribution program currently carried out by the government of the province of Buenos Aires (Auyero 2001, 103). Consequently, networks of political clientelism started overlapping traditional survival networks that in turn fortified *Peronist survival networks*. In this way, Auyero argues that poor people’s politics emerges in the intersection of poverty alleviation programs and local processes of violence, despair and unemployment. In Auyero’s own words, “it is in the collusion between elite’s attempts to control the poor and the problem solving strategies that the destitute operationalize that the most interesting aspects of the reproduction (and, yes, sometimes, the challenge) of this political order occurs” (2001, 213).

The notion of ‘problem-solving through personalized political mediation’ that happens in a “problem solving network” (2001, 80) is Auyero’s alternative to mainstream analyses of political clientelism that perceive it as involving at the core coercion, manipulation and vote selling. In explaining the phenomena of clientelism, literature has often stressed (and continues doing so) the

role of 'values', 'political culture', or provided blunt economic analyses (supply and demand) that sees clientelism as direct exchange deriving from low income (e.g. Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007). Contrary to such notions of political clientelism, Auyero makes the political ethnographic argument that *the how* of clientelist exchange has come to be underexposed due to the focus on *the what* in clientelist exchange. In other words, a limited focus on *what* is being exchanged [votes for favours] according to Auyero "does not do justice to the much more complex reality of the enduring and long-lasting relationships, narratives, and identities that are constructed within the problem solving network"(2001, 213). The latter relationships, narratives and identities, Auyero shows, are reproduced the moment 'political brokers' organise rallies or distribute goods and favours (food, t-shirts, medicine etc.). Hence, *Poor People's Politics* explains how 'problem solving networks' both play a role in the reproduction of Peronism, in the reproduction of the system of domination, and in the intersection between the livelihoods of the urban poor and national politics.

As for the notion of coercion, Auyero shows, and I will do so in chapter five in the case of *Aderbal*, that while 'political brokers' have what he calls an "inner circle of followers" (Auyero 2001, 91), a group that is intimately connected to the broker and who meet the 'broker' on a daily basis, most relationships between 'brokers' and 'clients' are fluid. At the same time, at the moment of voting, it is not possible for politicians to force slum dwellers to vote for them. In fact, one of Auyero's main conclusions is that clientelism is not a very efficient way to ensure voter support. He notes how members of this inner circle positively evaluate the clientelist system and their broker.

That is, those exchanges between 'brokers' and 'clients' are not necessarily interpreted by the 'clients' as coercion and manipulation. They do not interpret it as such, since 'brokers' are often committed members of the community, that "constantly deny the political content of their actions" (Auyero 2001, 117). Auyero shows how relationships between brokers and the clients in their inner circle are maintained through everyday practices. Specifically, 'brokers' according to Auyero;

"Do not explicitly exchange votes for favours. Rather, they position themselves in such a way that they become synonymous with the goods received, the favours granted [...] a performance must be enacted that publicly represents the thing being given or the favour granted, not as a bribe, but as a gift bestowed because of a great love for the people [...]" (Ibid, 123).

In this 'performance' lies another interesting aspect in Auyero's work, namely that he insists that gender is crucial to patronage politics, a theme returns throughout this thesis but particularly in chapters three and ten. Auyero found in the case of Argentina that female 'brokers' "performed" Evita and hence reproduced the role of mothering. In addition, he argued that this performance is "central to the production and reproduction of gender differences in politics [...] men deal, women remain pure; men decide, women comply" (Auyero 2001, 138-9).

More generally, it can be said that such 'brokers', or *punteros* as they are called in Argentina, have a lot in common with the Brazilian *líderes comunitários* (community leaders) who are often seen as falsely projecting themselves as community representatives, while being paid for personal/political gains. Such practices are then seen, also in scholarly circles, as necessary to eradicate. The widely known term for 'political broker' in Brazil is *cabo eleitoral* and the popular term that referred to such

‘false’ community leaders in Recife was the term *pelego*. According to the informal Portuguese dictionary, the term *pelego* (lit. sheepskin) was popularized during the Getúlio Dornelles Vargas era and resurfaced during the military dictatorship. The *pelego* was the union leader appointed by the military. The word that formerly designated the skin or cloth that softened the contact between a horse rider and the saddle has become synonymous with traitor of the workers and ally of the government and business.

Aderbal, who I introduce in more detail in chapter three, was a *pelego* to some, and a *líder comunitário* to others. As *Aderbal* is involved in fruit and vegetable distribution practices, he has many similarities with the *political brokers* described by Auyero in *Poor People’s Politics*. However, I had trouble finding a term to describe his practices in the right context. On the one hand, the term community leader provides the idea that there is a homogenous community that widely accepts the practices of this leader, who in turn has frequent discussions with this community about necessary strategies. This was not the case in my observations of the practices of *Aderbal*, who – especially in my first month observations – in ‘working for the community’ seemed to operate to a large extent alone. On the other hand, the term ‘political broker’ portrays a politics without passions. Contrary to the term community leader that portrays a person working to a large extent for the community, the term broker portrays a person that works as much for outside politicians as for the community, hence, working without preferring the community. Neither terms fitted with my observations, so I chose to use the word that people in *Coque* themselves used, and that was community leader.

An interesting observation about the distinction between ‘community leader’ and ‘political brokers’ is made by Koster and de Vries (2012) who have also conducted research in Recife. They argue that political broker (*cabo eleitoral*) relates to electoral politics, whereas community leader relates to slum politics. Although community leaders are also involved in electoral and governmental politics, they represent the needs and aspirations of the slum. As Koster and de Vries (2012, 89-90) put it:

“It would be wrong to assume that community leaders only exist for the need of governmental agencies to create reliable interlocutors within the slum. It is rather the other way round. The slum produces an array of leaders who come to represent a variety of aspirations and needs, thus standing for the slum’s internal diversity [...] they are divided between “unconditional love” for the community and personal gain.”

Thus, a community leader could act as a political broker in times of elections, but his activities are not only related to the time of elections and *not* predominantly in accordance with the needs of politics outside of the slum. Auyero (2001) does not make such distinctions between types of politics. Neither does Auyero (2001) pay sufficient attention to socio-spatial differentiation within, and around, ‘the slum’. Although, the latter criticism against Auyero may not be completely fair, since he is dealing with political clientelism and the reproduction of a political system (Peronism) rather than slums as a global urban phenomenon (e.g. Davis 2006) per se, I will argue in the next chapter that socio-spatial differentiation is important to consider when theorising slum politics.

Still, although Brazil differs from Argentina, in the sense that it misses something similar to

the Peronist Party with strong historical ties to the poor, in this thesis I show how Auyero's description of the practices of brokers and clientelism has many similarities to those in Recife's slums. I do this by building forth on the work of Koster and de Vries (2012), who in turn have built on *Poor People's Politics*, but argue that there is a disjuncture between the *favela* [slum] and the world outside it. This forms their basis to distinguish three types of politics – governmental, electoral and slum politics – that I will further elaborate in chapter three. For Koster and de Vries slum politics is defined by virtue of the slum being a specific space with a logic of its own, making it “entwined and interdependent, but different” (Koster and de Vries 2012, 83) from electoral and governmental politics. For them slum politics refers to “the particular ways of doing and experiencing politics in the slum” (Koster 2009, 3) involving the organisation of “life in a broad sense, ranging from family life, to making a living, to dreaming about the future” (Koster and de Vries 2012, 87). Secondly, they posit that slum politics is “not derivative but foundational of politics in general” (Koster and de Vries 2012, 86) and that slum politics (or Poor People's Politics) not only functions as a system of domination, but also, picking up theorisations of philosophers like Slavoj Žižek (2004), as a “politics of hope and possibility” (Koster and de Vries 2012, 83).

In this thesis I argue that *Poor People's Politics*, in pointing to reproduction of the system, has difficulty in explaining change, and in general provides a somewhat defeatist image of life in Villa Paraíso. Koster and de Vries (2012) on the other hand, present a romantic description of slum politics. They follow Rancière to argue that rupture – or politics – comes into being when ‘the part of no part’ declares that it belongs to the situation (ibid, 87), however they do so without providing a definition of this ‘part of no part’. In addition, this ‘part of no part’ plays a minimal role in their ethnography. Further, both the theorisations of Auyero and Koster and de Vries of slum politics provide little attention to socio-spatial division *within* the slum (Gilbert 2007; Owusu, Agyei-Mensah, and Lund 2008; Nuissl and Heinrichs 2013).

My aim in this thesis is to show that – following Brian Massumi's elaboration of the concept of hope (Zournazi 2002) – slum politics in *Coque* can include a ‘politics of hope’. However, my theorisation of a ‘politics of hope’ aims to take into account socio-spatial division near and within *Coque* – that is describe ethnographically the ‘part of no part’. In addition, this theorisation of a politics of hope should not be equated with an optimistic or romantic politics. As a tool to take into account socio-spatial differentiation, I describe in the following chapter the classical “multiple social realities of three separate but intersecting realms”; the *casa* [house], *rua* [street] and *mata* [forest] (Scheper-Hughes 1993). In these conceptual categorisations, the *casa* is roughly the female domain, the *rua* the male domain, and *the mata* the domain of the “traditional” or “backward”. The *mata* stands here for the *favela*, the people living on stilts [*palafitas*] near the mangroves.

1.3 Methodology and Methods

“If political ethnography is your thing, you are now warned.”
 ____Javier Auyero(2012)

To study slum politics in *Coque*, I took an ethnographic research approach⁵ that is based on two months of participant observation (Madden 2010; Silverman 2010; Tilly 2007) and that combines

insights from the science of the *extended case method* (Burawoy 1998) with the art and science of *political ethnography* (Tilly 2007). The *extended case method* is a theory-driven *reflexive scientific model* that Michael Burawoy applies to ethnography and that “elevates dialogue as its defining principle” (1998, 14). The name refers to four ‘extensions’ out of the field – *intervention, process, structuration, and theory reconstruction* (Burawoy 1998, 4). In each extension “power effects” take place; *domination, silencing, objectification, and normalization*⁶. Rather than going extensively into the details of the extended case method here, I believe it more appropriate, interpretable, and catching, to refer to the conversations I had with *Aderbal* as *Bull Sessions* (Frankfurt 2005). I will discuss *bull sessions* in chapter four, referring to the conversations I had with him in his car.

As for political ethnography (Auyero and Joseph 2007; Tilly 2007; Wolford 2007; Schatz 2009), this needs to be interpreted in the light of a *double absence* – of politics in ethnographic studies and ethnography in studies of politics (Auyero and Joseph 2007). In light of this double absence, political ethnography refers to:

“The politicized nature of ethnography as a method that is uniquely suited to examining and exposing the power relations that inflect all social life. At the same time, it refers to the need for (and practice of) ethnographic investigations of politics, where elections and states are no longer the privileged site of political life, rather *people are*” (Wolford 2007, 19).

To give “methodological fortification” (Madden 2010, 26) to this political ethnography, I have used reflexivity as a tool (Auyero 2001, 206) in the form of a blog on the Internet. On this blog, I wrote stories of daily experiences, overlapping with my fieldnotes. This idea came to mind when I realised that I would have to deal with *reflexivity* from the start through towards the final report, since “despite the strict meaning of the term”, *reflexivity* is not about getting to know myself and how I influence the research. It is “to create a more reliable portrait, argument or theory about *them*, the participants” (Madden 2010, 23 own italics) and should not “degenerate into a celebration of self-privilege” (Bourgois 2003, 14).

I consider this thesis to fall under what Nancy Scheper-Hughes calls an “anthropology with one’s feet on the ground” [*antropologia-pé-no-chão*] (Scheper-Hughes 1993, 4). Scheper-Hughes describes such an anthropology as a more “womanly” anthropology which “would not only be concerned with how we humans “reason” and think, but also with how we act toward each other, thus engaging in questions of human relationship and of ethics” (Scheper-Hughes 1993, 21).

Throughout my fieldwork I hung out with the people I studied; I ate meals with them, helped in the household (e.g. making cake, pizza, lasagne, cleaning dishes, buying coffee and chicken), went to parties, did shopping with them, played football with the children, watched football matches and *novelas* on the television, attended church, helped *Aderbal* distribute food, and always had a couple of beers after football matches and meetings (for the methodological implications of this see Nielsen 2002).

More specifically, this thesis tells the life history of community leader *Aderbal*. This life history is based on stories he told me while being on the road, rather than from a formal conversation with a recorder. I transcribed my fieldnotes, and as a form of triangulation, checked these fieldnotes by, comparing them with a transcription I made of an interview conducted with

Aderbal by *Cynthia*, a French student at the *Universidade Federal de Pernambuco* (UFPE) who also interviewed community leaders in *Coque* for her PhD thesis. The stories *Aderbal* told *Cynthia* were surprisingly coherent with the ones he told me. I had expected the fact that I was a male outsider to be highly influential to what *Aderbal* would tell me, but this did not differ from a female ‘insider’, as *Cynthia* was already well known in *Coque*. In addition, since *Aderbal* would often talk fast, making it difficult to write detailed notes, *Cynthia’s* interview offered a way to extract more details from his personal (political) history.

Amongst other obstacles during this research⁷, my complicated position between community leaders, as will become clear in chapter three, was most prominent. Since *Aderbal* was in severe conflict with the *Ponto de Cultura*, I felt them to be reluctant to provide me with information, believing that I was gathering information for *Aderbal*. One day when I visited their ‘office’, I even had to show them I was not recording the conversations, emptying my pockets, when I felt them to worry that I would be gathering information for *Aderbal*. Therefore, I decided to organise a ‘focus group’ with the community leaders from the *Ponto de Cultura* together with other local university students. By making it a focus group, in which I secured them that the information they provided me was not for *Aderbal*, I felt I was able to show to the community leaders from the *Ponto de Cultura* that they could trust me.

1.4 Ethics

“You know I don’t like to talk about it. It is the law of silence *ne* [isn’t it]? The law of the *favela* is the law of silence... We *have seen* it but we *have also not seen* it”
____Mother talking with child⁸

In conducting ethnographic research, scholars undoubtedly get themselves faced with challenges by the usual mainstream guidelines for scientific conduct. For the current thesis, this was to some extent the case with the Wageningen University code of conduct; particularly the *best practice principle of impartiality*. This best practice principle reads as follows, “A scientific practitioner is impartial if he does not let personal interest, preference, affection or prejudice affect his judgment and decisions” (ECW 2008). However, this thesis is inevitably partial (Clifford and Marcus 1986, 7). In trying to bring to light the voice of people ignored in mainstream media this thesis was partial from the very beginning. In fact, *the extended case method* necessarily involves the transformation of interest, preferences, and affections into virtues.

Under the same principle of impartiality the code states that; “The choice of methods and criteria is guided solely by the goal of truth-finding, and not by external goals such as commercial success or political influence” (ECW 2008) (own underline and italics). While my *primary* guide was truth finding, it certainly was not *solely* my guide in this thesis. I was inevitably also guided by a fear “about what our powers of representation and subjectification do” (Goldstein 2003, 44). I adhered to the principle that you should not inflict harm on others; *the principle of non-maleficence* (Beauchamp and Childress 2001). This principle falls under the principle of *scrupulousness* in the Wageningen Code of Conduct for Scientific Practice. I did not want to leave behind a *what-is-this-anthropology-anyway-to-us* (Scheper-Hughes 1993, 18) feeling with the people who have hosted me for two months. Towards informants, I always tried to be open about what I was writing about them. The anthropologist is

not only “a clerk of the records” (Scheper-Hughes 1993, 26) knowing what to report and what to silence, but also a person with ideologies and personal background.

Based on the *principle of non-maleficence* I have decided not to provide pseudonyms. By providing pseudonyms, I would anonymize the people I have lived with; something they experience regularly in their everyday lives. In addition, they always told me ‘to write what I felt to be good’. Direct family of my host were aware that I was conducting research and writing about them on a personal blog. I regularly reported to them in Portuguese. For other people I was often happy that they made their own interpretations of what I was doing in *Coque* (On identity in ethnographic research see Silverman 2010, 83). This meant that the politicians with whom *Aderbal* referred to me as “hey photographer!”, since *Aderbal* always told me to take my camera with me to political parties. Since I was not sure, whether they knew I was conducting research I refer to them here by their function. People in *Coque* that knew I was doing research at times referred to me as “hey professor!” Others would refer to me as “the guy who helps *Aderbal*”. For most people on the other hand I was “*Gringo!*”, and “*Ieshfeng!*” for people in *Rua Camdoi*, the street where I resided. The women of the family and I would at times joke that I could write five books about them. In case someone explicitly said not to make notes of something, I adhered to these comments.

I did not make strict agreements about payment beforehand, only to pay for housing and three meals a day. At arrival I agreed to pay 200 *Reais* initially for the first half month and see later how much money was further necessary to cover cost of living. At the end of the first half month I added 300 to make 500 *Reais* for the first month (approximately 160 Euro based on rate 1 Euro = 3.1 *Reais*, May 2014). The same amount I paid for the second month. In this last month, I also paid 200 *Reais* to make for an amount of 600 *Reais*/month (190 euro). This was partially a gift, and partially because what I was receiving, was in my opinion worth more than 160 Euro/month. Further, I only made use of a recording device when I had the permission to do so.

1.5 Organisation and argumentation of the thesis

The next chapter sets out the social, historical, and spatial context of *Coque* within Recife. In this chapter I describe how *Coque* has been historically stigmatized as a “*morada da morte* [house of death]” (Neto 2010; FREITAS 2005) through an elaboration of the origins of the name *Coque* (Ferreira 2011, 17; FREITAS 2005, 261-74). In addition, chapter two introduces *Aderbal*’s family (particularly *Jessica* and *Jucelia*) and provides an image of everyday life in *Coque*. In other words, this chapter deals with the ‘slum’ in slum politics.

In chapter three, I portray what it means to be a *líder comunitário* [community leader] and introduce community leader *Aderbal* and an “anti-*Aderbal*” group of community leaders who collaborate under the name *Ponto de Cultura*. I elaborate the distinction between three types of politics as elaborated by Koster and de Vries (2012). In other words, this chapter deals with the ‘politics’ in slum politics.

In chapter four, I analyse a traumatic encounter (Žižek 2008), covering a day together with *Aderbal*, and link this event with slum politics. In addition, I introduce the notion of *Bull Sessions* (Frankfurt 2005) to describe the everyday conversations I had with *Aderbal*. I provide a hilarious example of one such sessions where his wife *Jucelia* was also present.

In chapter five, I highlight the importance of the intersection between livelihoods and politics in *Coque*. In this chapter I describe a guide through *Coque* that *Aderbal* gave and that gives insights on how he has formed his “inner circle” in Auyero’s terms (2001, 91) in the poorer sections of the community. I compare a guide that *Aderbal* gave with one given by *Matuto* from the *Ponto de Cultura*.

In chapter six, I continue an analysis of the differences between the community leaders in *Coque* to show that also their operational styles differ. I describe how a regular day at work for *Aderbal* looks like, and point at his hyper-active character and his “capacity to interpret, manage and master the opacity of the city” (Hansen and Verkaaik 2009, 5). I contrast this with a meeting at the *Ponto de Cultura* and show that although there was conflict between community leaders they also agreed for a major skate park to be built in the neighbourhood.

In chapter seven, slum politics and electoral politics get entwined when male politicians from the PSB enter *Coque*. The chapter shows the interdependence between the two types of politics when a congressman joins *Aderbal* to his distribution practice where both give speeches to poor women waiting to receive diapers and Tupperware. At the same time, the chapter shows that people in *Coque* can be very critical.

In chapter eight, I discuss *Aderbal*’s mobilisations in favour of the polarized *Novo Recife* project. *Novo Recife* is a large urban “beautification” project (Davis 2006, 98) that includes amongst others the building of luxury residence, theatres, and parks. I highlight in this chapter the entwinement of slum dweller’s livelihoods with electoral and governmental politics.

In chapter nine, I zoom in on heavy conflicts between *Aderbal* and his wife *Jucelia*. While on the one hand there is conflict and a gendered division within the household, on the other hand kinship relationships interrelate and connect with each other *Aderbal* and *Jucelia*, juxtaposing the *rua* and *mata*. As I try to show in this chapter, *the mata*’ remains a symbolic given for them, that, in terms of Brian Massumi, represents both hope and despair.

In the concluding chapter, I argue that slum politics does not result primarily from a clash between the world inside and outside of the slum, but from the social division *within* the slum. The community (*comunidade*) is divided due to the presence of the *favela*, often the *palafitas* [stilts] near the *mangue* [mangroves]. Here the *comunidade* represents the social organisation of an urban informal settlement, whereas the slum/*favela* represents an official part of the *comunidade* that is socially seen as an occupation. It is this part of the community that theoretically brings together both exclusivity and rupture, and that prevents the real estate powers from colonising the *comunidades*, making the *comunidade* fundamentally different from its surrounding areas. Likewise, it is in this part that rupture may emerge as a basis for hope. I propose a re-thinking of slum politics as a politics of the *mata*, a politics of the nobodies, as a politics that revolves around the right to the city of the extreme poor, those for whom the city has no place, as Rancière describes them, ‘the part of no part’.

CHAPTER II: THE CITY OF CONTRASTS AND EVERYDAY LIFE IN THE *COMUNIDADE*

Socio-spatial differentiation within *Coque*

Sven: “How did you experience the Brazil-Chile match?”

Male resident Coque: “You know, I did not care a damn [*porra*] about whether Brazil would win or not! However, when I saw how the team was suffering, how the players were all crying, especially the keeper, I said this is my country! I stood up to cheer for Brazil to win!”

2.1 Introduction

It has been argued that the term ‘slum’ is a problematic one, since it confuses physical features of the slum with the living conditions and characteristics of its residents (Gilbert 2007). In addition, it is difficult to provide a universal definition of what a slum is (Nussli and Heinrichs 2013). Slums cannot be defined by a single parameter, they are too multifaceted, too changeable, and frequently they have blurred boundaries.

Still, it has been argued that most studies that examine the livelihood situations of slum communities are quick to use the term ‘slum’, and do not compare differences within such communities (Owusu, Agyei-Mensah, and Lund 2008). However, for this thesis to argue that there actually exists something like slum politics, that is “about struggle and a striving to connect the margins to the political and economic order” (Koster 2009, 315), it is necessary to interpret the complicated social and physical context of life inside ‘the slum’. This life, it has been argued, “has its own dynamics, not in and of itself, but as a result of exploitation and marginalisation by the political and economic order” (Ibid 315) and as such is “fundamentally different from middle- and upper-class life” (Ibid 314). In this chapter, I argue that indeed this is the case, by contextualizing *Coque* within the city of *Recife*. As such, this chapter carefully initiates the argument that it is possible to theorise a slum politics that is entwined with, but could be separately identified from, a more encompassing citywide politics.

In the next section of this chapter, I introduce *Recife* and describe the *PREZEIS* participatory slum governance system. In the third section, I describe the geographical and environmental context of *Coque*. In the fourth section, I delve into the history of *Coque* by providing different explanations for the origin of its name. In these different explanations “each has its beauty and meaning” (Ferreira 2011, 17). In the fifth section, I outline in more detail the three realms of the *rua*, *casa* and *mata* that I use, both literally and metaphorically, to distinguish between types of politics later on in this thesis. In the sixth section I take you to the moment I first arrived in *Coque* and introduce *Aderbal’s* family and shortly describe a day making pizza’s with *Aderbal’s* daughter *Jessica* to highlight the role that humour plays in daily life (Goldstein 2003). In the last section, I describe the distinction between the *favela*/slum and *comunidade*/community by describing conflicts around land invasion near *Coque*. In other words, in this chapter I engage with the ‘slum’ in slum politics. The next chapter shows how slum politics differs for other types of politics and hence deals with the ‘politics’ in slum politics.

2.2 The city of contrasts

Recife is a city with an estimated population of 1.608.488 (IBGE 2014) in North-Eastern Brazil. A 2005 local newspaper title “One Recife, two worlds” explains well the contrasts one finds in the city (figure 1). The article refers to a city level study from the *Atlas do Desenvolvimento Humano* (Human Development Index) that states; “The modern and cosmopolitan *Boa Viagem* – home to the rich minority – contrasts with *Coque*, place of the poor and forgotten by the government” (Barque 2005). This 2005 study ranked the Human Development of *Coque* last among the *ZEIS* areas (*Zona Especial de Interesse Social*; Special Zone of Social Interest) (Menezes 2014). The quality of life for some people in the neighbourhood is still quite precarious. The urban landscape is such that in the same neighbourhood, and sometimes on the same street, nice brick houses and wooden shanties coexist (Barque 2005; Koster and Nuijten 2012; Winkelhoff 2011).

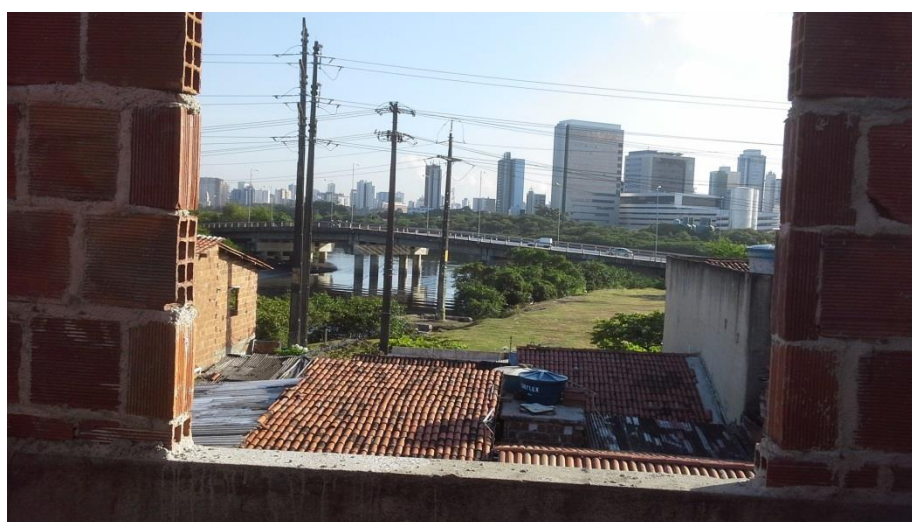


Figure 1: Contrasting view of city taken from *Aderbal's* house
Source: Luis de la Mora

Historically, in times of rapid urbanization, rural migrants squatted around the banks of the *Beberibe River*. Until the 1980s, attempts to ‘cleanse’ such areas by the then military government were met with stubborn resistance (Koster 2012). In 1987, as a result of popular mobilisation including the church and social movements, the *PREZEIS* (*Plano de Regularização das Zonas Especiais de Interesse Social*; Plan for Regularization of Special Zones of Social Interest) was created as a citywide framework for urban upgrading (Imparato and Ruster 2003, 87). Currently, there are 66 of such *ZEIS* areas in total (Menezes 2014) where over 600,000 residents live (de Vries forthcoming-c). It has been estimated that 16% of Recife’s territory is a *ZEIS* area, housing a total of 41% of the inhabitants of the city ((R)existe 2013a). From the early years of implementation of the *ZEIS* areas, in August 1983, *Coque* has been a *ZEIS* (FREITAS 2005). Hence, in *Coque* there is a long tradition of struggle that, I will show in this thesis, is continued by certain community leaders who struggle for basic sanitary needs, infrastructure, health, education, and safety.

The idea behind this *PREZEIS* framework is to protect *ZEIS* areas from real estate speculation, provide social services to these areas, and legalize property rights of invaded areas (Nuijten, Koster, and de Vries 2012). As such, it is a form of participatory slum governance, which provides tenure security to residents of the ‘informal city’ (de Vries forthcoming-c). The community representatives take part in joint community-government councils named *COMULs* (*Comissão de Legalização e Urbanização*; Commission of Legalization and Urbanization), to which these representatives are elected for a four-year period. *Aderbal*, who I introduce in the next chapter, is part of *Coque’s* *COMUL*. The *COMULs* are entitled to legislate on land use at the neighbourhood level. They receive special funding from the municipality for local projects and for contracting the services of specialized NGOs. Such a position in the *COMUL* carries a wage with it and as such, it is a coveted position (Nielsen 2002, 22).

The contrast between life in *Coque* and life of the rich outside it was humorously described by *Aderbal* when he picked me up near *Casa Forte* [an upper class neighbourhood in Recife] at a party given by university professor *Luis de la Mora*, who guided me when entering the field. When *Aderbal* and his son *Anderson* picked me up, *Aderbal* was quick to ask; “What was it like?”

Sven: I was not expecting the place to be so big. It even had a swimming pool. A completely different party from the ones I have observed in *Rua Camdoi* [street where I resided in *Coque*].

Aderbal: Here in Brazil, those who have [money] have, and those who have not also have nothing.

Sven: We were sitting at a table and in the middle, there were some little snacks. However, it seemed like everyone was just looking at the food. [Laughing] It seemed like watching each other – who was going to take the food first.

Aderbal: When a poor has food it is to eat and share, when a rich has food it is to show and keep. He [*Luis*] keeps the food for himself to eat [laughing].

Sven: If you wanted a drink you could call a person, I forgot how you call it, someone who will bring it for you.

Anderson: A *garçon*

Sven: Yeah, that. It was another Brazil.

[Back at the house]

Aderbal: The rich need the poor to become rich.

Aderbal tells *Jucelia*: He says that there was not much food as we have here at the party!

[Laughing]

Jucelia: Here we have *feijão* and *churrasco* to eat, eat, eat, and keep eating, isn’t it?

2.3 Socio-historical and geographical context of *Coque*

“You can only leave *Ilha Santo Antônio* (Saint Anthony Island) through the southern landfill named *Afogados* (the Drowned), which leads to a beautiful *povoação* (village) situated at one *légua* (measurement) of the city, traversing a sandy and marshy plain covered by mangroves which serve as refuge for a myriad of crabs [...] On the landfill there are some *cabanas* (huts) made of foliage where mulattos and free blacks live. Not knowing the customs of the country, I suppose it was women from the city that would come to recreate at these temporary dwellings, women

dressed in fine embroidered muslins I found lying on mats at the door of the huts; I was tempted to take off my hat to them. Miserable people who only wore an elegant muslin shirt did not pass by. The husband catches some crabs in mangroves, buying a handful of cassava flour, for 3 or 4 *soldos* (pence), and it sustains his entire family, who could, by means of such a frugal existence, surrender at careless idleness which constitutes all their happiness. [...] The mangrove (*mangue*), the coconut tree (*o coqueiro*), and the *dendezeiro* (palm tree) were the trees which provoked most of my attention on my walk through the landfill of *Afogados*; the field is generally flat, sandy and swampy. [...] We left the embankment of *Afogados*, to follow the principle to the southeast across a plain of sand (*planície de areia*), covered with mangroves, and frequently flooded by the sea; here and there we saw some miserable huts; they say they serve as a refuge of the robbers (*salteadores*); but we and our Negroes are heavily armed”.

_____ L.F. Tollenare, *Notas Dominicaes* (Sunday Notes), Recife in 1816 (Own translation of Tollenare 1906, 41-53)

A shorter version of this vivid description by Frenchman Louis-Francis Tollenare has been reported to perhaps be the earliest reference to *Coque* (Ferreira 2011). In 1816, Tollenare described in detail what he saw on his business trip to Recife, focussing on the vegetation in the region and people’s livelihood activities. Almost two decades later *Coque* houses three quarters of non-white population⁹ and has since the 90s been represented in newspapers as a *morada da morte* (house of death) (Neto 2010; FREITAS 2005; de FREITAS and NETO 2009; SILVA 2009). Historically governments have expelled residents from this area due to the strategic location. It has been reported that in 40 years *Coque* lost 51% of its territory, with peaks of expulsion in the military government ((R)existe 2013a; ImaginaNaCopa 2013). *Coque*’s strategic location combined with the stigma of it being a ‘house of death’ facilitated the eviction of people.

It is common that assaults near *Ilha do Leite* and *Boa Viagem* are assigned to residents of *Coque* (Lira 2008a). On the same street, in same house, it is possible to find on the one hand young people involved, or at risk of, getting involved in illicit networks, and on the other hand, those who fight for another image of the neighbourhood (Lira 2008a). Né, who forms the COMUL of *Coque* together with *Aderbal*, explains this historic stigmatization as follows; “In the past taxis would not even want to enter *Coque*”.

In the early twentieth century in central Recife, *Coque* emerged on the riverbanks of the *Capibaribe River* due to mangrove deforestation and influx of garbage (de FREITAS and NETO 2009). Before this time, the area was irregularly occupied. Residents who arrived from other areas in Brazil, and who had no other area to live, squatted near the riverbanks and built up. As such, like many other cities (Neuwirth 2005), Recife grew from the squatting of unused pieces of land. Most families were former residents of the *Pernambucan Agreste* (the half desert interior, literally wasteland) and the *Zona da Mata* (the coastal humid forest zone) (FREITAS 2005).

In the past such squatted areas along the mangroves were attractive because men could catch crabs to sustain their families, while the women, who worked as laundresses, could wash clothes in the river (Koster and Nuijten 2012). However, nowadays, women wash clothes in a (shared) washing machine and catching fish and crabs has declined due to pollution of the river. Although government maps and project images would tell otherwise, the river has a brown colour rather than blue (e.g. figure 2). Men have to find other possibilities to sustain their families, for example working in the disposal of waste produced by middle-class neighbourhoods through recycling activities. Next to pollution of the river, other producers of harm that

inhabitants have to deal with are types of violence (domestic, sexual, criminal, police) violence (see also Auyero and de Lara 2012).

To return to Tollenare's description, what was a long time ago named *Ilha Santo Antônio*, has been named after *Doña Joana Bezerra*, who came from an important colonial family (Barbosa 2010). *Ilha Joana Bezerra* lies between *Afogados* and a neighbourhood named *São José* (figure 2). It is on this "island" that *Coque*¹⁰ is located. Although it carries the name of island, it is in fact not an island. Metaphorically speaking it could be seen as an island nonetheless, since, as mentioned, many people outside of *Coque* still fear entering the area. When I would tell people in the bus or at the university that I would stay for two months in *Coque* their gaze would say enough. The part of *ZEIS Coque* can be found on the left of the viaduct. Although I have noticed people use different points to mark the area of *Coque*, the area is not confined to the borders of *Ilha Joana Bezerra*.

The number of inhabitants *Coque* differs significantly according to whom you ask. The fact that there is a difference between *Coque* and the *ZEIS Coque* also complicates calculations. The numbers that I have encountered range from 16 thousand inhabitants (TVJornal, 2013) to 40 thousand ((R)existe 2013a; Lira 2008a). Ironically, considering that this thesis studies hope in the slum, the main road to enter and leave *Coque* was called *Avandia Martin Luther King*. *Coque* is split by a main road (viaduct) which connects the northern (towards the university campus) and southern parts of the city (towards the beach). It is located about 2.5 km away from Recife's historical centre and 3.5 km away from *Boa Viagem* (high-income neighbourhood) (Lira 2008a; FREITAS 2005). The *Terminal Integrado Estação Joana Bezerra* (integrates metro and bus) facilitates travelling to other parts of the city. Although this often involves travelling like sardines in a can, after waiting for hours without any information. At the Integrated Terminal stallholders sell popcorn (*pipoca*), chips (*salgadinhos*), CDs, *tapioca*, (coconut) water, and other snacks. Similarly, in the main street of *Coque*, there are smaller markets where people are able to for example buy credit for their cell phones. In the main street there are a number of churches, barbershops, clothing shops, and shops where recycled TV's, refrigerators and furniture are sold.

As could be noticed, *Coque* is not a periphery since it is strategically located in the centre of Recife. It is economically integrated with the city. *Coque* borders with the *Capibaribe* river and Recife's medical hub (*Ilha do Leite*; Milk Island) which I have been told is one of the largest medical hubs in the country. Another ironical fact is that the new medical complex (Eyes Hospital of *Pernambuco*) is visible from inside of the slum and on top of the high building was a logo that read HOPE (for *Hospital de Olhos de Pernambuco*).

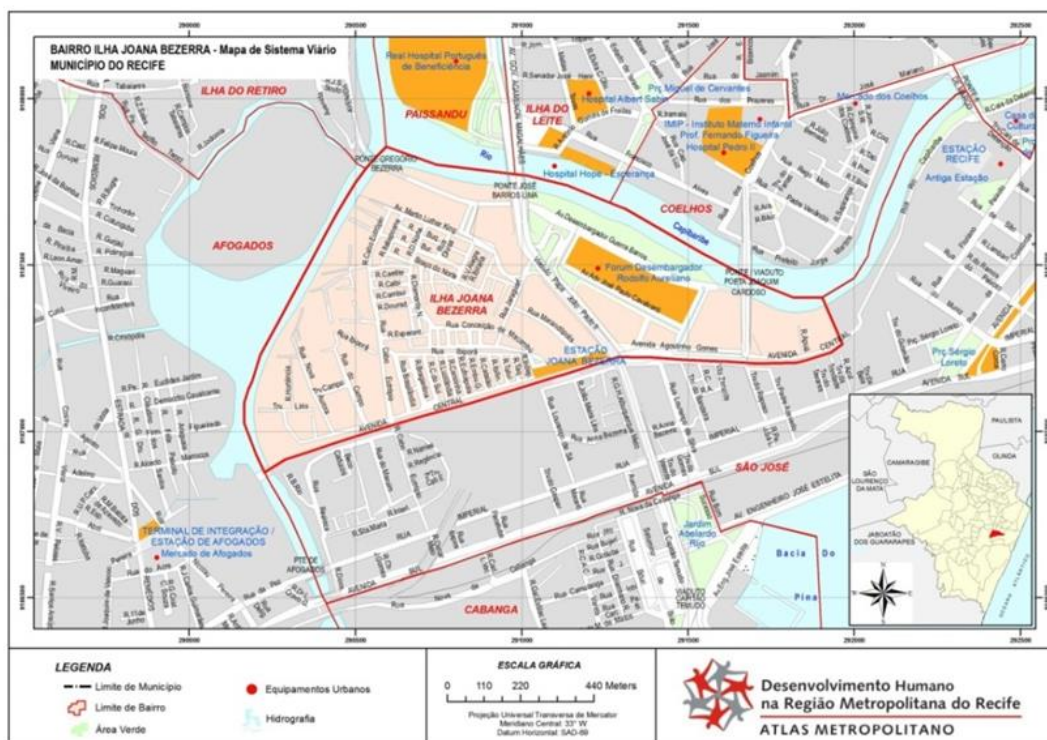


Figure 2: Map of Ilha Joana Bezerra

Source: <http://www2.recife.pe.gov.br/a-cidade/perfil-dos-bairros/rpa1/ilha-joana-bezerra>

2.4 Where does *Coque*'s name come from?

A look at the different stories that exist about the origins of *Coque* sheds light on the possible roots of the current stigma. In total, I came across six different stories, all scattered around different theses. The first, and most interesting, explanation for the name *Coque* is that it comes from *cocudos* (hard-headed people). The doctoral thesis of Simon Alexandre Freitas (FREITAS 2005, 261-74), explains how violence in *Coque* has a very long history that developed naturally. He explains that unlike the *malandro* figure (rascal) in Rio de Janeiro, Recife's history knows the *capanga* (thug) whose figure dates back to the late nineteenth century. It was at this time that the agrarian export model started to influence socio-spatial trade practices in the central area of Recife. The trade associated with port activities attracted a complex network of formal and informal businesses, which functioned as an important link in the transfer of sugarcane (from the *Zona da Mata*) and later cotton (from *Agreste*) to foreign markets. Freitas explains how this resulted in the hiring of armed men, the *capangas*, by sugar mill owners to ensure safe transport and sale of their products in Recife's port. These individuals went to locate nearby *Bairro de São José* not only because it was near the port, but also because a lot of bars and brothels could be found in the area. The whole area from the neighbourhood of *bairro de São José* towards the region of *Coqueiros* (including *Cabanga* and what is now known as *Coque*) became known for being a disorderly region. These *capangas* began the construction huts named *mocambos*. Residents were designated 'cocudos', i.e. brave people, hard-headed and easily oriented towards public display of power. Because it was common to use weapons by these *capangas*, these places were avoided by the population.

In the 60s and 70s the *capanga* transformed into a more universal figure of *malandro*

(bandit), a local one, and to some extent even social, because of crime and illicit trade becoming themselves underground commercial enterprises. Freitas points out that *Galeguinho do Coque* (Whitey from *Coque*) was the emblematic figure representing an image of a criminal from the community. In fact, when I was in *Coque*, *Aderbal* referred to *Galeguinho*, explaining his character as a kind of Robin Hood¹¹. Older residents of *Coque* will tell you the story that *Galeguinho do Coque* assaulted a truck loaded with milk powder and then distributed the milk powder in the community.

The second explanation is that *Coque* comes from *coqueiros* (coconut trees) which were in great abundance in the region where these *capangas* started to reside and of which the leaves were useful for covering the roofs of houses. A third explanation is that *Coque* comes from Cock (Ferreira 2011). At the time of construction of the railroad, people were afraid of being evicted from their homes. An English engineer with the surname Cock befriended the local people. He clarified and made sure that only some houses would have to be destroyed to make way for the railroad. The story goes that the name was given to honour the engineer. A fourth version, although discredited, is that *Coque* comes from the English word cook (Cavalcanti in “O Recife e seus bairros” according to ABCC 2010). In the area, there was a gasometer, which kept gas won by burning/cooking coal. The remains of this process were thrown away in the area. The word cook was transformed in *Coque* in this era. A fifth version, more plausible than the fourth, is that *Coque* refers to a person named Gaspar *Coque* (Ibid). Gaspar *Coque* was the owner of a piece of land on which a pottery was located. This was the same area known today as *Coque*. The last version is similar to the fifth, only that the pottery was a bar. In the mid-1950s there was bar owned by a man named *Coque* where workers on lunch breaks went to have fun, talk and rest. In weekends, they always visited the bar of Mr *Coque* (Ferreira 2011).

2.5 The realms of the ‘*rua*’, ‘*casa*’ and ‘*mata*’

I have discussed how *Coque* contrasts with other richer parts of city and discussed the history of the *capangas* and *malandros* that may have contributed to *Coque* being stigmatized as a ‘house of death’. In the following sections, I look at differentiation near and within *Coque*. Walking through the community, I could find myself on unpaved smelly roads with picket bare ducks and suddenly enter an area with horses and a beautiful view of the *Mangue* [mangroves]. One day an older man started a conversation with me, pointing out well some of the confusion I had myself about things that I saw on the streets, about what I believed to understand, but still perceived to be a ‘mismatch’ between life on the streets and family life. He described well the desires for consumption in a neighbourhood with strong ties to the wealthier part of Recife. The man said;

“As I lived here in *Coque* for most of my life, I research the people I live together with in the community, and still I cannot understand them. You will see young people on motorcycles, with brand clothes, but if you go inside their house, you will find an empty fridge. They do not have enough to feed their families. I go to work on my bicycle, and I do not have the best clothes, but still I make sure there is *feijão* (beans) to eat everyday”.

Literally and figuratively, I observed in *Coque* the “multiple social realities of three separate but intersecting realms” (Scheper-Hughes 1993) – *the casa* (house), *the rua* (street) and the *mata* (countryside). In other words, the description of the man quoted above is about the difference

between the *rua* and the *casa*, public and private. In this section, I shortly describe how these realms have been theorized. It began with Brazilian sociologist Roberto da Mata, for whom the *casa* (house) stood for *private* behaviour and morality. In the *casa* one is a *person*, a “*somebody*”, based on family and “natural” hierarchies of age and gender. The *casa* is (ideally) characterised by hospitality, love, and honourable dealing, and becomes the sphere of women, children, and domestic servants (da Mata in Rebhun 2002, 113). The *rua* (street) on the other hand, stood for *public* behaviour and morality in the streets and marketplace. Here one is an *individual*, an “*anybody*”, where ideally, everyone should be equal by law and it is “every man for himself”. In the *rua*, individuals fight for dominance making this conceptual categorisation the realm of men for da Mata. He argued that power plays are constantly used to “personalise”, hierarchize, and “domesticate”, the impersonal world of the streets (Scheper-Hughes 1993, 86). It is my believe that this may explain why (young) men seemed to prefer to buy brand clothes and motorcycles rather than food for their families.

Gilberto Freyre however interpreted the *casa* as the *casa grande*, the symbol of the planter class, “a pre-modern form of chieftainship or leadership by big men, the heads of large extended households protected by privately owned police forces” (Scheper-Hughes 1993, 87). For Freyre, not unlike da Mata, the *rua* on the other hand stood for the growth of the modern, less personalistic city that was more open, and did not have the strong hierarchy of the *casa grande*.

Using Freyre’s interpretation of the *casa grande*, Nancy Scheper-Hughes reinterpreted the conflict between *casa* and *rua* as a conflict between feudalism and capitalism and showed how wealthy families, ‘big people’, fence their lives from the *rua* to live a separate life from the ‘little people’. In addition, Scheper-Hughes identified another tension that she described as “the dynamic tension between *rua* and *mata*”. This tension concerned “the relationship between the street and the forest, between the *somebodies* and the *nobodies*, between the big people and little people” (Scheper-Hughes 1993, 88). As she put it, the *rua* (here city) stirs imagination of the *matutos*, rural people, “of a life free of obligations to the *patrões*” (1993, 89). However, in this world of the *rua* they are “neither modern individuals with rights [...] nor yet persons [...] respected and cherished” (ibid).

As such, the *mata* stands for the wild-side, the backwater, or the ‘inconsistency of the urban situation’ (De Vries forthcoming-b). It functions as a metaphor for the people that live in the *palafitas* (stilts). The *mata* in *Coque* stands for extreme poverty that as I will show in chapter five has a strong gender aspect to it. In addition, whereas Auyero’s *Poor People Politics* takes place in the *rua*, but also in the houses of community leaders, I will show that *Aderbal* keeps the two separate.

2.6 *Aderbal’s casa and family*

“You think this is a house?! This is a shack!”

— *Aderbal*, somewhat joking

We arrive at the house of *Aderbal* and *Jucelia* at *Rua Camdoi*. At the entrance of the house a dog is standing, tightened to a short necklace, surrounded by his own excrements, and different construction materials. Inside the house it is neat. I am introduced by *Luis*, a Mexican professor at the UFPE, as “Sven da Silva from the Netherlands, family of Lula [Workers Party, PT]”. At the entrance of the house, there is a patio that includes a stereo set, cement bags, a goal net,

chairs, a round table, slippers and a football picture. On the inside of the front door, there is a Bible text that reads; “*your weeping may be the whole night long, but the joy comes in the morning*”. After the patio, there is a living room (figure 3) that includes two sofas, a large TV, a computer with printer (nor cartridge nor paper), three clocks (none works) and a picture of their grandson. On the wall, there is also a religious painting that includes a white bird and a chalice surrounded by trees. A text is written besides it with I suppose would go something like this: “*God prepare a place for me together with my enemies. Put oil on my head such that I am ready to enter your Kingdom*”. In this part of the house, there is a door to the room of *Aderbal* and his wife.



Figure 3: Living room
Source: Luis de la Mora

In another part of the house, there is the kitchen with black and white tiles and a blue painted wall, an oven, and a large fridge. In the middle of the kitchen, there is a table with six chairs and there is the door to the room in which I will stay for two months. My room has a two-person bed and three chairs. A fan has been placed on one of the chairs. A picture of probably their son is hanging on the wall. In the kitchen, there is also a water jug and many other kitchen utensils, nicely placed in a row. The kitchen sink to wash dishes is a delineated space further away, and in that space on the right, it is possible to find a toilet and shower.

Although I have seen most of the house, the official guide through the house begins when *Luis* starts talking about the money I would pay. “We do 400 in two instalments, with an increase to 500 if the costs could be higher”, *Luis* says. I hear *Aderbal* muttering before he stands up to show me the house and say that I am welcome in his house. It is clear he does not like to talk about the money, as he wants to show that he works *de graça* [without asking something in return]. In addition, as a community leader I believe he does not want to profit personally from hosting a foreign student.

I soon notice that *Aderbal* and his wife *Jucelia* are not actually married, since the social risks of romantic marriage are possibly too high for lower-class people, hence making companionship more common for lower-class people (Rebhun 2002). Together they have three children (*Jessica*, *Anderson*, *Nino*), and two grandchildren (*Emanuel* and *Guilherme*). *Nino* is *Aderbal*'s

foster child [*filho de criança*], since he is a child of *Jucelia's* previous relation. All live in the same street. *Anderson* lives with his family on the floor above *Aderbal* and *Jucelia* their house. *Jessica* lives with hers at the end of the street, and *Nino* lives on his own next to *Jessica's* house.

Jucelia (48 years old) is like *Aderbal* a former *favelado*. *Aderbal* would often tell me that together they suffered a lot. *Jucelia* has seven siblings and sells ice to the inhabitants of *Coque* who like to keep their beers cold. She fills bottles of *Coca Cola* with water and places them in a large fridge. Previously she would make juices and sell them on the streets. In addition, she has held a number of jobs as a housekeeper. *Jucelia* cooks and washes the clothes for her family (and even for some of the neighbours). She cleans the house twice a day. Further, she is in charge of taking care of the dog, who in the most supreme form of irony has been named *Shakira* (“*calla boca Shakira!* [Shut up *Shakira!*]”). One day when a woman was trying to take of my shirt, something I obviously did not like and hence got into the house, *Jucelia* told me “*Shakira* makes sure the prostitutes do not enter the house”.



Figure 4: *Jucelia* in the kitchen

Source: Luis de la Mora

When *Jucelia* talked about *Aderbal* with me, she referred to him as *o patrão* [the boss]. At times she then says “my life is one full of *padrões* [bosses, referring to all the men around her]” or, “men become more *safado* [screwed up] the older they become”. She once told me that;

“On the street he [*Aderbal*] is different. From the money I get from the people [*a gente*], I buy food for inside the house. Nevertheless, he does not think like that. I believe that if your situation gets better, the situation of your family must also become better. He thinks first of the community and second his family. For me it is first family and after that *o povo* [the people].”

She herself on the other hand, would simply be called “CELIA!” by her four-year-old grandson *Emanuel* (*Jessica's* son). He would particularly do so when he was hungry, to watch cartoons on the TV, or play on his *Samsung Ipad*. Interestingly, *Emanuel* would talk about “my grandfather” when referring to *Aderbal*, while only occasionally doing so in the case of *Jucelia*. Similarly, domestic workers often address their patron in a polite way (*doña* and *señor*), while they are

themselves simply called by their first names (Goldstein 2003).

Jucelia makes the best *maracujá* juice, which would often get me to sleep soon after drinking it. In two months, I have seen *Jucelia* leave *Rua Camdoi* three times. When asked about it, she told me “if I leave the house nobody eats”. For most part of my stay inside their house, *Jucelia* would sleep on the couch, because she had a severe conflict with *Aderbal*, which had to do with *Aderbal’s* activities on the *rua*. Related to these conflicts, a niece of her told me; “You must be enjoying yourself between those two. If I need a good laugh I always come listen to *Jucelia* talking”. Although *Jucelia* (rightfully) complained at times, she still said, “I do not want to change this place [*Coque*] for anything else”.

During her hard work, she often pauses to light up a cigarette. Since houses are very close to each other (see figure 5), *Jucelia* could smoke a cigarette on her doorstep, and have a conversation with her neighbours standing in front of their own house. Similarly, it was common for neighbours to come inside of the house to have a chat, look what could be found in the fridge, drink some water, or share in the meals *Jucelia* cooked. She would tell other people “he will go back to the Netherlands as a solid-filled boy. He says he likes the food I prepare. There [in the Netherlands] they only eat potatoes”.



Figure 5: Rua Camdoi

Source: Author’s photograph

Daughter *Jessica* (25), or *Jé*, lives together with her husband *Claudio* and her son *Emanuel*. *Claudio* migrated from a rural area towards Recife. He leaves the house early in the mornings to get back later in the afternoon. *Jessica* left her parental house when she was sixteen to live next to her parents’ house. From the age of twelve, she makes small pizzas that someone then picks up at her place to sell on the streets for one *Reas*. She makes these pizzas while having a smoke occasionally, and while listening to Evangelic music that comes from big speakers she is able to connect to *Bluetooth* on her mobile phone. Regularly people then walk inside of her house just to greet her, borrow something, or talk about religion. She would tell me to “dream the impossible”.

As I will elaborate further in chapter nine, *Jessica* was critical of her father’s practices, partially due to religious values. She told me;

“When he [*Aderbal*] did not have money, you would not see so many people around him. It is like that; when you have money, you have friends. However, one day it could all be finished and then the people around you will not be the same. For me that [money] is not important, because you do not take it with you when you die. *Jesus e Fiel* [Jesus is Faithful], and he has told me that I am on the good road. It is hard work, but one day it is possible to achieve. I am dreaming to buy that house for my pizzeria [points to a house at the opposite site of *Rua Camdoz*]. It is a big house. In fact, there are two houses. It would be the house of my dreams [*casa da minha vida*]”

One day I was helping *Jessica* to make pizzas while the Evangelic music was playing as usual. It was dark inside due to the clouds outside. It was raining heavily. Cigarettes were lying all around the room, as *Jessica* was experiencing problems with *Claudio*. Suddenly raindrops started falling on the pizzas on the long table (figure 6).

Jessica: Meu Deus! Ieschfeng! Look at my situation! My house can fall down any moment, the rain gets inside, and I have problems with my husband [she starts laughing]

Sven: Its true and still you are laughing

Jessica: You need to laugh in order not to cry

Sven: True.

Jessica: I have cried too much. I figured you do not solve problems with that.



Figure 6: Jessica makes pizzas

Source: Author’s photograph

Anderson lives together with his wife *Daniela* [*Dédé*] and their eight-year-old son *Guilherme*. *Dédé* also cleans the home, washes clothes, cooks, and takes care of her son *Guilherme*. When she would talk about *Aderbal* with me, she would refer to him as “Obama”, explaining this by saying “*Aderbal* likes being chic, just like Obama”. *Anderson* would frequently wash his car, sometimes even twice a week. He wants to buy a motor to have next to the car. He leaves to work early and arrives in the afternoons, after which he would go and do the groceries at the nearby *Extra* supermarket. He often wears a t-shirt with the text “*Deus e Fiel*” [God is faithful]. His favourite Dutch football player is Nigél de Jong [*o negão do meo-campo*; the black one on the midfield]. In his

car *Anderson* would often play the music of *Wesley Safadão* and occasionally I heard him playing Luan Santana's *Eu você dois filhos um cachorro, cê topa?* [You, two kids, a dog, and me, fine with you?]. *Anderson* prefers to wear the Argentina national team shirt, because "the blue and white stripes are more beautiful than the yellow shirt". He told me that he was saving money for a couch.

Nino is a *filho de criança* [foster child] of *Aderbal*. *Nino* is a single, muscled man, with a thick silver necklace, a motorcycle, and a shirt of the Germany national team. He believed the red diagonal stripe to be cool, and correctly predicted that Germany would win the World Cup. He lives on his own at the end of *Rua Camdoi*. Every Wednesday he plays *futsal* [indoor football] with his friends at a nearby school. During the construction of the *Arena Pernambuco*, he was a *vigilante* [security]. Currently he has no other job, but he wants to get another diploma to find a more entertaining job in the field of security. In the meantime, he earns money by renting out another apartment that he reportedly has built by himself.

One day *Jucelia*, *Anderson*, *Jessica* were sitting outside in the afternoon – like was often the case – while *Anderson* was critical about *Jessica*'s costs for making a cake for the *vigília* [church meeting]. He turned to me and said, "You know there are enough persons who just go there [the church], because they know there is going to be food and not because they have faith in God." He believed it best only 'to only give things personally to people who really need it' and did not understand why the church relied so much on *Jessica*'s donations in the form of food. In addition, he warned against other people getting used to, and people profiting from, *Jessica*'s donations. *Jessica* agreed with her brother's comments, but still she believed that 'one day God will show his appreciation'.

2.7 The *favela* within and around the *comunidade*

In the above I have mentioned that Recife is a city of contrasts, with *Boa Viagem* standing in stark contrast with *Coque*, and that *Coque*'s status of ZEIS in the 80s has been the result of social movements struggles supported by the church, but where in the 'slum' does the rupture start that is the basis for hope? In this section, I elaborate on the *favela*, the *palafitas* (stilts) that is intimately connected to, but differs from the *comunidade*. It is this social division within *Coque*, in the *favela* near and within the *comunidade*, that provides the possibility of rupture as a basis for hope. Since also within *Coque* there was social division, I felt it inappropriate to use the homogenizing term 'community' for it, and therefore it was necessary to make use of the terms that *Coque*'s residents themselves use. I soon noticed that the areas where I was advised not to enter were referred as *favela* (crime, underdeveloped, "them"), whereas those places where I could walk safely were referred to as *comunidade* (relatively developed, "we") (see also Hellweg 2014). When I started talking about *Coque* as a *bairro* [neighbourhood], I was told by *Aderbal* that I should still use *comunidade* [community] for it.

In the way used here, the *comunidade* represents the social organisation of an urban informal settlement, whereas the *favela* represents an official part of the *comunidade* that is socially seen as an occupation or invasion (figure 7). Whereas the *favela* is a 'non-place', the *comunidade* operates as a legitimate part of the city (De Vries forthcoming-b). However, at the same time, community leaders form their social basis and cherish an intimate relationship with the *favela*, or the '*mata*' I would say, that in Lacanian parlance would be termed the 'extimate part', an intimate part that is not considered in the whole. The 'extimate part' is the "intimate which is radically Other"¹² or "exteriority in the intimacy" (Pavón-Cuéllar 2014). Community leaders, as I will

show through *Aderbal's* food distribution practices in chapter four, re-establish their relation with the *favela* on a daily basis. However, not all community leaders work to mobilise these poorer sections that live in the *favela*. On the contrary, some may also be paid to suppress these sections, explaining why, as we will see next, conflicts in the *comunidades* revolve around land invasions or evictions of people who live on stilts [*palafitas*] near mangroves [*mangue*]. Community leaders play an important role in conflicts around new land invasions, at times representing *favelados* and at times as representing forces that want to evict people that live in *palafitas* or new land invasions.



Figure 7: *Palafitas* in *Coque* (left) and squatters at *Rua Imperial* (right)
 Source: Author (left), Luis de la Mora (right)

On *Labour Day* 2014 a group of people decided to break into a fenced area near *Coque* at the *Rua Imperial*, located between two factories, where previously the railway passed (for another invasion see LEÃO 2014). According to community leader *Moises* – linked to the Workers Party and the *Ponto de Cultura* and from the start involved in this invasion – the area is federal land [*tereno federal*]. They started building wooden shacks. *Moises* explained that it concerned 130 people who were registered to start living in this area. Whatever material that could be used to build a shack was used by people who were working hard and walking on and up with their construction material. As I interpreted, movements such as the *Movement of struggles in Neighbourhoods, Vilas and Favelas* [MLB] supported community leaders in the registration of squatter settlement. There were attempts of the police to get the people from this piece of land. However, according to *Moises*, “they [police] want to earn by such an action”, but “since it was not private area and we [the squatters] had all the necessary papers they did not remove the people [*a gente*]”.

Aderbal (Socialist Party) on the other hand would say things like “this is private land” and “since this invasion the *bagunça* [mess] in our city began”. When I told *Aderbal* that I had been with *Moises* to the land invasions, he told me “they all have a house, they all have, and they simply want to win [*aproveita*], however one day the police will get them all out”. In addition, in his hyper talking style, he said, “Only 10 per cent of the people there needs a house, some of the people there even own a swimming pool!” He believes, using a rightist political argument against the poor, that “these actions are just to rent out again” or “just to sell it afterwards”. According to him, the manipulation is even so severe that “if there are 50 people who need a house, than that is too much”. Still, he is not against the invasion; “Now they [other community leaders] are saying that I am against. I am not against. I am against that these are not people who need a house”.

The conflict about these invasions returned later during fieldwork when the MLB was present in the city hall at the same time that *Aderbal* and I were there. They started a discussion with *Aderbal* who claimed that “those people all have houses” with the MLB activists contradicting this. As usual in such discussions, the topic turned when *Aderbal* claimed that they have no right to talk about *Coque* because he is the *líder comunitário*, contrary to people from *Coque (R)existe*¹³ (social movement in *Coque*) who say that they represent the neighbourhood but do not live there”. In the heated discussion, one of the activists claims that “You [*Aderbal*] say you’re a *líder comunitário* but you just represent yourself instead of the neighbourhood”.

When leaving the building the activist turned to me. One of the female activists argued, “This has nothing to do with *Coque (R)existe*, nothing with politics, it’s about people.” Others for example added “that man you are here with is saying that he is a *líder comunitário*, but he is not on the side of the community” or “you would do better to walk with us, because we are the part of the people”. Conflicts on ‘who is the real community leader’ were common as I soon noticed at entry. In the next chapter, I highlight these conflicts when introducing *Coque’s* community leaders.

CHAPTER III: COQUE'S COMMUNITY LEADERS AND THEIR POLITICS

On the distinctiveness of Slum Politics

“I missed more than 9,000 baskets in my career and lost almost 300 games. 26 times, I had to play a ball that would win the game in the final minutes and failed. I have failed repeatedly in my career. And that’s exactly what makes me a WINNER!!!”

___Michael Jordan on Aderbal’s Facebook

3.1 Introduction

In *Coque* a number of people call themselves a *líder comunitário* [community leader], but “there are two types of leaders”, *Luis de la Mora* soon after arrival explains. The first type of community leader is primarily engaged with the consciousness of people and raising awareness of the rights people have. The second type of leader legitimizes himself by giving a lot to the people (e.g. food or parties). Although there is some truth in such a classification, there is more to say about the meaning of the term community leader. In this chapter, I introduce *Aderbal* and an “anti-*Aderbal*” group of community leaders who collaborate under the name *Ponto de Cultura*. In addition, I describe the different type of politics that they are involved in.

Community leaders are the main facilitators as articulators of the needs and aspirations of slum dwellers (Koster and de Vries 2012, 83). They are “urban specialists who derive their power base from their capacity to mobilize the poorest residents of the *favela*” (De Vries forthcoming-b), that as mentioned, are the *palafitas* and land invasions located in and around the *comunidade*. As the case of *Aderbal* shows, community leaders do not only form their social basis in the *favela*, as mentioned in the previous chapter, they also have a personal history of living in the *favela*. To define the term *líder comunitário* more specifically, a community leader:

“Refers to a well-known person from one of the many poor neighbourhoods who is socially and politically active [and has] specific life histories and characteristics [that includes] having been born and living in the *favela*. [They] are deeply familiar with its struggles [which puts them in an] informal [position which] has to be built up from scratch and maintained” (Koster 2014a, 6).

This informal position can be built up in different ways (Hellweg 2014). As I will show for *Aderbal*, he has done so through his local football team. In addition, the position involves getting to know, and maintaining relations with, influential people outside of the *comunidade*. In doing so, community leaders must, on the one hand, maintain a reputation of independence and commitment to the locality, but on the other hand, at the same time, they are dependent on outsiders to make a living (Nielsen 2002). In the words of Scheper-Hughes (1993, 98) community leaders act with a “double ethic”; an egalitarian and collectivist ethic of the *mata* towards family, kin, co-workers and friends, and an hierarchic ethic of the *casa grande* towards their bosses, superiors, benefactors. As the case of *Aderbal* particularly will show, community

leaders may use their “inner circles” (Auyero, 2001) for both personal gain (*Aderbal* has worked his way out of the *favela*) and purposes that suit the politics outside of the *comunidade*.

Community leaders consequently “can be pictured in terms of convergence of diverging values in the context of complex social issues” (Koster and van Dijk 2013, 224). In their “complex, provisional and contested” (Koster 2014a) practices they have to temporally and precariously connect seemingly irreconcilable values in their person (Koster and van Dijk 2013, 221). That is because, I will elaborate in this chapter, community leaders operate in different types of politics, and as I will show in chapter five, they have their distinct ‘inner circle’. This chapter shows that, in the case of *Coque*, community leaders were in severe conflict, but at the same time they cooperated when they felt it would fit what they often called ‘*the luta*’, everyday struggles such as providing sanitary services, leisure activities, education, a better image to the community or countering injustice done to the community by the police and government.

3.2 *Aderbal do Leite*: Macho, community leader, and football player¹⁴

Former *favelado* *Aderbal* is a tall, 49 year old, dark-skinned, *líder comunitário* representing *Coque* in the *PREZEIS*. He forms part of *Coque*’s small neighbourhood commission known as *COMUL* (*Comissão de Legalização e Urbanização*; Commission of Legalization and Urbanization). *Aderbal* lived most of his life in *Coque*, and is linked to the Brazilian Socialist Party (PSB). He is right-winger of the local *FC Madureira*, a whisky drinker, listens to Funk music, and often plays *jogo di bicho* [animal lottery game]. He is a passionate *FC Santa Cruz tricolor*¹⁵ (somewhat ironically) fitting with a saying that I had often heard before in Latin America that goes “you can change partner, but not your football club”. *Aderbal* would jokingly be called a *pé-leve* [stands for light-walk, which translates as bummer]. One of his mottos is; “when you cannot handle a person you join him [*si você não pode com a pessoa se junta a ele*]”. Often *Aderbal* talks about bringing a crèche to the community, but more importantly, he believes that “*a gente* [people] need basic sanitation” and “a complete Urban Plan [*Plano Urbanístico*]”.

For most of his life, *Aderbal* worked in the transport sector, and in a *loja* [shop], but now he describes his job as *funcionario da prefeitura* [functionary at the city hall]. In one of the many emotional conversations about his life, he told me; “when working at the *logia* I entered beautiful houses, now thanks to God I have this also”, pointing inside his house (figure 4 and 5). His house started “from *papelão* [cardboard]”, with “only a single bed” that would be soaking wet in times of heavy rainfall. Now his house continues to grow.

One day *Aderbal* told me;

“I have learned to always think a step ahead and to be positive. If you are negative you will get backwards [...] I have already suffered a lot, but thanks to God I won [*graças a Deus venço*] I thank God for where I am now. [...] My mother did not want me to go with her [*Jucelia*]. Then I left the house. I have for three days slept in the streets. Now we are together for almost 30 years [...] It is a lot, a lot. You could write three books about my life”.

Aderbal is one of his nicknames. On the streets he is also called “*Aderbal do Leite*” [*Aderbal* from the milk], referring to his distribution practices that I will turn to in chapter five, or “*vereador*”, referring both to his walks with politicians in the community and his personal political aspirations. He is a *gente de coração* (humble person) to some and a *pelego* to others. Others have

more complicated descriptions of him such as *safado mais de coração* [screwed up person with a heart] or *safado com boas intenções* [screwed up person with good intentions]. One of *Coque's* residents described *Aderbal* as “a *nego di graça*, [black person who freely distributes]”, saying that “you just need to stop him when he passes by in his car, and then ask him for eggs, or whatever you will ask, he gives you, everything”.

As I will describe in chapter six, on a daily basis *Aderbal* goes from meeting to meeting, from person to person, from party building to the *prefeitura* [city hall] and from the *URB* [Recife Urbanization Company] to the city hall. In these governmental buildings, *Aderbal* is at times referred to as *meu nego* [my Negro], a term that was used as endearment for slaves in the colonial era (Goldstein 2003, 74). Looking at *Aderbal's* material possessions, it is clear that, in terms that I will elaborate later, *Aderbal* has outgrown the ‘*mata*’, something that has been possible due to his career in politics. However, this conclusion, that is drawn by other people inside and outside of *Coque*, seeing personal gain as a violation of the “communitarian ethic” (Nielsen 2002), clearly bothers *Aderbal*. Emotionally he told me; “I had to work hard to come so far that I am now constructing a third part of the house, I have stayed so long in a private job, and now they are trying to get me down. *Thát* is politics!” As will become clear in chapter five, like the community leaders in Auyero’s *Poor People’s Politics*, he does not see the distribution of goods in the community as politics but as voluntary work.

Aderbal grew up near *Coque*, in *Pitangera* [now called *Ilha do Zeca*], a poor swampy neighbourhood, where “in the past there were only houses of mud [*talpa*]”. Currently *Ilha do Zeca* is a nature conservation area. In the 70s, he was relocated to *UR-10*, a poor neighbourhood further away from the Recife’s centre, but after some years, he returned to *Coque*. In the documentary *Memórias da terra* [Memories of the land], made by students of the UFPE who work closely with community leaders to defend poor neighbourhoods from real estate powers, *Aderbal* emotionally tells his personal history while walking at *Pitangera*:

“My house was there, just at the back of the centre. The house of my mother. This, where all the trees are, was all residence area. Full of huts [*baracos*]! Everybody knew each other. Nobody touched other peoples’ stuff. In the 70s, when there was a huge flood. I was 5 years old. The next, in 1975, I was 10. They removed other people to live in *Ibura*. The centre was there [pointing] and we lived just near the centre. You see, they moved the people and now there is nothing here! They thought it [the flood] to be the cause of the river. So they made an arm for the river and moved people from here, where there is nothing. We already tried to get back, and invade, but the police came and moved the people. Because this is all rented space here now. And the Real Estate speculation is big now. We live in the centre of Recife. It is all to move us! But now that I am with a higher consciousness – an expert consciousness – for them to get me out will be difficult [...] We wanted to construct a life in here. And came the politicians. And got us out. There was a man who did accept the resettlement money, and did not want to leave. With force they got him out of his house and broke down his house. I got out, I was young, but I remember these stuff [crying]. It was the biggest humiliation of the people. Now people talk [negatively about *Coque*], but *Coque* is a place where people struggle. All to stay here, to continue huh” ((R)existe 2013b).

Aderbal's mother returned first, when she got an allotment [*loteamento*] from an invasion in the area where his current house stands. In *UR-10*, *Aderbal* was part of an *associação do Moradores* [association of inhabitants]. Here he played football and participated in meetings of the association. As he says it, “there *a gente* [we] started learning some things”.

Back in *Coque* it was by means of football [*atraves do futebol*], which made up his social network, that he got involved with politics at the end of the 90s. As he explains:

“There at *Pitangera* there was a club called *Bangu*. I loved that team. The club was named after a team in Rio de Janeiro. When I was playing there, I got in contact with the father from [local PSB politician, further referred to in this thesis as *deputado* (congressman)]. The contact got closer and closer. I started campaigning for him. The team almost ceased to exist. However, with his help I managed to buy all the materials needed. Everything I bought was official material! It was very expensive! Then I started organizing more activities with football.”

This was the beginning of his political trajectory as an organiser and campaigner (*cabo eleitoral*). In 2006 *Aderbal* participated in his first election for the *PREZEIS* and in 2008, he was elected to represent *Coque* for the first time. However, before that, he “was never interested in *negócio político* [political business]”. He recalls his first election as follows:

“There were many characters [*muitos caras*] who did not do anything. They were *Morea*, *Nado*, *Misu*, *Rildo*, *Cacao*, *Sharki*, *René* and various others. And people like me, also supported *Morea*. *Morea* was candidate for re-election. *Cara Babão* [continues naming people]. A lot of people, but he was the candidate, and there *a gente* [we], only to *tira onda* [fool around] with him, since he had a deal with the people, and to bust him, on the last day, very fast [*pegazo de luz*], we also entered the election and votes which would go to him also went to me. I had 108 votes [...] In the second election I had 543 votes. In the third I had 1000, almost 2000 votes [...]”

With regard to his formal position, he is *Presidente*, of the *Instituto Cultural Renascer do Coque* [Cultural Institute Rebirth of *Coque*] (figure 7) that stands at the entrance of *Rua Camdoi* where he lives. Here, together with another location in *Coque*, *Aderbal* distributes fruits, vegetables, diapers, and Tupperware to mainly the women living nearby.



Figure 7: Aderbal's institute
Source: Author's photograph

The institute opened in 2006, and the rent is paid by the *deputado*. The main goal for setting up the institute was, as *Aderbal* explains, “for a *gente* [us/we] to give things to the community”. He recounts that the *deputado* had given him the contact information of the headquarters of the *Extra* supermarket in São Paulo who in turn helped him to arrange with the *Extra* in Recife to supply him with (over-date/unsellable) fruits and vegetables to distribute in *Coque*.

Interestingly, the institute building is primarily used as a storage house, and at times Evangelical meetings are held in it. Although his main activity is the distribution of goods, *Aderbal* is also involved in arranging work for people, helping people to fill in certain forms, arranging for the streetlights to be fixed, informing the police and government on dangerous areas (and even provides names of people), informs people about upcoming projects in the area, organizes festivities whenever there is a reason to party, and often gives people rides whenever he is on the road. I even had the impression that he helps people to open a bank account or credit card, although I have not seen this explicitly discussed.

In his activities, *Aderbal* is helped by an ‘inner circle’ of helpers. I shortly introduce them here, but they will return later in the following chapters. In general, *Pipoca* [Popcorn] and *Nado* [Ronaldo] are often around *Aderbal*, helping him in organising parties and informing *Coque*'s residents of these activities. Like *Nado* and *Pipoca*, *Walter* helps *Aderbal* as part of a “political team” when politicians from the Socialist party enter *Coque*, an event that I discuss in chapter seven. However, *Walter*'s role is limited to this “team”. *Damilo* helps *Aderbal* pick up and transport the food from the *Extra* supermarket towards his distribution point.

René, a short dark-skinned man, who was at times referred to as “the mouth”, ordered me to take a picture of him with *Aderbal* and *Nado*, stating afterwards that I write “united for *Coque*” as a subscript for the picture (see figure 8). *René* will return later when I discuss in chapter eight the *Novo Recife* project, a large urban “beautification” project (Davis 2006, 98) that includes amongst others the building of luxury residence, theatres, and parks.



Figure 8: “United for Coque”

Source: Author’s photograph

In the theory of Auyero (2001), *Aderbal* would be a community leader that is rising in popularity and available resources. He has got so far in an opportunistic style, in the same way as he entered politics. Just to ‘*tira onda*’, a saying that originated in Rio de Janeiro from the surfers who only show off, they take a dive rather than a wave. In this way, he achieved his latest re-election November 9th 2014, and his dream is to become a *vereador* [alderman] in 2016.

While discussing his political career on his couch, and the many people who comment on him, he repeatedly said “I am living my moment”. At such moments, he would reflect at the same time on his personal history of suffering; of the relocation to *UR-10*, of the racism in the country and of his hard labour to name just a few. Yet now, in his own words, he belongs to a class ‘between middle class and rich’, but in general he often made the distinction between ‘those who have’ and ‘those who have not’ and would then consider himself as belonging to ‘the ones that have not’. As we will see next, there is also a group of community leaders who have a different operational style and now, with the PSB in government, their popularity and available resources are going down.

3.3 The *Ponto de Cultura* community leaders

This group consists of *Rildo*, *Matuto*, *Moises*, *Carlos* and *Ricardo* (Workers Party, PT). Together with others, they have created the *Ponto de Cultura Espaço Livre Do Coque* [Cultural Point Free Space of *Coque*] (figure 9). It has been founded in 2010. According to professor *Luis*’s classification, they fall under the ‘politically conscious community leaders’. Contrary to *Aderbal* most of the *Ponto de Cultura* community leaders are involved in keeping the (historical) memories of *Coque* alive, and *Rildo*, the central figure of this group, has a political history in popular mobilisations that goes back to the founding of the *PREZEIS*.



Figure 9: Espaço Livre do Coque meeting area

Source: Author's photograph

The logo of the *Ponto de Cultura* symbolizes a hummingbird that is putting out a fire. The fable goes that one day there was a forest fire. The hummingbird would bring drop by drop from the nearest lake to the forest. Then an elephant asks to the hummingbird “do you really believe you are going to extinguish the fire like this?” The hummingbird replies, “I am simply contributing my part”. This building is filled with books and pictures, and here each week meetings are held where problems are discussed and events are organised.

At the *Ponto de Cultura*, notes are kept of each Monday meeting, and each of the people involved has a specific position and specialisation. These are for example, finance, education, health or heritage. I have mainly observed them discussing about a mobile museum, where they could walk through the community while showing videos of inhabitants telling their memories. In addition, the space provided by the Internet plays an important role, since I noted how this group is very active on the *Facebook* and they were discussing about making a specific website. Here they are getting help from some journalists interested in alternative media sources and especially university students who are, rightly so, critical of Real Estate investments in the city.

Aderbal was in severe conflict with leaders from the *Ponto de Cultura*. I soon heard rumours that *Aderbal* has sent *Moises* to justice for the suspicion of robbery. *Aderbal* would, enthusiastically tell me later, that *Moises* had to go to jail due to “*tentativo de homicidio* [attempted homicide]” and robbery. Comparing himself to other leaders in the community, *Aderbal* said “To say something is different from really doing something”. In addition, *Aderbal* would say things as “*Matuto* saw me yesterday and he quickly turned around. He does not know anything! That is why people love me!” or “He [*Rildo*] is a *partidista aproveitador!* [Is only interested in his political party and profits from the misery in the community]”. Further, *Aderbal* could make fun of *Matuto* saying, “*Matuto* cannot speak in public, *Matuto* is illiterate”.

On the other hand, *Rildo* would say things as “He [*Aderbal*] works for a *prefeito* that is a dictator”. He explains his concerns in length;

“Within the same community, there are other groups, who are co-opted. They [other community leaders] use the difficult condition in which people live, to benefit they invest in their [residents of community] jobs, in donations, and they [residents in community]

then do the things said by them [co-opted community leaders] while knowing that what they are doing is wrong. We from the *Ponto di Cultura* do not like to fight with that *compañero*, who has that reputation, who has that comprehension, and doing this in practice. That is what we call a *pelego*, a *pelego* is someone who is conscious. He knows that what he is doing is wrong, but still he does so for his own interest. We are not like that. Our motto is the hummingbird that puts off the fire. We are not better. Not worse. Not even equal. Not even different. We simply do our part! That is our motto. We do not fight with nobody!”.

However, although there was conflict between the leaders, it was also possible to see both parties talk about what they referred to as ‘a never ending *luta* [struggle]’. For example, *Aderbal* would say at times, “the *permanencia* [belonging] of the people is *luta* and *resistencia* [resistance] and that will never stop”. Similarly, *Rildo* said, “the *luta* of a *gente* is a *luta eterna*” [our struggle is an eternal struggle]. This *Nordestino* metaphor, that is especially so in the *rua*, “portrays life as a veritable battleground between strong and weak, powerful and powerless, young and old, male and female, and above all, rich and poor” that “requires strength and intelligence, cunning, courage, and know-how (*jeito*)” (Scheper-Hughes 1993, 188). In the case of community leaders, it refers to their everyday struggles such as providing sanitary services, leisure activities, education, a better image to the community, or countering injustice done to the community by the police and government. As I argue in this thesis, this *luta*, is especially part of a hybrid type of politics that revolves around the hope of *mata*, of the ‘part of no part’ as Rancière would have it.

3.4 The types of politics in which community leaders are involved

Before I ethnographically rethink slum politics in this thesis, building on the phenomena of community leaders with which I initiated the current chapter, it is helpful to look at a typology made by Koster and de Vries (2012) that distinguishes between governmental politics (programs and projects), electoral politics (voting) and slum politics (needs, aspirations, hope and possibility of slum dwellers). Table one summarises these “entwined and interdependent, but different” (2012, 83) types of politics. In this typology, “governmental politics is about representing, managing, and governing populations, while slum politics is about claiming the right to be counted, to be recognized, and about the care for the other”(Koster and de Vries 2012, 86) and electoral politics “comprises all practices that are in some way instrumental for getting votes, assuming or maintaining public positions, and making money as such” (ibid, 88).

Here, slum politics centres around the needs and aspirations of slum dwellers, or as I will argue later, those of the ‘*favela* within the *comunidade*’, whereas governmental politics and electoral politics are based on those outside of the slum (ibid, 97). More specifically, as shortly pointed out above, “governmental politics is tied to the time of projects and programs, and electoral politics to the time of electoral campaigns and administrative periods, slum politics is tied to the time of the slum and its needs and aspirations” (ibid, 96). The following chapters delve into the relationships between these types of politics as they play out in the context of *Coque*. In doing so, I will follow Koster and de Vries (2012) who “turn the tables around and privilege the ontological horizon of slum politics” (ibid, 86).

Following Hardt and Negri (2009) who define ‘the poor’ as ‘those who lack the burden of property’ they argue that slum politics “emerges from a certain freedom that offers

possibilities for constructing a different kind of world” (Koster and de Vries, 2012, 87), involving the organisation of “life in a broad sense, ranging from family life, to making a living, to dreaming about the future” (ibid, 87). Slum politics is based on the awareness of not being counted, of not being a part of society, of not being proper citizens, or again, of being ‘the part of no part’ as Rancière would say. However, this does not mean that such awareness expresses a desire to be part of civil society and to become a proper citizen. Koster and de Vries (2012) argue that slum politics, a politics that ‘often seems irrational and inconsequential’ from a governmental political view, “is not so much concerned with any institutionalized discourse of citizenship and rights, but creates its own spaces partly independent from dominant discourses” (ibid, 87).

As I will particularly show with the case of the *Ponto de Cultura* community leaders in their *Espaço livre* (free space), slum politics often involves reflection about the type of community they would like to see. Koster and de Vries (2012) rightly emphasize that this reflection is something that previous theorization on slum politics has often neglected or underrepresented. When this reflection is emphasized, it becomes possible to depart from a number of tendencies in previous theorizations of poor people’s politics. That is, to open up the conceptualisation of slum politics for it to be more than simply a ‘politics of survival’ (ibid, 86).

First, slum dwellers are not *necessarily*, and especially not *simply*, victims of a clientelist political system, impelled to sell their votes to manipulative politicians in return for favours (Auyero, 2001). Second, slum dwellers’ politics is not limited to involvement in governmental programs, nor is it particularly about responses to external interventions. Although slum dwellers make use of state institutions and/or participate in (non)governmental programs, and although slum politics is about not accepting the terms of power from governmental politics, Koster and de Vries (2012, 87) argue that “it would be wrong to envisage slum politics in a reactive way, as a form of resistance or transgression, for this would mean accepting the primacy of governmentality in shaping the political terrain”. Third, slum politics is not “a derivative kind of politics” (ibid, 85), “but foundational of politics in general, and governmental politics in particular” (ibid, 86). The latter I attempt to show in the case of the Real Estate project (*Novo Recife*) in chapter eight, when ‘the part of no part’ in Rancière’s terms, or the *mata* in Schepers-Hughe’s terms, ‘raises its voice and demands to be recognized’.

Table 1: The distinctiveness of Slum politics^a

	Governmental	Electoral	Slum
Is about	Managing and governing populations	All practices that are instrumental for getting votes, assuming or maintaining public positions, and making money as such	Claiming the right to be counted and recognized, the care for the other, not accepting the terms of power set by governmental politics
Emerges from	Interests of Political Economy	Need to remain in influential positions, political competition between parties	Needs and aspirations of the community
Based on	Government officials problematizing life conditions of subordinated populations for intervention	Promises of jobs, social services, infrastructure, making an extra income through campaigning	Awareness of not being counted, of not being a part of society, of not being proper citizens
Fields of activity	City Hall, URB, projects	Political Party, the road/squares, public space	Local/slum organisations, church
Time	Projects, programs, agendas	Electoral campaigns and administrative periods	Slum and community history
Idioms	Citizenship	Patron-client relations	Community solidarity
Scale	The city	The city	The community
Main protagonists	Educated elite	Political patrons	Community leaders

^aThis table is based to a large extent on Koster and de Vries (2012)

In this thesis, I will provide examples of the above typology. Roughly chapters four, five and six are primarily dedicated to slum politics, and chapters seven and eight dedicate attention to the links between slum politics and electoral politics and slum politics and governmental politics respectively. In chapter nine, I shift the focus from Aderbal to his wife, to highlight that slum politics is not only a politics of community leaders. These chapters all contribute to a rethinking and elaboration of the above table. In the concluding chapter, amongst others, I will add a gender aspect to the table, to argue that slum politics is gendered in ways that governmental and electoral politics are not, since extreme poverty is highly gendered (Scheper-Hughes 1993; Chant 2006; Doshi 2011). The discussion of the gender aspect in this thesis starts in the next chapter that describes particularly one day at the beginning of fieldwork.

CHAPTER IV: WHERE IS THE HOPE?

On Bull Sessions and the sexualisation of power

“[...] the same holds for every authentic intersubjective encounter: when do I actually encounter the Other beyond the wall of language, in the realm of his or her being? Not when I am able to describe her, not even when I learn her values, dreams, and so on, but only when I encounter the Other in her moment of *jouissance*¹⁶: when I discern in her a tiny detail (a compulsive gesture, an excessive facial expression, a tic) which signals the intensity of the real of *jouissance*. This encounter with the real is always traumatic; there is something at least minimally obscene about it; I cannot simply integrate it into my universe, there is always a gulf separating me from it”
_____Slavoj Žižek (2008, 61)

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is intended to make a methodological argument, as well as to highlight that the concept of slum politics as a politics of hope makes possible to see dreams and hope in places that you would least expect it. I describe first a ‘traumatic’ day, as Žižek would say, at the beginning of fieldwork together with *Aderbal*. I then proceed to introduce the notion of *Bull Sessions*, a notion that both describes my daily fieldwork experience, and since it took place for a large part in the *rua*, it describes as well the ‘personalisation’ or ‘domestication’ of ‘the streets’ as explained in chapter two. Thirdly, I provide an example of a *Bull Session* that did not take place on the road, but inside *Aderbal*’s house in the presence of his wife *Jucelia*. I do so in order to introduce in this chapter as well the consequences of *Aderbal*’s involvement in politics for his wife, a topic that I return to later in chapter nine. In the concluding section, I return to the traumatic day and look at it from the perspective of slum politics.

4.2 A traumatic day

“When I kill I go to prison
When I rob I go to prison
When I have sex with a minor [*pegar novinha*] I go to prison satisfied”
_____Funk music in *Aderbal*’s car by MC Sheldon e Boco, *Vem novinha tomar todynho* [come take chocolate milk girl]

Aderbal calls me; “*Borra gringo!* [let’s go foreigner!]”. Inside of his car, a video screen allows him to see whether there are any kids playing behind the car. I have no idea where we are going. When we are in *Realeza*, which *Aderbal* explains to be a subarea of *Coque* a girl gets in the car. She would later introduce herself as *Ali*. *Ali* is thin brown-skinned girl with short pants, her shirt tied on one side, and a piercing through her nose. While driving *Aderbal* names all the places that we pass and I write down what I hear. Amongst others, we pass *Estância* and *Jordão*.

While driving behind a woman sitting as a second passenger on the back of a motor *Aderbal* remarks; “What a *bunda!* [buttocks]. Look at that!”. *Ali* is constantly laughing in the back of the car. *Aderbal* constantly makes such sexual remarks or point to different luxury cars, causing the conversation to often shift amongst others between ‘the hot Brazilian ladies’, ‘the

corrupt Brazilian politicians' and 'the needs of a *gente* ["we", the people]'. Along the way, he makes a difficult to follow calculation about the salaries of the *vereador* and *deputado*. This calculation ends with "politicians are all thieves" and he "does not want to get involved".

The conversations shifts again, just outside of the city centre, when we pass the construction of a new hospital. According to *Aderbal* it was promised by *prefeito* Geraldo Julio (*PSB*); "This *prefeito* is doing in four years what the *PT* (Workers Party) has done in twelve". Then the following conversation starts, in which *Aderbal* tries to grasp the situation between 'outsiders' and 'insiders' of the slum. In addition, he implicitly tries to show that community leaders are the only legitimate persons to represent *Coque*.

Aderbal: What is your study about?

Sven: it is about your life and that in *Coque* [somewhat teasing]

Aderbal: It is *complicado* [complicated]

Sven: If it is complicated, then it is worth studying I believe

Aderbal: [looks at me, away from the steering wheel, and nods his head]
[moments later]

Aderbal: Did you know about *Coque* because of the *NEIMFA* [NGO]?

Sven: No, just by myself searching on the computer

Aderbal: *NEIMFA* gives *Coque* a bad name, saying there is a lot of violence in *Coque*

Sven: I have not seen any violence until now

Aderbal: *Ta vendo!* ["do you see that", turning to *Ali* in the back of the car]

They can bring a lot of good stuff, but they don't. *NEIMFA* needs *Coque*. If *Coque* did not have a bad name, they would not exist.

We are already some distance away from *Rua Camdoi*, the street where *Aderbal* lives, and I am getting an idea where we are going. "People come to live here if they are removed from *Coque*", *Aderbal* says. Followed by "I have lived here in *UR-10*", the place that, as mentioned in the previous chapter, *Aderbal* went to live in the 70s after the flooding and eviction. Here there are more hills, and it looks more like what I expected 'a *favela*' to be, with houses cropped against each other on a hillside. We continue driving upwards a hill where *Aderbal* stops the car and gets out.

While he is getting back to the car, at the point of opening the door, suddenly a fight starts. *Aderbal* is fighting with *Tio*, the man who I saw yesterday entering *Aderbal's* house when there was a party in the street. *Aderbal's* *S.C. Internacional* shirt [Football club Porto Alegre] is ripped and the two men end up in a heap of sand from construction work behind the car. Two other men quickly run to separate the two. *Ali* also gets outside of the car and starts shouting things to *Tio* and other bystanders. Before I know, *Aderbal* and *Ali* are back in the car. More people have come outside of their homes and are yelling things that you do not learn during a Portuguese language course. *Aderbal* replies to them by yelling "*e você!*" [It is you!].

Furious as *Aderbal* is, taking quick breaths, he immediately takes his phone while driving away from the crowd. He is calling the police and stands still down the hill; "*Commandante* it is me!". He explains the location and that there was a *briga* [fight]. While driving away from the location towards the house of his mother and other family members *Aderbal* asks (with a smile) whether I liked what I just saw. I reply that 'it is shit [*bosta*]', which *Aderbal* interprets as 'Tio is full of shit'.

At the house of his family, I stay in the car, still to some extent shocked about what I

have just seen. I am wondering where I have landed now, only two days ago, and whether I should ignore this event in my writings. Meanwhile I constantly look behind the car, imagining the case that *Tio* returns for his revenge. On the way home again I am not only thinking about this possible revenge. What would people, especially my girlfriend, think if I told them my host took me to a place where he had a fight? These thoughts are quickly noticed by *Aderbal*.

Aderbal: What are you thinking about, *gringo*?

Sven: Whether I am going to *escribir* or *calla boca*? [write or shut up]

Aderbal: Yes, yes, *bota!* [pointing to notebook] there is no problem! I am not telling you what to write or not, just do what you think is *certo!*

Aderbal: This man has *homicidios* on his name!

Sven: I have seen him yesterday at the house.

Aderbal: He came to threaten *Anderson*, but luckily, *Anderson* was not home.
[almost back at the house again]

Ali: But what do you think of it?

Sven: My heart did like this [sign of beating]

Ali: [laughs] Have you seen something like this in your country?

Sven: Yes on the football pitch, these things happen, but I have not seen a fight just like this in a neighbourhood before in my life

Ali: Here everyone has once gotten into a fight. You can find videos of people fighting on the Internet. There it is full of such things. [Silent] It starts like this with a fight and before you know it is *bala* [bullets], everybody has one [gun] here

Sven: Do you have one? [Looking at *Aderbal*, who laughs back]

Ali: Everybody has! [laughing]

At home, *Aderbal* is proudly telling his wife and the neighbours about the fight and that I have seen it. We have a meal and leave the house again 'to see the beautiful beaches of Recife'. If I thought I had enough to think about and write about *Coque* only in the first part of the day then I was wrong. Before I know, *Aderbal* is picking up *Ali* and a friend of hers *Paulinha* to join. *Paulinha* is a brown-skinned 15-year-old girl. They start giggling in the back of the car and this is where the second part of the day starts.

Girls: Do you want to do it with us?

Aderbal: Which one do you want?

Paulinha: anus, *lubricante* [laughing]

Sven: No, No!

Aderbal: Later we go to a motel!

Sven: I am not. I am not *tarado* [maniac] I am *fiel*
[girls giggle in the back of the car]

Girls: But you will turn into one

Girls: You must have come to study the biology of girls?

Aderbal: Laughing

Sven: No not that

Girls: *Mentira!* [it is a lie] [laughing/giggling]

Aderbal: What are you going to do for two months?

Sven: Nothing

Girls: [continue laughing and giggling]

Girls: Two months without doing sex?!

Sven: Possible

Girls: [continue giggling and chatting with each other]

Sven: You may think that I cannot, but I am a *gringo santo* [holy foreigner]

When we arrive at the beach, *Aderbal* buys *Red Bull* and a small bottle of *Teachers* rum at a small shop around the corner. At the see-side restaurant *Aderbal* orders a large bottle of *Skol* beer while the girls start putting tanning oil, say things as ‘the browner the better’, and laugh at my white legs. When *Aderbal* walks away, to order French fries and *churrasco* [meat] *Ali* continues; “I am a *Brasileira falsa* [false Brazilian] and I proudly am”. She sometimes takes a sip of the rum, while *Paulinha* shifts between the *Coca Cola* and the beer. I am wondering how much *Aderbal* is spending here for the food, since we have just had lunch made by *Jucelia*. When the food is finished, and the hottest time of the day has passed we leave again.

While driving, suddenly *Aderbal* looks at me with red eyes and says, “*de la Mora* in other words said that I am a thief, you can see that I am not. What he did was *disrespeite* [disrespectful], *a gente* [we] do not like *disrespeite* [disrespect]”, referring to what happened yesterday at the elections in *Planeto dos Macacos*. Yesterday Mexican professor *Luis de la Mora* showed me around in Recife, and at the end of the day we visited *PREZEIS* elections at a *ZEIS* area named *Planeta dos macacos* [Planet of the Apes]. *Aderbal* and a couple of other people with the green *PREZEIS* shirts were standing outside of a small building near *Aderbal’s* car. *Luis* and *Aderbal* get into what seems a friendly conversation

Luis: And I can see you have a new car!

Aderbal: Mine? [laughs] From the bank you mean!

[other people around also laugh]

Aderbal: I am still paying for it every month

Luis: I see

Aderbal: And your car?

Luis: [points] Yours looks better than mine.

Aderbal: It is time for an upgrade, you could afford more, you are a professor!

Luis: [laughs] I am happy with mine.

Back in the car on the way to *Coque* *Luis* told me that he always ‘gets suspicious when people suddenly have a new car’ due corruption practices. It is exactly this accusation that *Aderbal* felt in the above conversation, as he is talking about it now that we are on the way back to *Coque*. “Haven’t you seen how *de la Mora* said a community leader cannot have a car?” he continues, while driving fast on the bumpy roads of Recife.

4.3 Gathering data through Bull Sessions

Most insightful conversations took place inside *Aderbal’s* car or walking on the streets. I would jokingly refer to his car as ‘his office’, since he kept necessary daily documents inside it and had most conversations in the car as well with other inhabitants, most frequently women whom he gave a lift to their work or back to *Coque*. I even had the impression that *Aderbal* did not consider this car to be ‘his own’, but rather ‘from the community’.

In the car he told me about politics and his personal life, driving fast, often with *Funk* music on the background and his phone in one hand. With the other hand he would switch between the clutch and the steering wheel. On the road, going towards meetings or the city hall for example, the music of *Polentinba do arrocha* is his favourite. The song entitled *Poderoza* (powerful) would often blast out of the boxes in his car that even has a small TV screen in it. *Funk* music and performance, that has a tendency to be derogatory for women, at the same time can be critical and creative and has a utopian potential, where the poor “have power and can be proud of who they are and where they come from” (Sneed 2008). After the usual *Uh uuuhu ien ien ien ien*, *Polentinbaaaa*, the song *Poderoza* would continue:

When she comes for the dance
In a dress of Ed Hardy
She's a *panicat* type [often underdressed girls that assist in TV programs]
featured sexy on the cover
Powerful, wonderful
Where she passes uncomfortable
Where she passes uncomfortable

Sick [*enjoada*], armoured mind [*da mente blindada*]
Only drinks tequila and sips the cup
This girl is a hot plate, an experienced bandit
When she enters she robs the scene
From the *camaro* [luxury car] she waves, from the *camaro* she waves

Topics inevitably switched between, on the one hand, politics, projects and football, and on the other hand, the for me uncomfortable “*safada* speech” [immoral, often about women]. Although I was often reluctant to enter the car, knowing beforehand that the latter type of conversations would follow, I knew that I would be missing interesting information if I would not join *Aderbal* on the road.

In other words, power relations were omnipresent in the peculiar relationship I developed with *Aderbal*, even after this shocking entrance to the field. In the car, on the couch, on the football field, I went from one *Bull Session* (Frankfurt 2005) to another with him. He was always trying to poke, impress, get around topics raised, exaggerate, while I constantly tried to defend, hit the counterattack, and figure out which things to believe or not.

Stepping outside of a conversation during another one of such *Bull Sessions*, I got myself thinking that if I had hung a camera in the car, we would look like Patrick van der Eem and Joran van der Sloot¹⁷. I take the term *Bull sessions* from one of the few philosophers interested in the topic of bullshit, who writes;

“What is distinctive about the sort of informal discussion among males that constitutes a bull session is, it seems to me, something like this: while the discussion may be intense and significant, it is in a certain respect not “for real”. The characteristic topics of a bull session have to do with very personal and emotion-laden aspects of life—for instance, religion, politics, or sex. People are generally reluctant to speak altogether openly about these topics if they expect that they might be taken too seriously. What tends to go on in

a bull session is that the participants try out various thoughts and attitudes in order to see how it feels to hear themselves saying such things and in order to discover how others respond, without it being assumed that they are committed to what they say: It is understood by everyone in a bull session that the statements people make do not necessarily reveal what they really believe or how they really feel. The main point is to make possible a high level of candor and an experimental or adventuresome approach to the subjects under discussion. Therefore provision is made for enjoying a certain irresponsibility, so that people will be encouraged to convey what is on their minds without too much anxiety that they will be held to it.” (Frankfurt 2005, 35-7)

I believe that in relation towards *Aderbal*, the traumatic day described above, could even be seen as a *Bull Session* in the most extreme form. It was one where at the same time *Aderbal* picked on ‘my softest spot’ while at the same time sharing openly his feelings of humiliation and showing me himself in his ‘moment of *jouissance*’ as Žižek would have it. In the next section, I describe one such *Bull Session* that was exceptional since it took place inside the house in the presence of his wife *Jucelia*. It was one of the few days that I have seen *Jucelia* laugh so much in *Aderbal*’s presence, most probably due to the sexual content in the storytelling and their past together in the *mata*.

4.4 *Jucelia* witnesses a Bull Session

Aderbal and I are sitting on the couch after dinner. We have watched the *novela* and now *Globo*’s news is on the background. *Jucelia* is cleaning the house again, walks in and out, but at times also sits on another couch beside us to relax and wipe the sweat from her forehead. *Jucelia* is also sitting on the couch when the following conversation starts.

Aderbal: You see how *Emanuel* likes you a lot now?! He will stay with *saudade* [yearning] of you when you are gone

Sven: Yes, I will miss him as well, playing football together

Aderbal: Here if kids are born they get a ball to play. In all the other countries, they get a book. Here it is like this, if it is a boy they get a ball, if it is a girl they get a doll.

Sven: Both get a book in the Netherlands [laughing]

Aderbal: It is only studying isn’t it? There is a man here in *Coque*, who has studied so much that by now he has become *doido* [crazy] [N.B: probably referring to *Rildo* who is a psychologist]

Sven: Yes it can get you crazy if you think too much. But studying is a good thing I believe and so far I like it.

Aderbal: I also like studying. When I was in Porto Alegre once with the political party. I would stay in the hotel to read. Because there in the hotel they had many books, about politics and things like that. But the others would go out to drink and come back at two in the morning. By then I was already sleeping.

[*Jucelia* stands up from the couch]

Sven: I would do the same.

[pause]

Sven: You know some people do not like the thing of distributing fruits and vegetables,

like *de la Mora*, but they do not see that these people are in need of food. These people who comment on your distribution like more the other leaders who keep meetings and talk a lot. But I am thinking; Do these people then need to die from hunger?! I will talk with *de la Mora* about that.

Aderbal: [laughs] *de la Mora* was thinking that you are on his side, but now he sees you are not doing what he says. Other students do what he says, but you are not, and now he is avoiding me.

Sven: No I am not like that. But what I like about *de la Mora* is how he is fighting so much for the *PREZEIS*

Aderbal: Let me say, I do not have a fight with *de la Mora*. He is looking for problems with me! Didn't you notice how he keeps taking about *your prefeito?!?* [NB: Geraldo Julio, PSB] Also, did you know my term in the *PREZEIS* will stop in November. I have a *troca di favor* with a woman from the Evangelical church here in *Coque*

Sven: What is a '*troca di favor*'?

Aderbal: It is that first I help her get into the *PREZEIS* and after that she can help me become *vereador*

Sven: That is good, that is good!

Aderbal: It is like that

[*Jucelia* gets back somewhere here]

Aderbal: It is like that. If you help other people they help you later. Well I am going to wash my *rabo* and go to bed now!

[*Jucelia* starts laughing]

Sven: In the Netherlands it is sometimes too cold to wash the *rabo* [tail].

Aderbal: People in the Netherlands do not like to shower, isn't it!

[*Jucelia* continues laughing]

Sven: It is just not necessary to shower so much because the weather is different.

Aderbal: And brushing teeth! You come out of the room in the morning and start drinking water before you have even brushed your teeth! Then all the *babão* gets into the water that you drink.

[*Jucelia* laughs harder]

Sven: That is true. Tomorrow I do it differently.

Aderbal: Here people *do* like to take a shower, because Brazilians do not like *puseta fedeno* [dirty pussy].

[*Jucelia* laughs even harder]

Aderbal: Here they wash it three times a day!

Sven: But it should not lose the taste! If they wash it three times a day it tastes like nothing

Aderbal: *Osb!* We call that *fedeno* [dirty]!

Sven: No, I am not saying *fedeno*, I am saying taste!

[*Jucelia* is laughing at hardest by now]

Aderbal: *Fedeno!* Brazilians do not like pussy that tastes like *bacalão* [fish]

Sven: I am not saying *bacalão*

Aderbal: If you want that you have to go to *Rosa* [neighbour in *Rua Camdoz*]

Sven: Not *bacalão*, but also not *sabão* [soap]!

Aderbal: Here people want it to be in an ice cream flavour like chocolate, vanilla [names more]

Jucelia: Like a *salada di fruta* [still laughing]
Aderbal: *Morango* [continues naming]
Sven: But how did the conversation turn like this?
Aderbal: Because you said that you do not like to shower!
Sven: [laughing]
Jucelia: [laughing]
Aderbal: People in Brazil like sex and in the Netherlands?
Sven: They also like sex there, but they do not talk about it like people do here.
Aderbal: Do you know, when we were younger *Jucelia* would stop working to have sex with me. Even when she was pregnant!
Jucelia: No, No! [continues to laughing even harder]

The following morning *Jucelia* tells me that *Aderbal* has left the house 4 o'clock in the morning, followed by "what a conversation from yesterday wasn't it" [laughing]. *Jessica* comes inside as well.

Jucelia: Tell her what the *patrão* [boss] was talking about yesterday!
Sven: He was saying that Brazilians like clean pussy
Jessica: Well mine is *fedeno*, I am working and working, from yesterday I have not gotten the time to take a shower!
Sven: But *fedeno* is not good. It should taste like chocolate or *salada di fruta*
Jucelia: No I said *salada di fruta*. Because he was naming so much different flavours. I asked him whether he wanted to make a fruit salad.
 [*Jucelia* turns to *Jessica*]
Jucelia: You see he writes down everything, so he also wrote the fruit salad. He [*Aderbal*] even said that we had to take the child away since we had sex during the pregnancy.
Jessica: Well I am here! [laughing]
 [*Jessica* drinks coffee and leaves]
Jucelia: The flavours he is naming is from the *camisetas* [condoms] he takes to the motel! I know, because I found one of them in his pockets when I was washing his clothes.

It was here that I figured *Jucelia* was aware of a lot more than she had previously told me about what she knew of *Aderbal's* outdoor escapades. Yet, she could not, or did not want to, have a divorce. In chapter nine I shift the focus from *Aderbal* to *Jucelia*. It is there that I focus on the gendered aspects in the realms of the *rua* and *mata*. In the next section I will first analyse the specific traumatic day described above through the lens of slum politics.

4.5 Performance, excessive enjoyment, and degeneration of slum politics

In the morning *Aderbal* brought me to *UR-10* where he was involved in a fight. In the afternoon there was the beach, beers, food, and girls. What was I witnessing this day at the fight and at the beach? Where the two parts of the day connected in any way? Could *Aderbal's* fight be explained as a form of transgression, since he was still upset by his interpretation of the comment on the day before by *Luis de Mora* that 'a community leader cannot own a car'? Many questions came to mind that day, remained during fieldwork, and still I cannot answer them. As Žižek states in the quote that I started the chapter with, 'I cannot simply integrate this into my universe'.

Yet, in line with Auyero (2001) who argued that ‘the how’ of clientelist exchange – the performance of *punteros* – is a central and neglected dimension of politics in Argentina, and with de Vries (2002, 921) who argued the same for the performance and imaginative aspects of *caciquismo* in Mexico, I argue that the study of the performance of community leaders is central to an historical understanding of politics in Brazil. In doing so, in a similar type of processual reasoning as in Auyero’s argument (2001) – that as a consequence of economic crises draining the urban poor of resources, networks of political clientelism started overlapping traditional survival networks that in turn fortified *Peronist survival networks* – I wish to argue that slum politics, as a politics of hope, is a complex form of politics that in certain historical time periods is more prevalent. Compared with now, this type of slum politics was more intensely felt when Recife’s poor, community leaders, social movements and the church in the figure of bishop Dom Helder Camara and the *Comissao Justiça e Paz* [Commission of Justice and Peace] mobilised and the *PREZEIS* (Plan for Regularization of Special Zones of Social Interest) was created.

In contrast to the slum politics of that time, my current ethnographic description of *Aderbal’s in situ* practices – particularly as I will show in chapter eight – does not lead to a theorisation of slum politics as ‘politics of hope’. In fact, I have shown in this chapter – and this line of reasoning continues in the following chapters – how slum politics can degenerate into a situation of manipulation that, as Massumi (2002) would say, provides little reason for optimism. In other words, slum politics also has its ugly sides.

As I have shown in this chapter, an ‘ugly side’ lies in the sexualisation of power, or as Slavoj Žižek (e.g. 2008) would say, in the element of ‘excess enjoyment’, the element of *jouissance*. As de Vries (2002, 922), following Žižek would put it, the community leader – in this case *Aderbal* – “can only function as an (imaginary) object of desire thanks to his skilful orchestration of enjoyment and his capacity to convert himself into a spectacle of (excessive) power”. *Aderbal* did so with some sort of identification with the story of *Galeguinho do Coque* (chapter two), taking women to restaurants and paying for their food and drinks, and driving with them while playing the *Poderoza* Funk song in his car.

Soon I found myself asking where is the hope? The day described above changed my emotional being in the field and made me more sympathetic towards *Jucelia* than I had already been before. Hope was to some extent in the *Ponto de Cultura*, but most clearly it was on the side of *Jucelia* and other women their struggles and sacrifices. Their politics of hope had nothing to do with optimism or pessimism, but it was an attitude. I will return to this in chapter nine. In the next chapter I describe how *Aderbal* has formed his inner circle through football, continuing an elaboration of his ‘management of enjoyment’.

CHAPTER V: “ADERBAL IS THE BEST!”

Forming an inner circle and power base

The broker is related to the members of his inner circle through strong ties: friendship, kinship, or ‘fictive kinship’
—Javier Auyero (2001, 91)

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I first highlight the role that social gathering and festivities (particularly those around football) play in *Aderbal’s* political career. As mentioned, he got involved with politics at the end of the 90s through his social network around football. Through football he got in contact with politicians, and some of the people, like *Nado*, that have become part of what Javier Auyero (2001) calls an ‘inner circle’. *Nado*, as an ‘inner circle’ member “helps the broker solve shantytown dwellers’ everyday problems” (Ibid 93). In the third section, I specifically show how *Aderbal* forms his power base of people that he has frequent encounters with, but do not explicitly help him in his political career. I do so through an ethnographic account of a walk with him through different subareas in *Coque*. In the fourth section, I zoom in more on these people, and describe a day with *Aderbal* when he distributed food in *Coque*, particularly to women from the communities’ poorest areas. In the fifth section I sum up the chapter, linking *Aderbal’s* practices to governmental politics and comparing *Aderbal* with the *Ponto de Cultura*. The latter comparison I set forth in the next chapter.

5.2 Football, *Nado*, and celebrations

O meu lugar [My place]
É sorriso é paz e prazer [Is smile, is peace, and pleasure]
O seu nome é doce dizer [The name is sweet to say]
Madureiraaa, lá laiá, Madureiraaa, lá laiá
—Arlindo Cruz, *Men lugar*

In the previous chapter I have already touched upon sexually tinted jokes that particularly appeared in *Bull Sessions*. In Brazil, in general, jokes constantly played with men’s fear of their neighbours’ sexual aggressions and their wives’ disloyalties (Rebhun 2002, 192). In popular culture, an adulterous wife puts horns on her husband, who then becomes a *cornio* (cuckold). The stigma of *cornio* intensifies male sexual jealousy, and although a woman who stays with an adulterous husband will be praised for her long-suffering loyalty, a man who has an adulterous wife is considered a weak fool (Ibid 200). At *Aderbal’s* local FC *Madureira* team, the ‘team of the *cornos*’ (Figure 10), these type of jokes were made regularly, with the players teasing each other for being a *cornio*.

In the morning we pick up some of the men in *Coque* since FC *Madureira* is playing a match outside of *Coque*. In the car they immediately start joking about ‘the beautiful women in Brazil’ and tease each other as being a *cornio*. Especially the man introducing himself as ‘the trainer’ is the biggest noisemaker.

Trainer: Is *Aderbal* taking good care of you?

Sven: Yes its good

Trainer: How is the food at *Aderbal's* place?

Sven: All from the Extra supermarket

Trainer: And the bed, how is the bed?

Sven: A *boxi* [box spring]

Aderbal: [laughs] You are already turning into a *safado!*

Sven: Why? [NB: Unaware that most probably the question was not about the bed I was sleeping in]

Aderbal: [laughing]

The joking mixes smoothly through *Aderbal's* (negative) talking about the *NEIMFA*, as described in the previous chapter, and the *Novo Recife* project that I will discuss in chapter eight. When we arrive at the football pitch, I get my shirt, and notice that the name of the *deputado* from the Socialist Party, who *Aderbal* is supporting, is written on the back of the blue-white shirts. This is a reminder of how politics and football are intertwined. As mentioned, it was through football that *Aderbal* started a political career as campaigner (*cabô eleitoral*).

By the end of the match players and fans get towards a bar. Crab, *Pitú* bottles, *Schin* beer, *Coca Cola* and different plates of food fill the tables at which we sit. As expected, the conversations are sexually related, with the keeper even showing porn on his mobile phone, and one of the midfielders joking that “the cigarette gets it down and the *cachaça* gets is up again which makes it wiggle in between”. Soon I am told by him that ‘I am starting to learn’. He means that by now I follow the unwritten rule that you need to pour from the cold litre-bottle of *Schin* in everyone’s cup before pouring for yourself. At the table again (governmental and electoral) political topics shift smoothly with the ‘*safada* talk’.

In this way I notice that during these weekly meetings *Aderbal*, contrary to his critics’ view that he does not share information with the community, does discuss political topics with residents from the *comunidade*. He does so, however, in a way that differs from a ‘formal meeting’ – a way that does not make these gathering seem ‘political’. Yet, such social gatherings are political, as they create the feelings of togetherness amongst the residents of the community, and strengthen or initiate mutual support networks. In the next chapter on operational styles, I describe how a more ‘formal’ style is used by the *Ponto de Cultura*.

Nado, known as ‘the *baixinho*’ [small one] (foreground figure 10), was also present at the table with food and drinks is. He knows *Aderbal* ‘since they were children’ and works for a company responsible for the streetlights. As I will discuss in the next section, in this way *Nado* is an important member of *Aderbal's* inner circle. It is he who *Aderbal* turns to when streetlights need to be fixed in *Coque* – something that needs to be done regularly. In addition, *Nado* was always present at PSB gatherings. When at one of the after-match parties I asked him what socialism meant, he smiled and pointed with his finger to the table with drinks, food and families, and replied “this is socialism, we are very social people”. This, yet again, is an interpretation of how such gatherings can be political, although with a somewhat humorous tone. If there was any ‘political ideology’ that was ‘theirs’, that they enjoyed, that they would come out of their houses for, then such social gatherings symbolized it well.



Figure 10: “FC Madureira team of the *cornos*”

Source: Author photograph

‘Outside’ politicians were also drawn to such festivities, as I noticed during the *São João* party (figure 11), a cultural festivity that originated in the rural interior of Brazil. At this festivity *Aderbal* had his own *araial* [often a tent], a place where usually the *quadrilla* is danced. Similar sexual jokes would be made here, for example when the DJ joked that “*O Globo* did research, and it turned out that women who only drink *Coca Cola* make men impotent”, insinuating that the women should also be drinking alcohol to become more loose.

I noticed how *Aderbal* would use this, to others seen as non-political space, to make political statements or communicate to *Coque’s* residents messages from governmental- and electoral politics. At times, while drinking his whisky, he took the microphone and gave short speeches, or used these moments for shouts such as “*Coque* is my life!” or “The biggest skate park in the world is coming to *Coque!*”. In addition, neighbours and members of his ‘inner circle’, at times got to the microphone to show their support for *Aderbal* as a community leader. They did so by shouting through the microphone that “*Aderbal* is the best!”.

Then the *deputado*, invited by *Aderbal*, arrived and started shaking people’s hands at the big tent, described by Jessica as ‘the tent with the drinks’. It was an interesting, complex, moment when electoral politics met with slum politics, including a gender and humour aspect. When *Aderbal* took the *deputado* to have a drink and slice of cake to the small tent (‘the tent with the food’ in Jessica’s words) where *Jucelia*, *Jessica* and I were sitting, the *deputado* asked *Jucelia*; “and who is the boss here?”. *Jucelia*, while pointing to *Aderbal*, answered; “the *patrão*”. “That’s a lie!” was the response of the *deputado*. “They just come to eat something and then tell me that I am the boss” *Jucelia* told us when they left, with a dazzled, somewhat disappointed, and critical look on her face. Such sharp tongue is similar to forms of resistance described in a *Weapons of the Weak* (James 1985). *Jessica*, trying to ease the humiliation felt by *Jucelia*, jokingly replied to her; “you should have told them that if you were the boss you had already charged them a hundred *Reais* for that slice of cake!”



Figure 11: São João festivities
 Source: Author's photographs

Donna Goldstein in *Laughter out of Place* – inspired by her historical background of living in Brooklyn where Jewish immigrants lived – incorporated the topic of humour as resistance (2003, xiii) in her analysis of everyday life in a Rio de Janeiro shantytown. She described that humour is “where a particular kind of communication and meaning-making takes place”(Goldstein 2003, 5) that is more of a “discursive form of resistance” (Ibid, 16) and “often a survivalist response” (Ibid, 6), but certainly not limited to a form of survival. This poor peoples’ humour is kind of “an indirect dialogue, sometimes critical, often ambivalent, always (at least partially) hidden, about the contradictions of poverty in the midst of late capitalism” (Ibid, 2), and as such “contains a sense of the absurdity of the world they inhabit” (Ibid, 13).

Although in itself probably it will not lead to a revolution, humour may play an important role in changing society since “it does open a discursive space within which it becomes possible to speak about matters that are otherwise naturalized, unquestioned, or silenced” (Ibid, 10). The latter critical humour I will show in the next chapter when I describe the situation where urban planners present to community leaders in *Coque* a proposal for a large skate park in the area. Humiliation of *Jucelia*, sexual joking, and a gender aspect in politics, return in the next section when I analyse *Aderbal’s* support base by describing a day walking through *Coque*.

5.3 *Aderbal’s* power base shown through a guide in the *comunidade*

“This is *Areinha* [little sand]”, *Aderbal* says while walking around the corner of the *Rua Camdoi* to begin the tour that he gives Karina (a French student that studies the analogies between slums in India and Brazil) and I. People start greeting *Aderbal*. While walking *Aderbal* often attends his phone calls and greets people who yell things to him when we pass by. *Aderbal* is the centre of attention when walking on the streets. This differs from walking through the neighbourhood with *Matuto* [hillbilly], who is someone who is not taking a role on the front stage.

We walk through alleys and have to avoid stepping in horse excrements, garbage or mud. We arrive at an open area. It looks like a small farm. I had seen this area my first night in *Coque* and that day there were also horses here. The views in *Coque* as mentioned are highly contrasting, with beautiful views on the mangroves on the one hand, and dirty muddy roads between shacks made of different materials on the other hand. It is possible to observe differences in the areas

that we are walking through with *Aderbal* compared to *Matuto*.

Karine asks *Aderbal* what the plans for this area are. He replies that there is a project for *paisagismo* (landscaping). “I have all the documents and a big map at my place,” he continues. When asked for clarification he tells us

“I have gone through a lot of discussion in the *PREZEIS* to bring these programs *a gente* (the people) want [...] now these discussions are on a lower level because everything is quiet due to the World Cup [...] I will get out of the *PREZEIS* [...] the person who takes over my position will have to take over these conversations and discussions”.

As we walk further, I can notice that we are almost at the riverside where there are broken *palafitas*. This is the place where *Maria Grinaura* lives. I have seen some of these images on video clips from *Coque (R)existe* (social movement in *Coque*). According to their information, *Maria* is a resident of *Coque*, who was removed from her house in order to allow the implementation of infrastructure works. The amount of compensation allows only buy a shack in the bank of the river. According to *Aderbal* however, as he had told me before, “The case of *Maria Grinaura* is not about eviction”, but “she went to live nearby the canal because her grandchild was involved in drugs. She sold her house voluntary to pay for the debts of her grandchild”. He insisted that “some people who are in the video of *Coque (R)existe*, received money for it, going there with hammers [...] these are not people who are telling the things that happened [...] what is happening is not eviction”. Now that we are near to her place *Aderbal* repeats “They [(R)existe] use *Maria* for money [...] They do not say that the *prefeitura* is now paying her rent such that she does not have to be removed [...] she does not want to move and so it will be”.

Leaving *Maria's* shack, *Aderbal* continues; “This is the most forgotten area of *Coque*”, referring to the subarea *Areinha*. Soon we enter *Rua da Zoada* [street of noise]. He explains that “there are a lot of troubles here”. His rationale is that “if these people are removed also the *maloqueiros* [bandits] will be gone”. In this area I can notice the people have constructed their own sewer system and paved small alleys themselves. Out of the walls from the houses I can hear the *música safada* [Funk]. Like in other cases where the government’s “regime of spatial ordering clashes with the livelihoods of the urban poor” (Nuijten, Koster, and de Vries 2012), *Aderbal* explains that “here [in *Rua da Zoada*] the *prefeito* get things done, but the people break the stuff they get [*prefeitura faz projeto, o povo faz bagunça*]. They make their own *favela* and then complain about the *prefeitura* afterwards”. “But why?”, I ask him. He replies with a smile that “they love to live in the dark! To deal their drugs”.

After another phone call and more greetings, we are standing close to the *mangue* (mangrove area) and on the other side is *Ilha do Zeca*. As explained in chapter three this is the place where *Aderbal* grew up. As the community leader explains “it was previously called *Pitangera* [reference to the *Pitanga* tree]”. Where we are standing, out of sight, he explains, is the favourite spot for drug traffickers.

While we continue walking we hear the shouts of a woman who passes by; “Hey! When are you going to distribute *fraldas* [diapers] again?”. The community leader answers that she will hear when that will be again. A difference between walking through *Coque* with *Aderbal* and *Matuto* was that while people would ask *Aderbal* to do something for them or ask him, like the woman passing by, when he would be distributing again, people would ask *Matuto* for information about projects and upcoming events organized by the *Ponto Cultural Espaço Livre*.

We continue walking and get to the bridge where the metro passes while he explains that “*Afogados* [Drowned neighbourhood] is there, and that is an *invação* [illegal occupation of urban land]”. “Isn’t it dangerous there?” *Karine* asks, pointing somewhat to the structure of the houses and their vulnerability. “Yes it is dangerous there, there are many *asaltos* [burglaries] there [...] They have been removed five times, but they keep coming again” he answers.

We get in *Realeza* (subarea of *Coque*), and stop at the invasion which *Moises* has shown us earlier. With a wink *Aderbal* argues “No one is going to win here [...] This is private land [...] Before this invasion, people have been removed already three times [...] When the elections [state and national] are over everyone will be removed”. I notice that in *Realeza* the streets are paved and it looks cleaner than the parts we were walking before. His rationale for this, using a rhetoric from (governmental) political actors, is that in *Realeza* “people value [*valoriza*] more what the *prefeitura* does for them”. Since I am expecting that he talks nicer about certain areas in *Coque* where he got more votes in the election for member of the *PREZEIS* local committee, I ask him “is this also the area where you got most votes for the *COMUL?*”. He replies that he got around 400 votes in this area.

Still in *Realeza*, we pass two women who are sitting next to the road, drinking a beer. They ask *Aderbal* to arrange something for them. He reacts shockingly, as it seems that their problem was not solved. He quickly walks around the corner and gets back with another man. They talk a bit and it seems to be solved, or almost solved. Yet again we stop when three women pass by and start talking with *Aderbal*. It is not a co-incidence that many women seek support from *Aderbal*. Not only does the sexualisation of power play a role here, as explained in the previous chapter, also the fact that extreme poverty is highly gendered (Scheper-Hughes 1993; Chant 2006; Doshi 2011). With this statement I refer to the fact that women represent a disproportionate percentage of the world’s poor, that this trend is deepening, and that women’s increasing share of poverty is linked with a rising incidence of female household headship (Chant 2006).

We walk under the metro railway and get to the street where *Rildo* lives and the *Ponto de Cultura* is located, although *Aderbal* does not mention this. “These are all villas”, he somewhat jokingly says. We do not enter this street. Although there certainly are no villas in *Coque*, I believe that there is an exaggerated truth in the statement ‘these are all villas’. The joke was meant I believe to stress the competition between community leaders who attend to different geographical sections of the *comunidade*. *Aderbal* and the *Ponto de Cultura* attend to different people, although this does not mean that *Coque*’s residents are tied specifically to one community leader. The people we met with *Matuto*, I got the impression, were the somewhat ‘better offs’ in *Coque*, hence the reference to ‘villas’ by *Aderbal*. People in *Matuto*’s inner circle believed that “the kids [*criança*] need more events organized for them. They need music, poetry and literature”.

For example, while walking in *Coque* with *Matuto*, a woman called us inside of her house. She showed us her recently renovated house, and showed us a group of kids who were dancing behind a computer. They were inventing a choreography on Evangelic music. I imagined that the women who depended on fruits and vegetables from *Aderbal* did not have the resources to live in such relatively luxury houses as this woman who I met on the guide by *Matuto*.

Back to the guide by *Aderbal*, soon we stop again at a group of people who are standing in front on a house. “She never puts on underwear [*calcinhas*]” *Aderbal* says, while laughing and pointing to one of the women. The woman is also laughing and disagreeing, but I can sense more unease, since *Karine* and I are also present. Although I initially did not understand what he

said, I understood when he explained afterwards when we continued walking “nothing below the shorts”.

We walk past his house again towards the bridge that connects *Coque* to the *Ilha do Zeca*. He explains that according to official government maps *Ilha do Zeca* still belongs to *Coque*, however other neighbourhoods have claimed it to belong to them. This is also *ZEIS*. Again attending his phone on the bridge, he points towards the big buildings of the hospitals. After the phone call, he explains that “the hospitals are expanding their area and breaking the *mangue* without having a licence for this”, in this way pointing to environmental hazards that the community faces as explained in chapter two. When we are at a building under construction that allows for helicopters to land on the rooftop, he says “This is from *João Santos*, the richest guy of Pernambuco [...] He also did not want to have this bridge [the one we just crossed] [...] the people [*a gente*] resisted, they wanted the bridge, so it was constructed”. Although I am suspecting that the building is an extension of the medical hub, rather than a private house for one of the richest men of Pernambuco, the contrast is striking between the high rise buildings of this part of the city and *Coque*. We get the football pitch from *Pitangera*, where a friendly, amateur, afternoon, match is being played. We cross in front of the goalkeeper, while talking to one of the players, who also lives in *Coque*, and who we would encounter later at the end of the tour.

While walking back, it is getting dark, we are almost at the football pitch again, he says, “I do not know why they [probably referring to community leaders *Moises* and *Matuto*] do not invade this land. They should, because with what they do now, they will not achieve anything! This land is worth more”. As I will elaborate in chapter eight, one of the reasons why, contrary to the other community leaders in *Coque*, *Aderbal* is in favour of the *Novo Recife* real estate project, is that he believes that the value of land in *Coque* will rise, making it more beneficial to own a house there.

By now, there is more activity at the football pitch. “They are making confusion,” *Aderbal* says, pointing to discussion between players. *Karine* asks whether people from *Ilha do Zeca* go to the other football pitches and vice versa. He answers that “the people from *Coque* get to this place to play, but the people from here do not go to the pitch in *Coque*, since they think there will be problems”, illustrating the stigmatized position of *Coque* within the city as explained in chapter two.

The player we saw earlier on the tour gets to us and a short discussion initiates between this player and *Aderbal*. When *Aderbal* tells him that he is showing foreigners around, the man argues

“Brazil is a country ‘for who has’ [money] [...] *Rio Mar* [The largest mall recently built in Recife] is there, but it is ‘for who has’, not for the people [...] They put that there and pollute the environment without being punished for that [...] Brazil is also a country of *impunidade* [impunity]”.

In line with the PSB discourse in favour of beautification projects such as *Novo Recife*, *Aderbal* defends the *Rio Mar* shopping mall; “I think *Rio Mar* brings a lot of work for people”. The player replied “No not that much”. *Aderbal* continues, “Who pollutes the environment is the project of *Via Mangue*” [Mangrove Expressway recently built]. The player also agrees with this.

Aderbal's powerbase we can now conclude, consists of particularly women from the poorer sections of the neighbourhood. As pointed out by Auyero, mentioned in chapter one, this

both causes, and results from, a gendered division in politics where “men deal, women remain pure; men decide, women comply” (2001, 138-9). Interestingly it was a man that initiated a discussion with *Aderbal* on mega-projects, whereas the many women encountered asked *Aderbal* for, or about, favours (e.g. distribution of diapers). Related to this is the gendered dimension of extreme poverty. The case of the old *Maria Grinaura* living in a shack near the riverside, as a symbol of injustice, is an example of slum politics evolving around (extreme) poor women from the *favela*. In addition, this guide through *Coque* yet again, has highlighted that conflicts between community leaders are often about land invasions, illegal occupations, as elaborated in chapter two. Community leaders may either play a role as representing *favelados* or as implicitly representing powers that want to evict *favelados*. In the next section I show how *Aderbal* through the distribution of goods maintains a relation with women from the *favela*, women from poorer sections of the neighbourhood.

5.4 Wednesday is distribution day in *Coque*

Damilo helps *Aderbal* with the transport of goods from the supermarket to the distribution points in the neighbourhood. He arrives in a *combi* bus at *Aderbal's Instituto Renascer*. He calls *Aderbal* “a *macaquino* [small monkey]”, but adds that it is “just a nickname”. In the *combi*, he has potatoes, onions, peppers, tomatoes, pineapples and papayas. We drive to a distribution point a few minutes driving distance. When we arrive, *Damilo* complains “*porra, porra*” referring to the fact that he has to manoeuvre his *combi* between the sewer holes in order to get towards the distribution point.

Damilo explains to me that this food is from the *Extra* supermarket: “It’s garbage for them, but here we can use it well. Look! It still looks good”. There are some rotten goods, but the majority of the fruits and vegetables still look fine. It is one bucket per family, *Damilo* explains to me, pointing at the row of buckets outside of the building. *Aderbal* is already placing a bucket of rotten apples and a papaya outside. He tries to save the good part of the papaya, but it is a lost cause.

Then we begin to empty the *combi*, always a moment for making (often sexual or racial) jokes. I take a crate filled with potatoes inside, but according to *Aderbal* and *Damilo*, I am not strong enough. I hear that I am a “*flaquino*” and that I should “leave it to the strong men” while they both point towards their muscles. *Damilo* says that *Aderbal* “eats a lot of bananas, that’s why he got strong”. “You also have to eat more bananas before you get so strong”, *Damilo* continues while laughing all along due to the multiple interpretations that you could make about such a saying.

Meanwhile, the women are gathering at the distribution point. They hold their babies in the arm, while children are screaming around them. *Damilo* drives away again with a half-filled bus to attend another distribution point. I enter the building and ask *Aderbal*; “you have paid this with your own money?” *Aderbal* looks up and smiles; “Yes everything I do myself. Only the rent is paid by the deputy so I can do the job here”. He is preparing the fruits and vegetables in such a way that facilitates him to quickly fill the buckets.

The women wait outside, and cannot see what *Aderbal* is doing inside the distribution point. Some women stand in the shade and others in the sun, but all keep a close eye on their buckets. The buckets are at times pushed forward a little. Frequently I hear “whose is this?!” and then quickly someone arrives such that the bucket is not removed from the line. There are only

two men standing in the back of the line. A woman who is also standing in the back of the row shouts at me that I have to tell *Aderbal* she is standing with children in the hot sun. She wants to be in front of the row. I cannot do anything, since the only rule there is, as *Aderbal* had told me earlier, is that “first come, first served”.

There is both tension and laughter at the same time. A woman with a slipper in her hands runs behind her crying son. There is constant yelling for people not to slip in front of others, and *Aderbal* walks from inside the distribution building to the women waiting in line outside.

When outside, *Aderbal* occasionally shouts to the people standing in line “that they should keep calm” and that “if today it finishes, he will also be distributing Friday”. He looks very strict to the people in line. The women are teasing each other and *Aderbal*. They joke with *Aderbal* that “I will take them to the Netherlands” or that, since I would take pictures to the Netherlands, maybe they could “find a nice and rich husband there”.

One woman jokingly tells me “*Aderbal* is my man; I’m going to have children with him”. She is wearing pants, which are part of the school uniform, together with a ripped t-shirt. She later says that she is 52. After we have talked a bit she starts pointing to the women in the row and teases them saying “she is 23 and has four children, she has 11 children, and she, her mother, has 12 children”. Some of the women are calling her “the baby factory”. Another woman, who has just gotten her bucket filled with vegetables, passes by when I am still standing with the other women, and tells the woman I talk to “you should tell him that *Aderbal* does much for the people here”. The woman turns back to me, repeats what I have heard, and adds “but you have to tell *Aderbal* he should also arrange clothes for the people [pointing to the holes in her shirt]”.

In all the activity going on, the laughter, gossip, and daily news, the number of buckets does not decrease. Some buckets I have seen twice, and there are always other people coming back. It is hard to keep track of how many families get food, because people come and go. My guess is that at least thirty buckets must have disappeared at the end of this hot morning.

By now, although I know that not all the food has been distributed, *Aderbal* decides that it is enough. While we walk back home, between one of his phone calls he asks me; “Did you see how they liked me?”. I tell him that I am surprised how many women with children were there. He replies, giving a sexual tint to a discourse used by right wing politicians against the poor, that “the women like sex, and they like kids, because of the money they get from the *bolsa familia*”.

Javier Auyero’s work (2001, 2011, 2012) may be used to analyse *Aderbal*’s distribution practices. Auyero argues that while waiting “the poor learn the opposite of citizenship. They learn to be patients of the state” (2011). As I will show in chapter seven, when PSB politicians enter *Coque*, particularly his work *Patients of the State* is helpful in explaining the situation of the waiting women at *Aderbal*’s distribution point. Gender hierarchies outside the welfare office, Auyero argues, are reproduced in face-to-face interactions between representatives of the state and welfare-reliant women. The women absorb the message that they should be patient and keep waiting, because ‘there is nothing else that they can do’. That is, they learn that “they have to remain temporarily neglected, unattended to, or postponed” since “they also learn that there is no use in protesting publicly” (Auyero 2012).

5.5 Inner circles, competing, co-opting, and cooperating

I have discussed in this chapter how *Aderbal* maintains contacts with members of his ‘inner circle’ of helpers, like *Nado* or *Damilo*, through social gatherings organised around football, cultural festivities, and political party festivities. Particularly those around football have been crucial for *Aderbal*, as it was through his network of football that he started career as political campaigner [*cabo eleitoral*]. It was through politicians that he got in contact with he arranged with a supermarket to distribute fruits and vegetables in *Coque*. The women that rely on these goods that are distributed on a weekly basis, who form part of *Aderbal*’s power base, come from poorer sections of the community. In other words, they come from the *mata*, and identify with *Aderbal*, because he also has a history as a *favelado*.

In addition, the role that humour plays in the livelihood of *Coque*’s residents. It may function as a form of resistance (in the case of *Jucelia*). It may function as a way to ease tension or facilitate a ‘non-political’ context to discuss (governmental) political topics (in the case of *Aderbal*). Alternatively, it may function as a form of sociality in the context of uncertainty (the women waiting in line at the distribution point). More importantly, I believe humour, with its hidden meanings, played an important role in maintaining a sense of togetherness in *Aderbal*’s inner circle.

Furthermore, the chapter may partially explain why *Aderbal*’s somewhat opportunistic distribution practices are disliked by the ‘politically conscious’ *Ponto de Cultura* who see this, as explained in chapter two, as the ‘co-opting of community leaders by governmental forces’. As shown in the different guides by *Matuto* and *Aderbal*, *Matuto* and the *Ponto de Cultura* have a powerbase that includes more inhabitants in *Coque* that are somewhat ‘the better offs’. The women that are attracted to *Aderbal*’s distribution practices where particularly from the poorest sections of the neighbourhood. Similar differences have been found by Koster and de Vries, who argue that

“It would be wrong to assume that community leaders only exist for the need of governmental agencies to create reliable interlocutors within the slum. It is rather the other way round. The slum produces an array of leaders who come to represent a variety of aspirations and needs, thus standing for the slum’s internal diversity” (2012, 89).

Overall, this thesis shows that relations between community leaders are complex, since community leaders may compete among each other (*Aderbal* and the *Ponto de Cultura* on a daily basis), work for each other (e.g. *Matuto* for *Rildo*), or collaborate with each other (*Aderbal* and the *Ponto de Cultura* in the case of a proposed skate park that will be discussed in the next chapter) (see also Auyero, 2001, 99). I will show in the next chapter that community leaders have different operational styles (e.g. opportunistic or idealistic), that they (fiercely) compete with each other, but that at the same time they are able to cooperate with each other.

CHAPTER VI: TRAJECTORIES & STYLES

The '*pelego*' and the '*partidista*' would like to see *Coque* skate

“Cities are charismatic entities. Both in and of themselves by virtue of their history and their mythologies, but also as sites where charismatic figures emerge on the basis of their capacity to interpret, manage and master the opacity of the city”
____(Hansen and Verkaaik 2009)

6.1 Introduction

When talking about his distribution practices and the needs of *Coque's* residents, *Aderbal* often added that he “does things *certo* [correct]”. However, as mentioned, the *Ponto de Cultura* accused hyper, opportunistic, *Aderbal* for not working on the side of the community but, as a *pelego*, on the side of outside politicians, the *prefeitura*. *Aderbal*, as mentioned, accused *Rildo* of the *Ponto de Cultura* to be a *partidista*, only working for the PT interests.

Here I continue the comparison between *Aderbal* and the *Ponto de Cultura*. While giving voice to the ‘opposite group’ of community leaders, I argue in this chapter that *Aderbal* has a rising trajectory (Auyero 2001, 98), whereas the power base of the *Ponto de Cultura* is declining. Although *Rildo* (PT) has a longer history as community leader compared with *Aderbal* (PSB), being involved in the social mobilisation that led to the emergence of *ZEIS* areas as explained in chapter two, his access to resources declined since the Socialist Party took power in Recife. In addition, whereas *Aderbal's* political career benefits from social division within the slum – as mentioned the women that rely on his distribution practices come from poorer sections of the community – the *Ponto de Cultura* experiences this as tearing down of their past community unifying achievements.

In this chapter I describe general patterns observed while following *Aderbal* in the offices and buildings that he entered on a daily basis. I contrast *Aderbal's* opportunistic operational style (and the frequent *bull sessions* that I had with him) with a Monday meeting at the *Ponto de Cultura* (and a ‘question and answer’ session with *Rildo* and *Matuto*). I end the chapter with a description of the moment that urban planners discussed with community leaders a proposal for a major skate park in *Coque*. Although to outsiders the project may sound as yet another one such projects that misfits completely the livelihoods of *Coque's* residents, the community leaders (both *Aderbal* and the *Ponto de Cultura*), while having a critical look, dreamed of the day the day the skate park would come. They set their disputes aside for the moment, as they saw the skate park as beneficial to their *luta* to bring leisure activities to the community.

6.2 *Aderbal's* style: street, ‘wait’, office, distribute, repeat

Aderbal and I often left the house early in the morning. Most of his activities take place in *Boa Viagem*. Here “people have a *nariz pinado* [puts finger on nose]”, meaning that “they do not look at others, only themselves”. More specifically, he operates between the *URB*, the *prefeitura*, the *assemblea legislativa*, and the *camara dos vereadores*, “where all the *ladrões* are”. Within the buildings, *Aderbal* – often walking with different envelopes in his hands – knows people of different departments (e.g. infrastructure, tourism, leisure). From the street to the office, he is often

actively waiting, greeting people, and fooling around. Therefore, it takes more than average time before *Aderbal* is finally inside the office of an influential person. Often *Aderbal* is spending his time making jokes with people in the waiting rooms, on the phone, or he tries to chat with people in other offices he knows.

Yet, most chats were outside of the offices and included frequently shouts of *safado*, *payaso* or *ladrão*. Other times, he would jokingly tell me while laughing “write down, this man has five wives!”. Likewise, while waiting at the secretariat it was common for him to point at the behind of the secretary. The same holds for shouts of “hey *morena!*” from inside the car. When *Aderbal*’s phone rang, there was often no greet nor goodbye. Conversations started with “talk”, “listening”, or “is talking”, and often ended with a term of abuse (*porra* or *carai*).

He does not like to wait passively. In fact, it seems that, contrary to the women who rely on his distribution practices, he has learned not to wait. He has learned that it is possible just to enter people’s offices to arrange things, or ask for people that are responsible for topics like leisure or security. One of days that I followed *Aderbal* in the government buildings, I had the idea that he quickly arranged a short meeting with two men from a department related to security. In this short meeting *Aderbal* simply reported the name of someone who was causing troubles in *Coque*. Likewise he named the dangerous areas in the community. The men – in suits, sitting behind their desks in towers – would make notes and after *Aderbal* explained that “each morning, very early, there are *asaltos* near the *academia*” asked questions like “are there already cameras there?” or “aren’t the police patrolling there?”. In this way he would provide information to governmental politicians that would otherwise be unknown to them.

One day, while standing at the elevator in the building of the *prefeitura*, *Aderbal* complained that he is earning too little for all the work he is doing, showing me a paper that I could not decipher that quickly.

Aderbal: It is too little isn’t it?

Sven: You do a lot for the people, go from here to there, but your salary is low. Here they sit in an office and earn more. This is *ladrão* stuff isn’t it?!

Aderbal: Some are, some are not. But these are political games that I do not know much of. I just give what I can to the community. If honest people want my help, I try to help where I can.

Sven: And you do that with your own money then?

Aderbal: People from the *prefeitura* do not give me any cent! They only accompany me to see the people.

This conversation shows the complex position that *Aderbal* is in, as explained in chapter three. On the one hand he tries to maintain, and show to others, that he does not rely to a large extent on outside politicians. Therefore he tries to argue that ‘he does not get any cent from the *prefeitura*’ and that ‘he does not know much of the political games’. On the other hand, he needs to make a living to support his family and arrange (in this case) security measures for the community.

The same day that we discussed his salary, an advertisement of *Petrobras* was played on the radio inside the car. The advertisement was about *Petrobras*’ social commitment. In an opportunistic manner, *Aderbal* suddenly said, “you are good with computers right, check for me if they can sponsor my distribution activities in *Coque*”. In this way I got explicitly involved in

Aderbal's daily slum politics. For example, one day I was asked to e-mail the water company [*Compesa*] for a donation of water bottles for the *São João* activities. As we will see in the remainder of this chapter, the 'politically conscious' community leaders of the *Ponto de Cultura* had a different operational style, one that tries to unify (and discuss with) the community and its leaders, rather than relying on the distribution of goods for the support of the community.

6.3 The voice of the *Ponto de Cultura*: A Q&A session

If the notion of *bull session* describes the daily conversations with *Aderbal*, the conversation with *Rildo* and *Matuto* should be described as Question and Answer session. Aware of the recording device, *Rildo* said things like "you could question me, I am not the owner of truth". Contrary to *Aderbal*, he would, in an undisturbed way, continue talking when women passed by. Standing next to his house he starts telling about the history of *Coque*, the start of *Coque (R)existe*, and the *Ponto de Cultura*. *Rildo* talks slowly for us to understand, and is clearly frustrated when telling parts of the stories.

While standing on this active road – with people passing by on their motorcycles, transporting construction work by hand, or selling music – the older *Rildo*, in a less hyper manner as compared with *Aderbal*, greets people passing by. He explains that *Coque (R)existe*, a social movement in *Coque*, "emerged to support our rights of housing since there are many harassments taking place in the community". He names amongst others the case of 58 families that are threatened with eviction due to the integration of the metro station with public bus transport, and the *Polo Jurídico* that recently evicted residents of *Coque*. Emotionally *Rildo* explains:

"When I studied psychology there were only three powers; executive, legislative and judicial. Now there is also *medical power* and *business power*. [...] the worst is that all this is done in presence of the *Ministerio Publico*! At this barbarianism and violence [...] This is a legal dictatorship! This is why we need new forms of mobilization [.....]

One such new 'forms of mobilization' is seen on the walls of his house. Painted over the names of PT politicians, the text "I WON'T LEAVE COQUE!" has been written with the help of university students. In smaller letters is written "*Não Saio do Coque porque [...]* [I won't leave *Coque*, because [...]]". On the dots *Coque's* residents had the opportunity to write things as "*Coque e bom* [*Coque* is good]" or "*nasci aqui* [I was born here]" (see figure 12).

Referring to the community's struggle against Real Estate powers – with tears visibly flowing from below his sunglasses – *Rildo* stated;

"We are not alienated. But we are conscious! Our *luta* is for the community! Our priority is the community! *Coque* is from nobody, *Coque* is from the people living in *Coque*! [...] We have been in this struggle, right *Matuto*? Then the *prefeito* gets *this man* [most probably referring to *Aderbal*] to say things that are wrong! For people to believe things that are not like that!"



Figure 12: “Não saio do Coque porque...”

Source: Author’s photograph

“And all of this is happening in *Coque’s ZEIS* area, where it should not be happening right?”, I interrupt *Rildo*, after he has named a number of violated rights violations. He continues:

“Yes it is happening. Without respect for laws and all. Like the *Polo Juridico*, the area there is also *ZEIS*! They made the forum, the academia, a bunch of stuff. There they finished with our space to play football. Hundreds of people were removed. And all of that in a *ZEIS* area. Never has this been respected”.

While *Rildo* is naming urban (beautification) projects, the conversation turns to one such projects that I discuss in the following chapter, the *Novo Recife* project. I knew beforehand that the *Ponto de Cultura* is against it, whereas *Aderbal* is in favour. *Rildo* argues that “The people living in the towers will have three or four cars per family. All will be passing here nearby and then you will see how *Coque* will get smaller”.

Another example of a recent event that potentially threatens the protection of the right to the city of *Coque’s* residents was a workshop where students from the local university and from England argued that the *ZEIS* zones harm Recife’s economic and urban development. At the workshop it was proposed to construct private buildings in *Coque* to make up for buildings that could not be constructed at *Ilha do Zeca* that has been named a *ZEPA* [Special Zone of Environmental Protection]. Answering the question whether *Rildo* was aware of this workshop, he replies:

“We know, we participated in all this movement [development of *PREZEIS*] [...] When they come here to say that the *ZEIS* distorts development, it harms everything! The development and economics! Because the *ZEIS* is a protection for people to live. Within this space there will be nothing that harms people’s housing [...] This is bad for them! Because they cannot make residence, win money and all. They say it is bad, but that is for *them*! What we need is our house, a street, a secondary school. This is what people need.

They do not need residence towers, nothing of that! This *Novo Recife* is no good! It brings a city within a city, which will do bad for numerous communities! [...] People want development, but collective development. Not the development that a person comes here, put something, and becomes the owner. Put a market and be the owner. People do not want owners! They want equal rights!”

Rildo continues by giving an example. He points towards the many garbage collectors who live in *Coque* and argues that the kind of development people want is for example a collective recycling factory. Such examples of development would not be mentioned by *Aderbal*. In addition, on frustrating days, he could say things like “the *PREZEIS* does nothing for the community”, things that, as could be observed in *Rildo’s* answer, would not be stated by the *Ponto de Cultura*.

As is clear by now, the *luta* of the *Ponto de Cultura* faces many obstacles. To the question “what are the major obstacles in mobilizing the community?” *Matuto* replies:

“The difficulties are that there are the *pelegos*, about which *Rildo* talked [NB: see chapter three]. Who *atrapalla muito* [step on issues a lot]! *The pelego* is linked to the *prefeitura*. The government. He uses politics to do this. Are you understanding? That is a big problem of people here in *Coque*. Including something bad that is going on which is the *Polo Juridico*. And we need the support of you guys in this! So that is why I wanted to talk with *Rildo* to write your phone numbers”.

Rildo adds, “There is not the feeling, a notion, of unity!”. Still, the *Ponto de Cultura* is not all that pessimistic. To the question “Do you think that it is possible to better the lives of people in *palafitas*?” *Rildo* answered;

“Look! Look! A man is able to adapt. He can live in 50 degrees and minus 50 degrees. He lives in rural areas, in the *favela*, during war, and he adapts right?! There are a lot of people that live in *palafitas* and they want it to stay like that. Because they have already gotten used to it”.

In this statement it is possible to see that, although the *Ponto de Cultura* is linked to the Workers Party, they “keep a critical eye on the party as it changed for the bad through the years”, as *Matuto* told me. He did so while showing me pictures of a candidate that according to him “had many more contacts with the business than with the people”. Likewise, the above quote by *Rildo* shows a critical stance towards the Workers Party that has a slogan ‘*cidade sem palafitas*’, a city without stilts. Contrary to this slogan *Rildo* seems to argue here that the *palafitas* have a right to exist. In the next section I continue an elaboration of the *Ponto de Cultura*, showing that they deliberately operate together.

6.4 The *Ponto de Cultura* style: A meeting at the *Espaço Livre*

The community leaders from the *Ponto de Cultura*, as mentioned in chapter three, get together each Monday for a meeting at the *Espaço Livre do Coque*. While *Matuto*, *Ricardo*, and I are walking towards the *Espaço Livre*, *Ricardo* – who *Auyero* (2001) would categorize as a ‘potential community leader’ – introduces himself:

“I work a lot with the youth here since they are the future. For example I bring the young boys to stay at Sporting Club [local popular football club]. There they are able to stay for a while, and then, when they are seventeen, they will pass a test to see if they could become professional players [...] This is *real* social work [NB: contrasting himself with *Aderbal*]. I am not asking anything back from anyone for what I do. I stand always with my feet on the ground.”

Also *Matuto*, as a beginning community leader, is called frequently by people. As such, like those with *Aderbal*, the short walk is taking more time than average. When the meeting starts *Rildo*, *Matuto*, *Ricardo*, *Carlos*, *Joaquim* and *Adriano* (see figure 13) introduce themselves. As mentioned in chapter three, each of them is linked to a specific topic such as finance, heritage, education, youth or health. *Rildo* – who the others at times refer to as ‘*doctor Rildo*’ – is sitting in the middle of the space and the others are sitting around him. He is making notes of the things said in a thick notebook, and *Joaquim* keeps track of the time. It is an organized meeting that has an opening round of recent developments, some agenda points and closing remarks.



Figure 13: Ponto de Cultura Espaço Livre do Coque
Source: Matuto

Ricardo in the round of recent developments talks about the organisation of water supply at the land invasion near *Rua Imperial* that I discussed in chapter two. Further, the men brainstorm about the development of a website for the group, and discuss the setup of a digital museum of *Coque*, that would be a museum moving on a bicycle. In addition, since the 4th of August is nearing – declared by *Coque (R)existe* as “*dia dos lutas e conquistas*” [Day of struggles and conquests] – a day to gather and tell about the history of *Coque*, the men are planning ahead for possible activities. In the closing remarks the men discuss the absence of a female community leader ‘who can also stand firm’. They explain this absence as following from the fact that ‘women do not like politics’. In short, the *Ponto de Cultura* tries to unify the community and keep the local history of *Coque* alive in a way that differs significantly from the way that *Aderbal* does this, if he even does so. In the next section I show that although there was severe conflict between the leaders, they united in favour of a major skate park.

6.5 Cooperating for (and dreaming about) the 4000 m² skate park

This is the second time that I see this presentation of a proposed 4000m² skate park in the area of *Coque*. The first time only *Rildo* was present to discuss this project amongst others with urban planners, university professors and architects. My first impression was that a skate park would not be the first thing that people in *Coque* were waiting for, but the presenter enthusiastically introduced the plans and argued that “a lot of people, from all social classes, skate”. With few community leaders present and residents of *Coque* missing, it was not surprising that there was no heated discussion. Tonight the project is presented in *Coque* in the presence of community leaders and some inhabitants. No female residents of *Coque* are present. It is raining heavily outside and the ventilator is making a horrible noise in the classroom of a primary school in *Coque* where we are sitting.

I am sitting in between *Aderbal* and *Nado*, who are in turn sitting on the opposite side of the *Ponto de Cultura* community leaders. After we have all introduced ourselves, it is soon emphasized that “there are many projects for *Coque*” on which “architects, social workers, geographers, and economists are working”. *Aderbal* quickly interrupts to say that “it is all well, but that the football field should stay”. Just as quickly, he is told that “this is only a proposal, things may change, and further discussions will take place in August”. A resident of *Coque* also does not hesitate to comment fiercely before the presentation starts; “all this is what people outside of *Coque* would like to see, but what do we want? It does not come out because we are divided”. An animated *YouTube* clip is shown of a graffiti-less skate park without people present. In addition the clip shows a beautiful sunset on the background of the skate park. Yet again, to my surprise, no heated discussion follows after the clip and presentation by the young man behind the laptop who argued that no residents would be evicted for this project.

The angry resident reacts calmer;

“I came here anxiously, with the idea that maybe people would be removed and that the residents would have nothing to say, but now I know that this is just a beginning and I know the area of the project, I can go home calm again”.

When it is the turn of *Nado* to speak he says, “Please note, if we do not accept this project it goes to Curitiba, since they also would like have the biggest skate park of Brazil”. Another resident is less optimistic and says that “education should have priority above sports, if there is no education, there can be no discussion. No discussion means that residents die in the game where everyone has their interests”. *Nado* responds to him saying, “The more of these projects are coming to *Coque* the more discussion there will be”.

At this point the discussion gets going. Not everyone simply agrees with everything said by the person behind the laptop. *Guerrero* stands up. He is a potential community leader, who moved towards *Aderbal's* inner circle, helping him with setting up a museum, since he believed that the *Ponto de Cultura* ‘had more *caciques* than there are indians’. He warns the presenter; “do not let me put your name in the mouth of the frog [*sapo*]”. Everyone started laughing. According to an informal Portuguese dictionary this means “to be sworn woes for a long time”, for the person ‘who is in the mouth of the frog’ will become a scapegoat. It is used as a form of fooling around with a person you have a somewhat intimate relationship with. When this person treats you badly it is possible to decrease the tension, fooling with the person by saying “watch out for

I put your name in the mouth of the frog”. The idea is that, as happened, everyone starts laughing and the discussion does not continue.

Guerrero continues: “You should not give something for people to simply dream, and then nothing. Action is needed. Bring this to the people! [NB: the project to the community]”. Not much later *Matuto* tries to conclude by saying “I’m happy, and also the people support this project, but we must be quick, because otherwise the project is gone. If we continue like this, politics postpones the project. It should go to the people.” Suddenly, without any hard decisions, it seems that the discussion is over.

On the way back home I ask *Aderbal*;

Sven: I am still wondering about why there should be a skate park?

Aderbal: Because people in *Coque* skate

Sven: I have seen them at the academia, but I have counted no more than six people. Many more play football. I think it is a little weird to make a skate park when everyone plays football.

Aderbal: I know, Brazil is the country of balls [football], but once the skate park is there, things will change

Sven: Do you mean that once the park is there people will start skating?

Aderbal: Yes, that is what I am saying

I noticed the same dreams and reasoning about the skate park when I asked *Rildo* about it at the ‘question and answer session’ described above. I asked him, “Do you think the skate park that they want to make is the same thing [i.e. the ‘non collective development’ that he talked about], coming from outside and not from inside the community?”

Rildo: Look! Look! Which business, brings the community inside of his practices? The communities of *Coque*, *Cabanga*, *Coelbos*, *Santo Amaro*. The people are discriminated! We are discriminated against! They say we are thieves, murderers. Are you understanding? So all this is something to shut us up [*um calla boca*]. What they do is *articular* [articulate] with money some leaders to say we are going to do this.

Sven: It is true

Rildo: We are going to do that! Then they are co-opted! All lies!

Sven: But I was at the meeting with the different leaders and it seemed all the leaders thought it to be a good project? There was some fight, but not much...

Rildo: Look! There is a vision. Here is *Coque* there is nothing for leisure. There is only a football field there. Then comes this project for the skate park. The people know that this space will not be used to construct housing and other things will not be constructed. Then at once comes a secretary for example, who knows about animals to say doctor, we want to make a hospital for animals and there is an excellent space at *Coque*. Who is going to be against this hospital? A hospital for animals at that area? A space where people do not have the means to occupy [...] So the majority of us support the construction of this project that will cover the whole area. And there will be international competitions. And we will see hundreds of our kids spending their energy there to become professionals. As you know, skating is already professional. And it gives many people a better life. So people are in favour of this project for this reason. It will occupy a space, for which people do not have the means to invade [...] And the international competition will

liberate resources. For our group it is approved. [...] as a space for leisure it is welcome. There could be many other things there [crèche, school, hospital] but people know that those things will not come. It does not come! Because the things only come to people after struggle. It is a big project of 4000 m², a big project that may come.

In *Rildo's* answer – and to some extent also in *Aderbal's* reasoning – it is possible to notice how close hope is to despair. The conversations with both community leaders show that the skate park project brings the community leaders together. Both see the skate park as Massumi's 'next experimental step rather than the big utopian picture' (Zournazi 2002, 212). Both agree that the skate park is not the primary need for *Coque's* residents at the moment – *Rildo* believes that, for example, a school would be better, and *Aderbal* knows that not many people in *Coque* are fans of skateboarding – but who knows what will happen when the skate park is finished? In addition, this reasoning shows the intertwined, complex, relation between governmental politics (programs and projects) and slum politics (hope, desires and needs of slum dwellers). Even when passed projects have had a negative impact on *Coque*, even when 'the community is not brought into the practices' of projects, and even when it is known that some community leaders have been paid to talk in favour of the skate park, there remains the possibility that when the skate park is finished it will attract new development projects for the area or serve as a possible way for youth to escape their poverty by becoming a professional skater. In the next chapter I describe a similar relationship between electoral politics and slum politics by zooming in on a day that politicians of the Socialist Party visited *Coque*.

CHAPTER VII: POLITICIANS, BEER AND HUGS

When politicians enter *Coque* in times of elections

Aderbal: Are you a socialist?

Sven: Yes! I always voted for the Socialist Party! I like MARX!

Aderbal: Who?! Marx ?!

Sven: Yes, MARX!

Aderbal: No, I do not know him. I only support [names *deputado* and other candidates]

7.1 Introduction

This chapter continues an elaboration of *Aderbal's* political trajectory and emphasizes again the aspect of gender in politics, seen in the many poor women who form part of *Aderbal's* inner circle. In this chapter I show the interdependence between electoral politics and slum politics by describing some of the encounters that *Aderbal* (and *Coque's* residents) had with a congressman. More specifically, I describe ethnographically (a) an afternoon that *Aderbal* visited the office of some PSB politician (b) the moment that PSB politicians visited *Aderbal's* institute, and (c) an event when a congressman joined *Aderbal* to his distribution practice. At the latter event, both gave speeches to women waiting to receive diapers and Tupperware. At the same time, in this chapter I show that people in *Coque* can be very critical, and constantly dream of changes that may happen in, or come for, the community.

7.2 *Aderbal's* relation to the PSB

At the corner of a small shopping centre. I arrive here together with *Anderson*, *Pipoca*, *Walter* and a man with a suitcase. Although on one of the buildings is written RESTAURANT, the cars outside with Socialist Party stickers tell that we are at the office of some Socialist Party members. When we arrive, *Aderbal* is leaning against a car on the parking lot, wearing his *FC Santa Cruz* shirt (NB: the PSB politicians support Santa's rivals *Sporting Club do Recife*). He shouts "*Gringo!* You joining us to hang out here?" I walk up to him and reply "So this is the place where the secrets are!". *Aderbal* laughs and reacts "secrets?! NO NO! MONEY!" while rubbing his fingers and smiling such that I see the gap between his teeth.

The conversation is disrupted since a person needs to get in the car that we are leaning on. *Aderbal* enters the building soon after and I stay outside with the others. The others are also waiting outside and talking to people that enter or exit the office of the politicians. When *Aderbal* comes out of the office he is angry that he has been waiting for nothing, since the politicians told him to get back another day for the money. He is driving furiously and angrily seems to be talking to himself; "*Porral!* These people do not have the money again! They cannot work properly. I'll show them how I work soon with my team". *Aderbal* refers here to the team that he would be leading in the electoral campaign for the politicians, since he is what is known as a '*cabo eleitoral*', someone who works for a politician as a 'vote winner'.

Another day, Eduardo Campos – the Socialist Party presidential candidate who died some months later in an airplane crash – gave an electoral speech in the centre of Recife. I was there with *Aderbal*, however he only helped Campos make a path through all the journalists and then said to me and another woman who also joined; "That was it for today, now we go for a

beer”. On our way back home, after a couple of beers, I jokingly told *Aderbal*; “So this then is Brazilian socialism? Before you were with the PT?” I was referring to parties, women and beer. He replied:

“To be honest I do not have a history in the Socialist Party. Also, I had never had links with the PT. I was friends with people from the PT, but my trajectory began at PMDB [Brazilian Democratic Movement Party; *Partido do Movimento Democrático Brasileiro*], that *na época* [at the time] was MDB [Brazilian Democratic Movement] [...] There was some *desligar* [disconnecting]. There was [mention of names]. I began working with a *cunhado* [brother in law] from them, which was [name], who already died, but I am now *ligado* [linked] with his son, [name].

As becomes clear from the above, his relation with the PSB was not an ideological one, rather one that developed through the years, as a way to get resources for himself or for the community. He would use the ‘apolitical’ word *ligado* [linked] to explain his relation with politicians outside *Coque*. For example, he could say things as “it is only now that I am *ligado* to the *prefeito* that finally some stuff for *Coque* is happening”. In the next section I describe the negotiation that takes place when politicians enter the community when elections are nearing.

7.3 PSB in *Coque*:

It is around 9 am, and politicians from the PSB (the Socialist Party) will be arriving soon. “Sunday the war will begin”, *Aderbal* had said earlier during the week, referring to the preparations for the upcoming state elections in October, followed by national elections in November. The plastic chairs are ready, and people are sitting nicely in a row (figure 14). Two men wearing white polo shirts and jeans arrive, and react “What’s this?!” since *Aderbal* is wearing a short and his *Santa Cruz* shirt. *Aderbal* teases the two, and tells me, “*Santa Cruz* is the club of the poor, but *Sporting* has money! Therefore they support *Sporting*”. It is a sharp contrast between the politicians and the people sitting in the plastic chairs near the road.

They enter the Institute where *Anderson*, *Walter*, and *Nado* are also present. Somewhere in between *Aderbal* finds the opportunity to switch shirts. They talk about the October elections and *Aderbal* introduces the others. Meanwhile people outside continue waiting and start clapping when a third politician, also with a white polo shirt, arrives in his Black SUV-like car. It seems he is well known here, since he starts hugging people (figure 14). The others get back outside and pose for the picture (figure 14). They go back inside of the institute, and a woman enters to hand the men two bottles (600ml) of *Skol* beer.

“So tell me *meu negócio*, what do you need”, I hear one of the politicians ask *Aderbal* somewhat teasingly. I hear a lot of names and numbers, but stay at the entrance of the institute. I can follow that they talk about a team [an *equipe*] that will promote the politicians in the neighbourhood. The politicians are constantly looking at their phones, and asking *Aderbal* questions. Inside of the institute there is a pile of Tupperware that *Aderbal* instructs *Anderson* and *Dédé* to distribute to the women standing outside of the institute.

After *Aderbal* has shown them the institute and chatted with them for a while, the men go outside for a walk in the neighbourhood. They shake hands with people from the neighbourhood. Then I am also called to get inside one of the big SUV’s. *Aderbal* is going to

show them the *Mocidade* sport club building. At the *Mocidade* I get the impression that the men are planning to organize a party or meeting, since they are measuring the distances in order to see how many people would fit in.



Figure 14: Politicians at *Rua Camdoi*
Source: Author's photograph

The visit does not last long, since one of the drivers of the politicians got an accident with one of the other SUV cars while leaving *Coque*. The politicians soon leave in order to make sure the papers are rightly handled. At night, *Aderbal* tells me “I have told them that I need computers for inside the institute, such that the people could play and learn on them”.

7.4 On politicians and diapers

Aderbal's car is packed with diapers and we are waiting for the *deputado*. He is joining us towards the distribution point at *Rua da Zoada*. When we arrive, the women are already standing with their children in line (see figure 15). *Aderbal* shows the *deputado* the distribution point, the diapers, and a pile of (again) Tupperware. A mouse quickly runs away when *Aderbal* moves a pile of diapers to make space for the new ones that we just brought with us. I leave the men to discuss, and go outside to the waiting women.

Outside, on the same road where *Damilo* cursed when having to drive there with his *combi* bus, a man comes to me and says that I should take pictures of the street to show the politicians that nothing has been done. He is one of the few men that are around the distribution point. “All streets have been paved, except for this road on some others” the man complains. The wastewater flows openly on the muddy road. Some people throw their garbage into the water. “I do not need to explain that therefore mice, rats and mosquitoes are attracted to this place” the man continues. “For years they promise, but after voting nothing is done!” the man reacts disillusioned from electoral politics. When I ask him what he thinks about *Aderbal's* work he says, “It's necessary help, but we want more than that!”.

The women are called inside when the distribution point is neat again, and the diapers hidden around the corner such that the women cannot take them themselves. In *Aderbal's* speech he mentions that he does not like ‘*safadeza* politics’, that he is doing his best for the people, and the *prefeitura* is working for the community. Then the *deputado* is allowed to speech.

“I keep it short because already a lot has been said [...] Now the politicians are beginning to come into the neighbourhood with their talks [...] But I know that you yourselves know what is *certo* [true/sound] and what is not [...] I’m here, but I do not say that you should vote for me [...] you are smart enough to see who is doing most for you, so you can decide yourselves what is correct”.

The man I spoke outside enters the distribution point to interrupt his speech; “Are you going to do something or not about this street here?!”. The *deputado* “cannot promise anything”, but he ‘does his best’, I understand from the long-winded answer that follows. When the *deputado* is done talking, the women are ordered to stand in line.

Aderbal will not start distributing the diapers and Tupperware if there is no order (see figure 15). When the *deputado* leaves I hear two women behind me telling each other; “they talk, talk and talk, and what we get is five diapers and this [the Tupperware]”. I look at the women and tell them “it is just like that huh” while shaking my head. The women start laughing as they did not expect me to hear them.

The point is reached where the diapers are finished, but more women are waiting outside of the distribution point. *Aderbal* orders me to stand at the entrance in order for nobody else to enter. It is a tricky position to be in for me, as I have to tell them that the diapers are finished. As *Aderbal*, in an almost cold way, would later tell me, “you should not be worried that these women did not get anything. The next time they should try again. Also, some of them are just trying to find ways to get more than they should by sending someone else to ask for them”.



Figure 15: Distributing diapers
Source: Author’s photograph

In the afternoon *Aderbal* enters the house while I am making notes of the day. I tell him a lame joke that I just thought of. “What is the similarity between diapers and politicians?” I ask him. “What?!” he is curious to hear. “Both start off clean and end up dirty (*nogueira*)” I tell him. We both laugh shortly, but soon he replies, as if he also saw the joke as an accusation, “No, it is not like that. You have honest politicians, less honest politicians, and corrupt politicians”.

Again he tries to distance, in the same way as the *punteros* in Auyero’s (2001) work, his distribution practices from ‘politics’. He points to his institute and says “I only care about *thát*. Only *thát* is my work. I just do what I can for the community. I am not much interested in

political business”. By now he is also sitting down on the couch and, amazed how similar *Aderbal* is to Auyero’s brokers, I tell him: “I like to see how you do things for the community”.

Aderbal: Ha-ha, how I *tira onda* [fool around] with the *povo* [people]?

Sven: Is it really just *tira onda*? It is also serious, right?

Aderbal: That I help *safada* [screwed up] politicians?

Sven: No, how you help *a gente*

Aderbal: Yes, that is serious

Sven: But [name *deputado*] is *safado*, isn’t he?

Aderbal: No he is *legal* [cool]

Although I believe that what he perceived as the difference between ‘his work’ and ‘politics’ was the distinction between slum politics (care and recognition for the community) and governmental/electoral politics, I tried to ‘fish’ for an elaboration of what he perceived as the difference. The *bull session* style of interview that was the result, shows, it seems, that *Aderbal* experienced difficulties in managing both his image, and the image of the politicians that he was linked to, making it difficult to ‘talk freely’ about a slum politics and the other types of politics. At the same time I have attempted to show in this chapter how entwined slum politics (getting a hand on resources like for example computers for the community) is with electoral politics (team of ‘vote winners’). Again, since *Aderbal* does not only work in times of nearing elections, it would be too simple to assume that slum politics only exists because of electoral politics. This shows that it is too simple to argue that *Aderbal* is only working for the PSB politicians’ interests or personal gain. Next to personal support and gain from outside politicians, he needs something (e.g. the computers for his institute) to show that he is also working for the community. In the next chapter I turn to the relation between slum politics and governmental politics.

CHAPTER VIII: “RECIFE WILL BE A SECOND DUBAI”

Aderbal and the *Novo Recife* project

8.1 Introduction

In this chapter the lines of research around hope, gender, and the intertwining of different types of politics come together. I describe ethnographically how *Aderbal* mobilised *Coque's* residents in favour of the polarized *Novo Recife* project. Again, the people who *Aderbal* mobilised in the majority consisted of women. This mobilisation is an example of how the livelihood of the poor women is entwined with politics, since they make an extra income through protesting. They are manipulated by *Aderbal* to demonstrate in favour of the *Novo Recife* project. I describe that the women go to the streets to protest, but they do so for the money as they are not interested in politics and know little about projects such as *Novo Recife*. Like discussed in chapter four, I argue that it was not here, on the *rua*, that a ‘politics of hope’ could be identified.

8.2 The context of the *Novo Recife* project

The PSB has become a fierce advocate of “beatification” projects (Davis 2006, 98) that incorporate middle-class, hygienist, notions of citizenship (Koster and Nuijten 2012; Nuijten, Koster, and de Vries 2012). One such immense urban projects is the *Novo Recife* project. It includes, amongst others, the building of luxury residence, theatres, and parks (figure 16). The project is part of the PSB government program, and this partially explains why *Aderbal* supports this project. On the other hand, *Rildo* from the *Ponto de Cultura* – cited in chapter six – is against the project. Amongst other reasons, *Aderbal* argued that such a project would be good for *Coque*, since it would increase the value of living in *Coque*. Then, according to him, residents would have the right to more money if they would have to leave the area in the future.

Exemplifying the major changes in Recife was a metaphor that I heard while I was waiting for the *deputado* with *Aderbal*. While waiting *Aderbal* discussed with a female community leader of *Brasilia Teimosa*, another ZEIS area. They talked about the many projects in the city and then the female community leader said; “Recife will transform into a second Miami”. *Aderbal* replied to her

“Recife will turn into a second Dubai. I have heard that a lot. Who does not want to live in Dubai? All those people who are against the *Novo Recife* project, ask them if they do not want to live in Dubai?”

When I asked him afterwards whether he liked the idea of living in Dubai, he replied;

“Look. Everyone knows that the poor will not be living in these towers, but it will bring jobs and a nice place to walk. Just imagine people from *Coque* walking around in the park. There will be a theatre and a park. It would just be nice to wander around.”



Figure 16: Novo Recife beautification project

Source: <http://www.novorecife.com.br/o-projeto>

With ‘the people who are against’, *Aderbal* meant the *Ocupe Estelita* movement, a middleclass movement (to a large extent) that occupied the area at *Cais Jose Estelita*, the location of the *Novo Recife* project. When I visited the occupation there were many university students discussing the next steps to take against the project. They had banners with the text “the city is ours” or “robbed city”, since they believed the project was not participatory enough and benefited the real estate powers only. Some weeks later, the *Estelita* activists were violently evicted by the police. The morning it happened *Aderbal* told me; “all the drunk students have been removed by the police. It was on the news”.

Related to this project, *Aderbal*, as a representative of *Coque*, had frequent contact with businessmen and journalists. He would tell me things as; “I have told the consortium involved in *Novo Recife* to buy a house in *Coque*, such that there could be a crèche where everyday 200 kids could come. You know, I want to arrange that”. One day he was even asked to participate in a project commercial for the *Globo* channel (figure 17). During the recording he had 30 seconds to answer ‘why the project was good for the community of *Coque*’.



Figure 17: A commercial for *Novo Recife*

Source: Author’s photograph

He had earlier experience with journalists, since he and *René* featured in a news-clip from the *Jornal do Commercio*¹⁸ [Journal of Commerce] on the *comunidade's* perspectives on *Novo Recife*. In the clip – that starts with “neighbouring communities support works at *Cais José Estelita*” – *Aderbal* sits on the floor in front of his house while being interviewed.

Interviewer: What do you think of these future neighbours, the new project *Novo Recife*?

Aderbal: I think it is excellent, and good for our community

Interviewer: And why?

Aderbal: Because...there will be...jobs...the development will be better...the community will be having more access to the area, that is now completely closed. And there are many robberies taking place there. If you pass there at night, starting at six, you get stuck in traffic. Marginality. You cannot pass there, there is only one entrance. That is a tunnel that goes to *Cabanga* and there are a lot of robberies there.

Interviewer: Ok, then one more thing, what is the difference between this project compared to the other one, which was close to here, and which you guys were against?

Aderbal: Man [*rapaiç*], they are very different...*Novo Recife* and the *Polo Jurídico* that is there...*Polo Jurídico* was meant to evict people from the community...It was a certainty to evict...And the towers which will be there, they will bring better things for *Coque*. Where the community will have jobs...Listen, the *mulheres doméstico* [housekeepers] will have loads of work to do there in the buildings, are you getting it? There will be some kiosks there...People could work there...domestic jobs huh...

In the same news-clip *René* replies to the question “Is the community in favour or against the project?” that “the community is in favour” of this project that is taking place in this “[abandoned] space in a city that needs space to grow”. He continues:

“Not only the community, also other neighbouring communities like *Pina*, *Cabanga*, *Coelhos*, because the project is very vital. These works will do what? The commerce of neighbouring communities will return to what it was in the past. All the small businesses will be revived [*oxigenar economicamente*]. All the micro-enterprises, without any doubt, will benefit a lot and consequently also the inhabitants of these neighbouring areas”

In daily encounters with residents of *Coque*, the *Novo Recife* project, like the land invasions/occupations near *Coque* were often shortly discussed by *Aderbal*. With regard to the occupations he often said “all have houses”, and with regards to the *Estelita* movement he often claimed that “the student hippies are all smoking *maconha* and having sex in the tents”. In this way he was trying to create discontent. At some point I even heard rumours that people from the community were offered money to steal from the tents at the *Estelita* area. In the next two sections I discuss how *René* and *Aderbal* worked together to mobilise *Coque's* residents in support of the *prefeitura* in the approval of the *Novo Recife* project.

8.3 “The community is in favour of *Novo Recife*”

René (middle person in figure 8) is a community leader supporting *Aderbal*, but is not in frequent contact with him. In fact, I did not see him often in *Coque*. I do not believe that he has his own strong ‘inner circle’, since he seems to rely on operating between groups of community leaders,

since I have also seen him working with the *Ponto de Cultura* leaders in past YouTube clips. He does not have an institution like the *Instituto Cultural Renascer do Coque* or the *Ponto de Cultura Espaço Livre do Coque*. Although I have seen him at a Socialist Party festivity it has not become clear for which politicians he works, if even so.

One day he enters the house with a paper and sits with *Aderbal* on the couch, while I am working behind the computer. I can partly follow their conversation about a meeting in which, as *René* says, the community leaders are being excluded from. They are supposed to have access to this meeting he believes. He wants to arrange something that they can gain access to the meeting. It is a quick conversation. When *René* leaves – and *Aderbal* angrily finishes some phone calls – I tell *Aderbal* I have seen *René* talking fiercely earlier during fieldwork at the presentation of the skate park project. *Aderbal* replies, “Yes *René* knows how to talk. He’s good in debates. He also has his bad things, but he is from the community”. Therefore, *René* is also referred to as “the mouth”.

A few days after *René* sat with *Aderbal* on the couch, *Aderbal* entered the house with a smile and opened his eyes wide open.

Aderbal: You should have been today with me to the *Prefeitura*. Three journalists have called me to ask about the project [*Novo Recife*]. I have brought enough people for them to keep their [the project critics] mouths shut.

Sven: You have brought people?

Aderbal: Yes, they all talked in favour of the project. Only Chico tried to talk against the project.

Sven: Is that the guy who claims to be *Coque*’s community leader, while he is not?

Aderbal: Yes that *safado*. Also, *René* talked. *Rapaiç* he knows how to talk!

Sven: Ah *René*, also in favour of the project isn’t he?

Aderbal: Everyone is in favour of the project, except *Rildo*, *Matuto* and *Moises*.

Sven: Ah the *Ponto di Cultura*. But which journalists called?

Aderbal: From *Globo*, *Jornal do Commercio* and another one. I don’t know that one. All those *safado* students need to leave their tents!

Sven: Did you tell them it like that?!

[Both laugh]

Indeed, some days after, the *Jornal do Comercio* reported; “OPENING OF NEGOTIATION” (*JornalDoComercio* 2014). Under the heading “communities ask for a voice”, the article reported; “community leaders from the neighbourhoods of *Pina*, *Ilha Joana Bezerra* [*Coque*] and *Cabanga* attempted yesterday to participate in the [consortium and government] meeting”. *Aderbal* is cited at length saying, “I have lived for more than 20 years in *Coque* and never something has been done for us. This is our chance to change reality”.

Then the *comunidades* got more involved in the discussions around the project when one day *René* stood with his car (with big speakers on the roof) around the corner. The moment I got to him, he told me “tomorrow we will go there in busses to arrange for a *pasarela* such that the area is more accessible to people in *Coque*”. In the remainder of this section I discuss this mobilisation of *Coque*’s residents in support of the *prefeitura* to approve the *Novo Recife* project.

It is eight in the morning. I am ready to leave the house, when *Dédé* enters.

Dédé: Where are you going?

Sven: A protest against ‘the *safado* students in tents’ [NB: imitating *Aderbal*]

Dédé: Wasn’t it *René* who had put the people to occupy the space in the first place?

Sven: that may well be, I have no idea, the politics here is crazy

Dédé: How are you going?

Sven: *Aderbal* arranged for a bus

Dédé: [laugh] Then take care of your camera!

Sven: Yes, I know, but why?

Dédé: You are going with all the *maloqueiros* [bad guys] from *Coque*

Supposedly, 50 other people would go, but there are not many other people waiting for the bus. Only *Pipoca* [popcorn] has arrived. The young potential community leader *Pipoca*, is looking for people to join the bus. One of the people that arrive later is a man with a football shirt and a large wooden cross on his chest. It is *tarado da Cruz* [maniac with the cross] who I had seen my first night in *Coque*. *Tarado* sings a song to make everyone laugh.

A Copa vem aqui [The World Cup is coming]

A São João vai ser legal [*São João* will be cool]

No dia 3 outubro o vereador e Aderbal [3th of October *Aderbal* will be councillor]

It seems that the people are not arriving because they know about the project but they are here in support of *Aderbal*. A man with a walking stick, a woman with a too short t-shirt, two young men, and the famous street wanderer of *Coque* also arrive. In the meantime, the bus is also ready to go. *Aderbal* comes and yells “*bora bora!*” Like kids on a school trip, one young man who enters the bus quickly asks to turn on the TV. An older man does a little dance on the bus. *Aderbal* gets in and sees that there is almost nobody in the bus; “Gosh”. The bus cannot leave empty like this. *Aderbal* accompanies *Pipoca* to look for other people to enter.

It is as *Dédé* said earlier. *Aderbal* is going with his own car, and I am joining ‘the drunks from *Coque*’ in a bus towards the *prefeitura*. As we drive through *Coque* more people enter the bus. The men are hanging out of the window to call for people to enter. “It is our friend *Aderbal*” yells the woman with a too short shirt. The other men call “*bora bora!*” to people outside the bus. Like a high school bus trip without a teacher, despite the no smoking sign half the bus is smoking cigarettes and the *Pitú* bottle [rum] is going back and forth.

When I ask a man who has entered the bus whether he knows what we are going to do he replies, “to *meiorar*” [better] followed by “*pra comunidade né*” [for the community isn’t it]. After a short ride, we arrive, and hear *René* already preaching through the microphone. The microphone is connected to the speakers on the roof of his car (see figure 18).



Figure 18: *Renê* with the microphone (left) and inhabitants of *Coque* (right)
 Source: Author's photographs

People get out of the bus and quickly separate in different groups at the square. A small group stands in front of *Renê* to listen what he says. One of the drunken people is whistling continuously, while *Renê* defends *Novo Recife*. Using similar arguments as he had mentioned in the news-clip quoted above, he says things such as “this is an historical place which is not used” and now it will bring “employment for people near the *Rua Imperial* and *Avenida Sul*”. He asks, “When has there been a project for the periphery?” and answers it with “Never!” As if trying to defend himself against counterarguments, he tries to legitimize himself saying “we are instruments of the community” and “we are not working for the enterprises”, but “we have been searching for real information”.

There are people from several neighbourhoods that also support the project holding banners. I am wondering all along whether the people standing here even know why they are standing there. My suspicion is strengthened when I look at one of banners that confuses ‘project’ and ‘protest’. It reads “THE PROTEST NOVO RECIFE BRINGS JOBS AND ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL, AND INTEGRATIONAL DEVELOPMENT”.

Then *Renê* and *Aderbal* enter the building at *Cais do Apolo* reportedly being received by Gabriel Leitão, the Executive Secretary of Governance and Social Participation (DiarioDePernambuco 2014). We remain outside and observe how multiple protests are now taking place at the square. The people who were just with me in the bus are watching, chatting, buying some goodies to eat, and joking with the people of other protests. It takes a while before *Aderbal* and *Renê* are outside again. They encounter journalists who like to ask some questions and take pictures. At the same time, protesters who are against *Novo Recife* also get in discussion with them (see figure 19).



Figure 19: René (right) in discussion with anti-*Novo Recife* protesters

Source: http://www.diariodepernambuco.com.br/app/noticia/vida-urbana/2014/06/07/interna_vidaurbana,508764/comunidades-pedem-reuniao-sobre-o-novo-recife.shtml

When I arrive at the scene, I hear *Aderbal* say, “the people of *Coque* are here and it is clear that they are in favour of the project *Novo Recife*”. He then calls everyone together for a photo and says again “*bora bora*”, calling everyone to the bus again such that they leave and he can continue “doing *negócios* [business]”. The next day one of the journalists quoted *René* to have said “We want the project because there will be more leisure spaces and we want priority in the jobs that will be generated during construction” (DiarioDePernambuco 2014).

We walk back to the bus when the man in a Botafogo shirt (football club Rio de Janeiro) asks *Aderbal*; “but hey! We would get something to drink?!”. Back in *Coque*, we get out of the bus, and right in front of us, the police is holding a young boy against the wall. We stand and watch since the police car is also blocking the entrance towards the house. We go to the bar a few minutes walking in the main road of *Coque*. There is chicken, *feijão* (beans), rice, *Pitú*, and *Coca Cola* on the table. Here I am told that the incident was about the boy transporting a bottle of whisky and *maconha* [marijuana]. When I offer to pay for my share *Pipoca* says, “no, no, *Aderbal* arranges the bill”.

After we had a couple of beers *Aderbal* arrives with his car at the bar, which is actually simply some plastic seats under a roof near the street. He handles the bill and counts 1,2,3,4,5 and gives *Tarado da Cruz* 50 Reais saying “to divide between you guys”. The other attendees each also get their money. He leaves again, but in the night he enters the house again. I read from my notebook the song made by *Tarado* for *Aderbal*. He starts laughing. When *Jucelia* leaves the room, he shows me money:

Aderbal: This is politics of money [*politica do dinheiro*]. You have seen, if there are people behind you. When they love you [*gosta de você*]...for what you do for them. You can earn a lot. However, if they no longer support you, you stay with nothing [silent]. Are you coming to live here? You can earn a lot!

Sven: I have seen how they like you [*gosta de você*], but I have asked some of them whether

they know what they are in the bus for. I have only heard that it is “for our friend *Aderbal*”, “for the community”, and simply “for improvement” [trying to explain with different tone]. Do you really think they know about the project?

Aderbal: [laughs again] They are all donkeys [*burro*]

8.4 Public Audience on the *Novo Recife* project

Today there will be a public audience. The decision followed after protester from *Ocupe Estelita* continued occupying the area where the *Novo Recife* project is planned. A bus will leave from *Coque* early again, although the public audience starts at 14h. The reason for this is, as *Aderbal* told me yesterday that they want to be there before *Estelita* activists. It is eight a clock in the morning and significantly more people are waiting for the bus in *Rua Camdoi* to leave. *Aderbal* is, as always, walking all over the place and talking on the phone. He hands paper and pencil to a woman and orders her to fill in the names of the people joining on the bus towards the public audience. The majority of people present are women.

Two boxes with bottles of water and apples from the *Extra* supermarket are prepared to take on the bus. None of the people present are talking about the project *Novo Recife*. I try to figure out what the waiting women know and start a conversation with one of them.

Sven: Did you know the open audience is starting at 14h?

Woman: My God, really?! Is there going to be food?

Sven: No, only water and apples

Woman: [joking] If there is not going to be food I will get after that tall *negão*

Sven: No. I have heard nothing about food, only apples and water

Woman: [joking] So we will be on a light diet

The women are concerned with something else. A man is having a shower at the end of the street, simply in his boxer-short. With a bucket, he takes water from a tank and showers for quite a while. Some of the women start talking; “hhmmm you could give me a *negão* like that”, one says. “He is standing there for a lifetime”, another continues. “You could give me a clean *negão* like that”, they joke. “He is surely taking a long time washing his ass”, they keep watching the man. In this way they fill the time waiting for the bus.

It is an hour later and I am sitting in the bus that has finally arrived. *Aderbal* and *Renê* are going with their cars. All seats in the bus are occupied and after we have passed the main road in *Coque*, the bus is packed with people. But before we leave, again like a schoolteacher speaking to children, *Aderbal* gets on the bus to say; “Everyone knows we are going to the public audience. We are not leaving before it is over at 18h. It is about a business which will bring jobs for *Coque*”. People in the bus start a discussion about whether there is going to be food. *Aderbal* points at the fruits and water, and quickly gets out of the bus again.



Figure 20: Action at public audience *Novo Recife*
 Source: Author's photographs

When we arrive at the building where the open audience is held the students from *Ocupe Estelita* and journalists are already present. *Aderbal* to some extent provokes the *Estelita* activists by ordering some of the women to stand near the entrance and by saying out loud that “the *povo* has arrived!”. Some of the activists get irritated and start critiquing *Aderbal* that ‘he is getting paid’, that ‘he pays the people to arrive in busses’, and critique some of the women ‘that they are doing the wrong thing’ by following *Aderbal*. *Aderbal* reacts fiercely that he is the only legitimate person to represent the community. Other activist provoke by shouting “ask them whether they know what the project *Novo Recife* is about!”.

Also other community leaders, who I have seen in the daily commercials in favour of the project on *O Globo*, have brought people in busses with banners. It does not take long before there are more tensions between *Coque's* residents and students. The parking lot is starting to get full of people, with small groups forming. Some discuss heavily, with one female *Estelita* activist sweating to convince *Coque's* women that the project will in the future be a bad thing for *Coque*, and that they will then be evicted. With fierce tongues *Coque's* women are arguing that *Aderbal* knows more about the project and that the project will not evict them.

In another spot a student, with glasses, a pierced ear, and a beard, is also trying his best to bring forward arguments against the *Novo Recife* project, but he is being booed at by some of the *Coque's* residents. When *Aderbal* replies something to the bearded student, they back him by chanting *Coque, Coque, Coque!*, or they laugh while saying “*pão no culo de Estelita!*” [*Estelita* gets an ass spanking]. Other residents of *Coque* discuss or explain to themselves the project, they try to understand the flyers handed out by *Estelita* activist, or they listen carefully to what activists from *Estelita* have to say.

Aderbal distributes the water since the sun is burning on the parking lot. From a distance I see one of the female *Estelita* activists throw an empty bottle of water at *Aderbal* who reacts back, although in the tumult I cannot hear what he tells her. Meanwhile discussions continue. Somewhat uncomfortably I watch the following scene unfold, when a short female activist in her twenties bravely tries to convince an older firm dark-skinned woman that “*we* are also on *your* side! *We* are also struggling for *you!*”. As expected, the student is questioned fiercely with the inquiry whether she ‘has ever entered the community’.

After some time – when more people arrive and it is almost the time set for the public

audience to start – the smaller groups form into ‘the group of *Occupe Estellita*’ and community residents. *Occupe Estellita* start with a chant. *René* – who by now I suddenly see appearing – reacts to this chant. This is followed by community residents cheering with their hands in the air “*René! René! René!*” (see figure 20). The tensions have reached a high point, but there is no escalation, and as *René* disappears, the women spread out over the parking lot again.

Then finally people are allowed to enter, but this goes slowly since forms need to be filled in first. After waiting for a long time, *Aderbal* calls some women towards him and tells them

“probably they are not going to let you enter anymore. It is better just to go home. The important thing is that the *cara* [person in influential position] has seen you, the people. I saw that he was looking from the window above”.

I decide that I have seen enough, tired of the waiting, and walk back to *Coque* with the majority of women who are happy they can leave. One of them tells me “now finally I can get back to my child”. Another tells me “I liked the tumult, but I do not like politics. In politics they are all *ladrão* [thieves]. Dilma is the first *ladrona*”.

When it is already getting dark in *Coque*, *Aderbal* finally gets back from the public audience. He changes money with one of the neighbours. Then the women gather around him, and call others who were present, or at least had their name written on the paper in the morning. They are on one side of the street while I am observing on the other side of street how they are joking, teasing each other, and receiving 30 *Reais* per person.

At this moment it does not even surprise me anymore. It is an example of how the livelihood of the poor women is entwined with politics, as they make an extra income through protesting. As Auyero claims, community leader’s politics and collective action are “dynamic processes that often establish recursive relationships” (2009). When the women go to the streets to protest, they do so for the money as they are not interested in politics and know little about projects such as *Novo Recife*. As I have shown in this chapter, they are manipulated by *Aderbal* to demonstrate in favour of the *Novo Recife* project. Yet again, it is not here, on the *rua*, that a ‘politics of hope’ can be identified. As I show next, the ‘politics of hope’ takes place in other realms, particularly in the *casa*.

CHAPTER IX: MEANWHILE IN THE HOUSE

The *mata* and *casa* as symbolic for slum politics

“White women are for marriage, mulatto women for sex, and Negro women for work”

—Brazilian saying cited by Freyre (1986, 13)

Remove a minha pedra [Remove my stone]

Me chama pelo nome [Call me by name]

Muda a minha história [Change my story]

Ressuscita os meus sonhos [Lift my dreams]

Transforma a minha vida [Transform my life]

Me faz um milagre [I need a miracle]

Me toca nessa hora [Touch me now]

Me chama para fora [Call me out]

Ressuscita me [bring me back alive]

—Aline Barros, *Ressuscita-me* (*Jessica's* favourite song)

9.1 Introduction

In the previous chapters I have shown the sexualisation of governmental and electoral politics, and that these types of politics are to a large extent about reputations and rivalries. They are about what Rancière calls the ‘*the police*’, standing for “all the activities which create order by distributing places, names, functions” (Rancière according to Swyngedouw 2011, 6). In other words, I have highlighted the way in which a power system operates. As already touched upon in this thesis, Rancière argues that *the police* is the opposite of *politics*. For him politics is always an interruption, a disruption, that shows the inconsistency of the (urban) situation (De Vries forthcoming-b, forthcoming-a) that is not only about the public but also, and even more so, about the private. In this chapter I put on this lens in and near the realm of the *casa* where I argue that it is possible – like in conflicts around the *mata*, the new land invasions, discussed in chapter two – to find a ‘politics of hope’.

One afternoon, *Jessica* told me; “It is going backwards, you know”. When I asked her what she meant she continued; “First my father bought fresh fruits for the family, but now we rely on the stuff he gets from the supermarket which is of no good quality”. After a pause she stated; “Here we run the family with everyone contributing his share in the food [...] now you are here and you buy chicken, coffee, *Guaraná*. Everyone should contribute”. Similarly, *Jucelia* stated that *Aderbal* “gives more to the community than to his own family”. Such irritations come from gender inequality within the family. As I will argue in this chapter, this inequality has one thing similar to the gender inequality between *Aderbal* and the recipients in his food distribution practices. The *comunidade* is divided, but also interrelated through kinship relationships, as much as the relationships within the house of *Aderbal* and *Jucelia* are. In both inequalities, the ‘*mata*’, the history of life in the *favela*, remains a symbolic given. This symbolic given, in terms of Brian Massumi, represents both hope and despair.

Since I developed a stronger bond with *Jucelia* and *Jessica*, it is possible to touch in this

chapter upon the related topics of gender in the organisation of a livelihood and gendered perspectives on politics. This stronger bond developed soon after my fieldwork entrance, particularly since I got irritated about the constant sexual remarks made by men in *Coque*. The stronger bond resulted in raw observations of the brutalities of family life that took place in the shadow of *Aderbal's* slum politics. I attempt to show in this chapter that *Aderbal* distances himself from the *mata*, but at the same time he is well aware that he is from the *mata* himself and that slum politics is based on fidelity to the *mata* that stands for the suffering of women and children and for love in times of hopeless situations.

9.2 On hope as an attitude

Jucelia, *Jessica* and I are sitting outside. *Jessica* is making a cake for the church meeting and had to wait since it was in the oven. During the conversation, the topic of *Aderbal's* expenditures for food on the streets is discussed. *Jucelia* says, "A prostitute is worth more for him than I am". She explains that "a prostitute gets food, drinks, attention, and then even a bonus for the act", whereas she gets "none of that, just eating the remainders of what he occasionally brings home".

Another day *Aderbal* has left the house early, and I am sitting at the table drinking coffee, prepared for me by *Jucelia*. We are eating white bread with butter. *Jucelia* sits in front of me and tells me that one of the neighbours has told her that *Aderbal* bought a present for another woman. She expresses herself with the word *vergonha*. She is ashamed of it. Especially when she hears other women talk about it while walking on the street she says. I express to her that I think she works hard in the household and that I think she deserves more compliments for that, but especially that 'respect' is important. There appears a little smile on her face, but not for long, since she gets up to the fridge and shows that there is nothing in the refrigerator.

"But on the streets he has money for other woman", she continues, while trying to hide her tears from me. When she sits back in front of me, again she cannot hold her tears anymore. *Jucelia* continues telling me that her husband eats outdoors and takes other people out.

"He has several women he walks along the street with. Other women call me when they see it [...] When I walk on the street they talk about me [and this is why] I prefer to stay here at home, or only go to the supermarket around the corner. This [the shame] is why I do not talk to him and sleep on the couch as you have seen".

I agree with her and say that I have noticed how 'in general women are treated badly here'. I tell her I noticed how *Aderbal* is very different in the house compared to on the street. She agrees,

"A lot of people say he's talking and laughing on the street, but in the house he is serious and he does not talk. He thinks that I do not know what he is doing outside, but I know very well. It is just that I am the person who keeps my mouth shut. But it cannot stay inside of me the whole time".

She pauses and continues;

"It is better to split up if he does not respect me. Sometimes I want to pack all my stuff and walk out of here. I do not want money from him, and as you see, I do not get in the car where other women have been sitting. He takes other women out, but he has never taken me anywhere.

She gets up from the seat and grabs a pair of new slippers. “This he bought for me for the *São João* festival, but I am not wearing them”, she says, while throwing them on the couch. She continues to explain that “a friend called me to say that she has seen that he bought the same for another woman and walked arm in arm with her”.

Then she walks to the fridge and shows the meat that *Aderbal* brought home the day before;

“This meat is expired! This is what he buys for us [...] we would become sick if we eat it [...] he does not think of here [...] Look at us, we are here eating bread and butter! [...] They say that *Aderbal* is telling everyone that everything inside the house everything is fine, but inside the house I get rotten meat”.

However, *Jucelia* does not leave it here, since she says decisively “today I am not cooking!”. She shakes her head to put more strength to what she said and continues;

“For he must learn that he cannot just come in and eat, and put on his plate what and when he wants himself. Otherwise he will get used to it even more, thinking that he can just enter, take food, and do not spend anything for inside the house”.

Jucelia has not been crying for a long time, since anger has taken over. She gets up again when her daughter *Jessica* enters the house, and picks up a few plastic bags from the *Extra* supermarket, the supermarket where *Aderbal* gets the (over date) fruits and vegetables that he distributes. Then she says, “What does he want? For me to eat this?!” , while putting the bags in her mouth. She turns to *Jessica* to explain to her about the expired meat, the slippers that he bought for another woman, and that she is not cooking today.

“But tonight you will see how I enter the church being sad, but get out happy”, *Jucelia* ends our morning talk at the table, and continues cleaning the house. *Jessica* and *Jucelia* ask if I would like to join them to the church, which they refer to as a *vigilia* [church service] that takes from 22h to 5h in the morning. Once a month such long services are held, whereas during the week, there are four opportunities for a *crente* [believer] to go to shorter services (2 hours).

And now it is tonight. We are on the bottom floor of an old apartment in the centre of Recife. Not all LED lamps are functioning here, and electrical wires are visible. Up front, the preacher stands behind a desk, but the rest of the room is filled with plastic chairs. *Jessica* explains that “the priest needed to pay 300 Reais to rent the place”. That is why, when it is possible, the meetings are also held on the streets or in *Aderbal*'s institute. *Jessica* kneels down on a plastic chair in the back of the room and does a quick prayer before she sits down.

We are one of the first to arrive, but “soon this is completely full”, *Jessica* replies. We are sitting in the back of the room, because according to *Jessica*, “in the front people become hysterical later on”. When the *vigilia* starts, I can hear all the prayers of the people that in most cases is a mixture of crying and praying. I believe that if you do not weep here for your own problems, you will so for hearing those of others. After that people get to hear several times by the priest that they are “loved and valued by the Lord” and that “the Lord has heard their problems”. Different people get in front to talk, or rather, rattle their sentences while making sweeping movements with their arms like chopping away the bad energies in the room. I would wonder at times whether it was even Portuguese. This goes on through the night and while walking back home in the early morning hours I can see how the women, *Jucelia* and *Jessica*,

'loaded their batteries' again so to say.

This day, I have seen how hope is where you least expect it. I, somewhat optimistically and naively, believed to find it in critical residents of *Coque* who could organize to go to the streets to demand a voice with the help of community leaders in the context of the 2014 FIFA World Cup when all eyes were on Brazil. Yet, this would have been a hope based on a vision for the future and rational calculation. Instead hope was on the side of women like *Jucelia*, (former) *favelado* women, who despite the many blows in their life retained an immense energy to struggle, and make sacrifices. This all in the context of an uncertain life in *Coque*, which was highly dependent on friends and family ties, and on the resources and economic situation from outside the community. Their hope had nothing to do with optimism or pessimism. In fact, for an outsider, like their laughter as explained in chapter five, it even seemed naïve.

Their hope was not based on rational calculation, but on a certain way of practicing belief and perseverance. It was not necessarily about belief, but resided in a capacity to see things that hitherto remained invisible. It was an attitude. Each time that *Jucelia* found the time and space – when *Aderbal* was not present – to (rightfully) express her discontent, she was in search of “a margins of manoeuvrability” (Zournazi 2002, 211) that consisted of ‘not going to cook’, ‘going to the city’ herself, ‘not wearing the clothes he [NB: *Aderbal*] buys’ for her, or ‘going back to selling juices on the streets’. Even the fact that *Jessica* and *Jucelia* (smokers and lottery buyers) were Evangelic, seemed more as ‘the next experimental step’, rather than living towards, or believing in, a ‘big utopian picture’ (Ibid 212). In the next section I discuss one of the days that *Jucelia* confronted *Aderbal* and showed to *Rua Camdoi* her frustrations with him.

9.3 *Jucelia* shows her discontent

Aderbal got home drunk yesterday night. It is early in the morning when I overhear *Jucelia* telling *Dédé* that “he told *Sven* that he was with politicians yesterday, but it is a lie”. When *Aderbal* gets in his car, *Jucelia* is cleaning in front of the house. She yells at him, such that everyone can hear; “Bring those prostitutes here inside the house! You are doing everything so secretly! But bring them here! *Safado!*” *Aderbal* does not reply and quickly leaves. Then *Jucelia* enters the house again, and furiously tells me; “I have seen in his wallet that almost all his money has been spent! And his car looks like a dump!”

She keeps walking up and down, like I have seen her do before when she is angry. Then she stands before me; “He should bring those prostitutes inside the house for them to give a show”! “I will grab them by their hair to *comer* [to consume sexually the prostitutes inside the house]”, she furiously goes on. Then she walks to the fridge and grabs a can of *Red Bull* saying “he needs these to *get it*, his thing, up. I am seeing everything.” She opens the can and starts drinking it fast. “Today is my turn. I will only prepare the food for people here, and after that I go to the city!”.

With a knife in her hands she gets outside and starts chopping down all the *São João* garlands. *Dédé* follows her, and after *Jucelia*'s anger cools down, they sit and talk. When they get inside again *Jucelia* continues, “He only bought this dress for me to shut my mouth! But I won't! It does not work on me!” I have seen *Jucelia* angry before, but have not seen her like this so far. She is breathing heavily and her tears are visible, yet she continues cleaning the house and doing what she would do on a normal day.

After another day drinking beers after an electoral PSB celebration, *Aderbal* replied the

following when I told him; “you know, *Jucelia* does not like these things”, referring to the drinking beer and chatting with many women. He said;

“She does not like politics, but I love her and there is nobody who could take her place. She is the best housewife [*ama di casa*]. We have suffered a lot together. But there are a lot of women that like me! I do not want them all! But I am like this; if they are open and offer themselves, then I will eat [consume sexually]. Do you understand? But *Jucelia* is the best! We have suffered a lot together. A lot of women want me to separate with her, but without her I will die. In case she dies I would soon after.

I argue that the above quote shows how *Aderbal* distances himself from the *mata*, but at the same time he is well aware that he is from the *mata* himself, and that slum politics is based on fidelity to the *mata*, that stands for the suffering of women and children and for love in times of hopeless situations.

9.4 Slum politics as a ‘female’ politics

Governmental- and electoral politics are predominantly a male way to practice politics. They are types of politics that predominantly take place in government offices – Freye’s *casa grande* as explained in chapter two – and on the *rua*. They consist of many *bull sessions* as I would say, where men bluff, debate, convince, decide and their power is sexualized. As I have shown many women in *Coque* did not identify with these types of politics, as they saw it as a politics of thieves, corruption, and dishonesty. Although the latter characterization of both types of politics was no different for men, they were involved in them, like *Aderbal*, as *cabo eleitoral*, making an income through ‘vote winning’ activities.

But what about slum politics? I wish to argue here – in a similar way as Auyero (2001) does in his Argentine case, as I explained in chapter one – that slum politics is gendered in ways that the former are not. This is due to the fact that extreme poverty is highly gendered (Scheper-Hughes 1993; Chant 2006; Doshi 2011). As I have shown in this thesis, it was women who depended on *Aderbal*’s distribution practices, and likewise, it was to a large extent women who – when slum politics got entwined with electoral and governmental politics – mobilised in favour of the *Novo Recife* project to make an extra income. In addition, women like *Maria Grinaura* symbolized the injustice exerted on the poor, and that *the police* is always trying to deny this.

Related to this gendered dimension in poverty, although I did not identify female community leaders in *Coque*, I still believe that slum politics can be characterized as a ‘female’ politics. Phrased in other words, community leaders may be mostly men, but the subject of slum politics is feminine. I believe so for two main reasons. First – as explained in this chapter – in the realm of the *casa*, in a situation that provides little reason for optimism, women like *Jucelia* are the main protagonists of a ‘politics of hope’. Second, the way that community leaders often themselves describe their work as different from ‘politics’, as social/voluntary work [*trabalho de graça*], and a politics of care/recognition for the community, slum politics is a politics that (somewhat stereotypically) comes to represent traditional female roles in or near the *casa*.

CHAPTER X: A POLITICS OF THE NOBODIES

Slum politics as a politics that takes place in and around the '*mata*'

I have initiated this thesis with the grim vision of the world's slums by Mike Davis in *Planet of Slums* (2003, 2006). Slums according to him have mushroomed as the result of *Structural Adjustment Programs* that required a reduction in government social expenditure, and cheap food imports from the First World that destroyed local agriculture. Davis is inclined to see slums inhabited by marginalized labourers, superfluous civil servants, and ex-peasants, as spaces of despair, missing the Left, and more prone to accept religious forces than have truly political potential. I have contrasted this somewhat apocalyptic view with an opposite one from philosopher Slavoj Žižek who argues that we should be watching slum collectives – that get 'thrown into a situation', with no adequate health or social security coverage, 'where they must invent some mode of being-together' (Žižek 2004, 2007) – for signs of new forms of social awareness, for political struggle, and for a revitalization of left thinking.

However, since Žižek is not an anthropologist but a philosopher, I wondered whether his redemptive belief in slums not merely a form of wishful thinking, a form of speculative utopian thinking, ungrounded in actual evidence? To deal with this deadlock, Žižek himself refers to the unconventional notion of hope given by Brian Massumi. Massumi disconnects hope from an expected success, making it different from optimism (Zournazi 2002). He shows that hope is where you least expect it, and that the situation can both represent despair and hope at the same time. This hope is not based on rational calculation, but on a certain practice that is about "focusing on the next experimental step rather than the big utopian picture" (Ibid 212).

I continue this way of thinking about hope by inquiring into the ways in which slum residents practice hope. For this inquiry it is fruitful to look at practices of community leaders, the main protagonists in slum politics. Yet, before I get there, it is useful to engage with ways of theorizing politics in slums. It has been argued that often scholars have insufficiently dealt with the notion of 'the slum', taking it as a homogenous entity (Gilbert 2007; Owusu, Agyei-Mensah, and Lund 2008; Nuissl and Heinrichs 2013). To depart from such homogenous notions I have used in this thesis the classical theorizing of "multiple social realities of three separate but intersecting realms" (Scheper-Hughes 1993); the '*rua*' (street), '*casa*' (house) and '*mata*' (literally forest but also meaning the wild-side).

First, the *casa*, for Brazilian sociologist Roberto da Mata was roughly the female domain. It stood for *private* behaviour and morality. Here one could be a *person*, a "*somebody*", based on family and "natural" hierarchies of age and gender. Gilberto Freyre however interpreted the *casa* as the *casa grande*, the pre-modern symbol of the (big men) planter class (Scheper-Hughes 1993, 87). I have used the *casa* in both interpretations, where the *casa grande* stood for governmental offices. Second, the *rua*, stood for *public* behaviour and morality in the streets and marketplace. Here one is an *individual*, an "*anybody*". In the *rua* individuals fight for dominance, making this conceptual categorisation the realm of men for da Mata. Here power plays are constantly used to "personalise", hierarchize, and "domesticate", the impersonal world of the streets (Scheper-Hughes 1993, 86). Third, the *mata*, added by anthropologist Nancy Scheper-Hughes stood for the "traditional", "backward", for the *nobodies* (Scheper-Hughes 1993, 88). In this thesis the *mata*

has been used to stand for the ‘inconsistency of the urban situation’ (De Vries forthcoming-b), for the *favela*, for the people living on stilts [*palafitas*] near the mangroves.

Next to departing from homogenous notions of ‘the slum’, I have attempted to depart from theorization of life and politics in ‘the slum’ that present one-sided images that are either apocalyptic/defeatist or romantic/redemptive. In this attempt, the work of Javier Auyero (2001, 2011) has most influenced me. He is one of the few scholars to have studied ethnographically community leaders (or ‘brokers’ as he calls them) in poor Latin American neighbourhoods. In *Poor People’s Politics* Auyero studies politics in *Villa Paraíso*, an Argentine shantytown drained from economic resources by economic crises. He argues that consequently networks of political clientelism started overlapping traditional survival networks that in turn fortified *Peronist survival networks*. To make this argument he describes how *Poor People’s Politics* is about the appropriation of poverty alleviation programs by ‘brokers’ for political purposes. Auyero, rather than calling it political clientelism, calls it “*problem-solving through personalized political mediation*” (Auyero 2001, 213). However – although his theories are insightful, useful, and to a large extent similar to what I encountered in Recife – I argue that by emphasising the reproduction of the system, it becomes difficult to explain change, and the theoretical focus comes to lie to a large extent on governmental- and electoral politics.

Koster and de Vries (2012) on the other hand, present a romantic description of slum politics. They build on *Poor People’s Politics*, but argue that there is a disjuncture between the *favela* [slum] and the world outside it. For them slum politics refers to “the particular ways of doing and experiencing politics in the slum” (Koster 2009, 3) involving the organisation of “life in a broad sense, ranging from family life, to making a living, to dreaming about the future” (Koster and de Vries 2012, 87). They posit that slum politics not only functions as a system of domination, but also, picking up theorisations of philosophers like Slavoj Žižek (2004), as a “politics of hope and possibility” (Koster and de Vries 2012, 83). In doing so, they follow Rancière to argue that rupture – or politics – comes into being when ‘the part of no part’ declares that it belongs to the situation (Ibid 87). However they do so without providing an elaboration of ‘hope’, nor do they define this ‘part of no part’. Although the authors succeed in depicting the community leader from their case into his socio-historical context, as a community leader whose history and community unifying practices are similar to the *Ponto de Cultura* community leaders in this thesis, I argue that this ‘part of no part’ plays a minimal role in their ethnography.

In this thesis I have built on insights from Auyero, Koster and de Vries, and on Brian Massumi’s elaboration of the concept of hope (Zournazi 2002). Through a political ethnography (Auyero and Joseph 2007; Tilly 2007; Wolford 2007; Schatz 2009), I have aimed to set forth an enquiry into three types of politics that impact on poor urban informal communities: governmental, electoral and slum politics that was initiated by Koster and de Vries (2012). As described in chapter three, slum politics differs from governmental politics and electoral politics with regards to space, time, idioms and, as I would add later, also gender. All three forms of politics take place in different spaces; electoral politics in de ‘*rua*’, governmental politics in the ‘offices’, and slum politics in the ‘*mata*’; the latter standing for the ‘slum/*favela* in the community’, precarious occupations inhabited by squatters, located in inhabitable areas such as wastelands and swamps, and lacking basic urban services. Whereas electoral politics takes place in de *rua* and governmental politics in the offices of the city hall or projects (*casa grande*), slum politics takes place in and around the *mata*. More importantly and specifically, I have aimed to show, slum

politics as a politics of hope in *Coque*, an informal settlement in Recife, Brazil.

In the early twentieth century in central Recife, *Coque* emerged on the riverbanks of the *Capibaribe River* due to mangrove deforestation and influx of garbage (de FREITAS and NETO 2009). As I described in chapter two *Coque* has been historically stigmatized as a “*morada da morte* [house of death]” (Neto 2010; FREITAS 2005). It has always been described as a black spot, a problematic community, characterized by crime, promiscuity and informality. In 1987 the PREZEIS (*Plano de Regularização das Zonas Especiais de Interesse Social*; Plan for Regularization of Special Zones of Social Interest) was created as a result of popular mobilisation.

This mobilisation consisted of the poor who had squatted land near the mangroves and swamps, supported by NGO’s, social movements and an important role was played by the church in the figure of bishop Helder Camara and the *Comissão Justiça e Paz*. The PREZEIS was created to protect already existing ZEIS areas (*Zona Especial de Interesse Social*; Special Zone of Social Interest) from real estate speculation, provide social services to these areas, and legalize property rights of invaded areas (Nuijten, Koster, and de Vries 2012) From the early years of implementation of the ZEIS areas, in August 1983, *Coque* has been a ZEIS (FREITAS 2005).

In a 2005 Human Development Index study, *Coque* was ranked last among the ZEIS areas (Menezes 2014). Because of the informal nature of *Coque*, its residents enjoy a relative autonomy. They do not pay taxes and do all sorts of chores for the wealthy. Their relationship with the state usually consists of clientelist contacts with the police and politicians, mostly through mediation of community leaders.

Throughout my fieldwork I hung out with the people I studied; I ate meals with them, helped in the household (e.g. making cake, pizza, lasagne, cleaning dishes, buying coffee and chicken), went to parties, did shopping with them, played football with the children, watched football matches and *novelas* on the television, attended church, and always had a couple of beers after football matches and political meetings. Yet, for this thesis, I focus on three (sets of) actors: community leader *Aderbal*, his wife *Jucelia*, and an “anti-*Aderbal*” group of community leaders known as the *Ponto de Cultura*.

A *líder comunitário* [community leader] refers to a well-known socially and politically active person from one of the many poor neighbourhoods (Koster 2014a, 6). He is the main facilitator and articulator of the needs and aspirations of slum dwellers (Koster and de Vries 2012, 83). They are “urban specialists who derive their power base from their capacity to mobilize the poorest residents of the *favela*” (De Vries forthcoming-b). Community leaders have what he Auyero calls an “inner circle of followers” (2001, 91), a group that is intimately connected to the community leader and who meet on a regular, often daily, basis. In their “complex, provisional and contested” practices (Koster 2014a), community leaders act with a “double ethic”; an egalitarian and collectivist ethic of the *mata* towards family, kin, co-workers and friends, and an hierarchic ethic of the *casa grande* towards their bosses, superiors, benefactors (Scheper-Hughes 1993, 98). As I have shown in chapter six, community leaders have different operational styles and political trajectories.

The main protagonist in this thesis is former *favelado* *Aderbal*, a hyperactive community leader representing *Coque* in the PREZEIS. He grew up in a poor swampy neighbourhood near *Coque*, in *Pitangera*, where he experienced forced eviction in his youth. He entered politics “just to fool around” [*tira onda*] and, in an opportunistic style – as described throughout the thesis – bases his political careers on discontent and poverty in the slum. He got involved with politics as an organiser and campaigner (*cabô eleitoral*) at the end of the 90s through football that made up his

social network. He is currently linked to the Brazilian Socialist Party (PSB) that governs at city and state level, but he has not always been linked to this party. He is president of the *Instituto Cultural Renascer do Coque* [Cultural Institute Rebirth of *Coque*].

As I describe in chapter five, at this institute and at another location in *Coque* near the *mata*, *Aderbal* distributes fruits, vegetables, diapers, and Tupperware to women from poorer sections of the community. These women make up his “inner circle”. This coincides with research on the waiting of welfare reliant people in poor neighbourhoods by Javier Auyero (2011, 2012), who likewise identified the majority of welfare reliant people to be women. Gender hierarchies outside the welfare office, Auyero argues, are reproduced in face-to-face interactions between representatives of the state and welfare-reliant women. The women absorb the message that they should be patient and keep waiting, because ‘there is nothing else that they can do’. That is, they learn that “they have to remain temporarily neglected, unattended to, or postponed” since “they also learn that there is no use in protesting publicly” (Auyero 2012).

Therefore, I have argued that slum politics is differently gendered from governmental and electoral politics. In the case of *Aderbal*’s inner circle and distribution practices, not only does the sexualisation of power play a role, as explained in chapter four, also the fact that extreme poverty is highly gendered (Scheper-Hughes 1993; Chant 2006; Doshi 2011). With this statement I refer to the fact that women represent a disproportionate percentage of the world’s poor, that this trend is deepening, and that women’s increasing share of poverty is linked with a rising incidence of female household headship (Chant 2006). As I have demonstrated with the case of *Aderbal*, community leaders may use their “inner circles” for both personal gain, since *Aderbal* has worked his way out of the *favela*, and purposes that suit the politics outside of the *comunidade*. In addition, I have shown that involvement of community leaders with electoral and governmental politics carries the danger of betrayal of their origin, their social basis: the *mata*, which symbolizes the suffering of bringing up a family in extreme poverty, often the sole responsibility of women.

As discussed in chapter seven – that describes how entwined slum politics (getting a hand on resources for the community) is with electoral politics (forming a team of ‘vote winners’) – next to personal support and gain from outside politicians, *Aderbal* needs something (e.g. the computers for his institute) to show that he is also working for the community. His role as a community leader, requires a constant management of his image towards the community, who often see personal gain as a violation of the “communitarian ethic” (Nielsen 2002). Therefore, it is too simple to argue that *Aderbal* is only working for the PSB politicians’ interests or personal gain.

Therefore, as explained in chapter four, I believe, in order for *Aderbal* to try out ‘how things sound’, the everyday conversations I had with him took the form of ‘informal, experimental, adventuresome, humorous, and especially not “for real” discussions’, otherwise known as *bull sessions* (Frankfurt 2005). Participants in *bull sessions* enjoy a certain irresponsibility, so that people will be encouraged to convey what is on their minds (Frankfurt 2005, 35-7). Like macho men stereotypically do, he was always trying to poke on soft spots, impress, get around topics raised, exaggerate, whereas I constantly tried to defend, hit the counterattack, and figure out which things to believe or not. The latter is particularly relevant, since there is a ‘lack of concern for truth’ in such conversations due to the fact that a bull session is not “for real”, it takes place “off the record”.

The relationship that I developed with him, amongst others, helped to provide insights

into one of the arguments in this thesis, namely that slum politics is a complex form of politics that in certain historical periods is more prevalent. Although often politics in Recife, and throughout Brazil, is characterized as purely ‘political clientelism’, the situation was different in the past. I show a mobilisation that is opposite to those in the 90s when Recife’s poor came in action in an ethnographic description in chapter eight of a mobilisation in favour of the *Novo Recife* project – a large urban “beautification” project (Davis 2006, 98) that includes amongst others the building of luxury residence, theatres, and parks.

Although *Aderbal* comes from the *mata*, he does not represent the people from the *favela*. In fact, as I show throughout the thesis, he is critical about people living in the *favela*. He could say things as “the *prefeito* get things done, but the people break the stuff they get”. He wants them to be evicted in order for the value of houses in *Coque* to rise. *Aderbal* is thus, an example of how slum politics can degenerate, as I have also shown in chapter four, in the sexualisation of slum politics, or what Žižek would call *jouissance* or ‘excess enjoyment’. In other words, through the case of *Aderbal* I show that it was difficult to identify a politics of hope, since there is not much reason for optimism as Brian Massumi would say.

Yet a politics of hope is not about optimism or pessimism as described by Massumi. Instead hope was on the side of (former) *favelado* women like *Jucelia*, *Aderbal*’s wife. On the side of women, who despite the many blows in their life, retained an immense energy to struggle, and make sacrifices. *Jucelia* sells ice to the inhabitants of *Coque* who like to keep their beers cold. She fills bottles of *Coca Cola* with water and places them in a large fridge. Previously she would make juices and sell them on the streets. In addition, she has held a number of jobs as a housekeeper. *Jucelia* cooks and washes the clothes for her family (and even for some of the neighbours). She cleans the house twice a day.

Together with her daughter *Jessica*, their hope was not based on rational calculation, but on a certain practice. It was not necessarily about belief, but resided in a capacity to see things that hitherto remained invisible. It was an attitude. Each time that *Jucelia* found the time and space – when *Aderbal* was not present – to (rightfully) express her discontent, she was in search of “a margins of manoeuvrability” (Zournazi 2002, 211) that consisted of ‘not going to cook’, ‘going to the city’ herself, ‘not wearing the clothes he [NB: *Aderbal*] buys’ for her, or ‘going back to selling juices on the streets’. Even the fact that *Jessica* and *Jucelia* (smokers and lottery buyers) were Evangelic, seemed more as ‘the next experimental step’, rather than living towards, or believing in, a ‘big utopian picture’ (Ibid 212).

I have argued the above in chapter nine that zooms in on heavy conflicts between *Aderbal* and *Jucelia*. What is often forgotten, to make things more complex, is that the work of these community leaders may also come into conflict with their family life. However, while on the one hand there is conflict and a gendered division within the household, on the other hand kinship relationships interrelate and connect with each other *Aderbal* and *Jucelia*, juxtaposing the *rua* and *mata*. In other words, I have attempted to show in chapter nine, that the ‘*mata*’ remains a symbolic given for them. *Aderbal* distances himself from the *mata*, but at the same time he is well aware that he is from the *mata* himself, and that slum politics is based on fidelity to the *mata*, that stands for the suffering of women and children and for love in times of hopeless situations. In terms of Brian Massumi, the *mata* embodies both hope and despair.

In addition, to some extent, hope could be found in the practices of the ‘politically conscious’ community leaders of the *Ponto de Cultura*. Contrary to *Aderbal* most of the *Ponto de Cultura* community leaders are involved in keeping the (historical) memories of *Coque* alive. In

addition *Rildo*, the central figure of this group, has a political history in popular mobilisations that goes back to the founding of the *PREZEIS*. As described in chapter six, at the *Ponto de Cultura*, notes are kept of each Monday meetings, and each of the community leaders involved has a specific position and specialisation. These are for example, finance, education, health or heritage. Further, as discussed in chapter two, these community leaders were actively involved in supporting new land invasions in and near *Coque*. Hence, in *Coque* there is a long tradition of struggle that, is continued by certain community leaders who struggle for basic sanitary needs, infrastructure, health, education, and safety.

I have highlighted in this thesis that relations between community leaders are complex, since community leaders may compete among each other (*Aderbal* and the *Ponto de Cultura*), work for each other (i.e. *Ponto de Cultura*), or collaborate with each other (see also Auyero, 2001, 99). I have showed on the one hand that there were severe conflicts. As I have argued in chapter six, the *Ponto de Cultura* accused hyper, opportunistic, *Aderbal* for not working on the side of the community but, as a *pelego*, on the side of outside politicians, the *prefeitura*. *Aderbal*, as mentioned, accused *Rildo* of the *Ponto de Cultura* to be a *partidista*, only working for the PT interests. And on the other hand I have described in chapter six, that although there was conflict between community leaders they also agreed for a major skate park to be built in the neighbourhood.

In other words, the skate part project brought the community leaders together. Both *Aderbal* and the *Ponto de Cultura* saw the skate part as Massumi's 'next experimental step rather than the big utopian picture' (Zournazi 2002, 212). Both agreed that the skate park is not the primary need for *Coque's* residents at the moment – *Rildo* believes that, for example, a school would be better, and *Aderbal* knows that not many people in *Coque* are fans of skateboarding – but who knows what will happen when the skate park is finished? In addition, this reasoning shows the intertwined, complex, relation between governmental politics (programs and projects) and slum politics (hope, desires and needs of slum dwellers). Even when passed projects have had a negative impact on *Coque* there remains the possibility that when the skate park is finished it will attract new development projects for the area or serve as a possible way for youth to escape their poverty by becoming a professional skater.

The central argument that I make in this thesis is that slum politics does not result primarily from a clash between the world inside and outside of the slum, but from the social-spatial division *within* it. This politics revolves around the right to the city of the extreme poor, those who belong but are not included in the city as rightful citizens, as Rancière describes them, 'the part of no part'. Slum politics is about the differentiation within the *comunidade* due to the presence of the *favela*, or as Žižek (following Lacan) would say, the presence of an 'extimate part', an intimate part that is not part of the whole. The community (*comunidade*) is divided due to the presence of the *favela*, often the *palafitas* [stilts] near the *mangue* [mangroves]. Here the *comunidade* represents the social organisation of an urban informal settlement, whereas the slum/*favela* represents an official part of the *comunidade* that is socially seen as an occupation.

Hence, I propose a re-thinking of slum politics as a politics of the *mata*, as a politics of the nobodies. It is the product of an inter-relation with governmental and electoral politics, but at the same time it has its own character. In other words, slum politics can be characterized as a *Poor People's Politics*, but one that takes place in divided *comunidades* where people live in a highly uncertain world due to processes of forced evictions or threats thereof. Slum politics becomes dominant when in relation to governmental and electoral politics, when the 'part of no part', or the *mata*, gets a voice. When *favelados* start to mobilise for their rights, taking distance from party

politics, with community leaders who act in an independent (non-electoral) way. It is this part of the community that theoretically brings together both exclusivity and rupture, and that prevents the real estate powers from colonising the *comunidades*, making the *comunidade* fundamentally different from its surrounding areas. It is in this part that rupture may emerge as a basis for hope.

EPILOGUE

“Yes it goes. My father is sad because Eduardo Campos [PSB presidential candidate] died in an airplane crash”, *Jessica* replies to my enquiry via Facebook how things are going in *Rua Camdoi*. *Aderbal* had hoped that Campos would win the presidential elections in a view that more economic resources would be available for him and *Coque*. The airplane crash was a blow to this illusion. Some months later *Aderbal* still got a step higher in his political career when he got one of the highest positions in the PREZEIS.

The *Ponto de Cultura*, continues their involvement in land invasions near *Coque*, and together with *Coque (R)existe*, they have organised again the ‘Day of Struggles and Conquests’ in August. It was a day where histories of *Coque* were told and the community came together. The community leaders remain active on Facebook. They often inform people inside and outside of *Coque* on upcoming activities.

Less than a month after the news of the airplane crash, *Jessica* wrote to me; “Friend, I am pregnant, I hope it is going to be a girl this time :D”. I was happy for her of course, like she was with the news herself. Yet, I did not know what to think of it at first, when considering their daily struggles to make ends meet. Behind my desk, with Auyero’s *Patients Of The State* next to me, I imagined *Jessica*, like pregnant mother Cleuza in *Linha de Passe*, to symbolise poor waiting women in an uncertain context who at the same time keep high spirits for new things to come. In the context of all the men in *Rua Camdoi*, *Jessica*, again like in *Linha de Passe* where Cleuza is surrounded by men, hoped for a girl, for a sister for *Emanuel*. It turned out indeed to be a daughter. She was named Ester. It is going well with mother and baby. Meanwhile, *Jucelia* remains on the background, doing her hard work inside the house and caring for her family.

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ENDNOTES

¹ From a commercial of Dona Irene for *Eleto Shopping* and this has become a popular expression. "These prices are *pra torrar!*" she would say. I have no idea how to translate this, and it seemed that even people where I lived did not know a meaning for this context except "to rip". I believe that "unbelievable!" or "the best!" would come close.

² The following glossary consists of (slang) language, titles of songs and *novelas* and names of places in and around *Coque*. The English translations are either taken from Goldstein's (2003) glossary, my interpretations based on someone explaining the words to me in case I asked for it, or they are taken from a web based informal Portuguese dictionary. Explanations of name places are in most cases taken from the Internet. Most of the sexually tinted words I discovered when I tried translating some of the words in the Funk songs I remembered to have been played every day in the streets – and some non-evangelic houses - of *Coque*. Although not all these words are found in the following chapters, they have appeared at points during fieldwork and give an indication of the topics discussed.

³ Political ethnographers immerse their own body in a political process under study rather than relying heavily on secondary sources or on what people recall about passed events (Tilly 2007). This immersion in several ways contributes to the study of politics, such as calling into question common sense, promising epistemological innovation, or providing normative grounding to the study of politics (Schatz 2009, 10-1). Together these contributions make political ethnography "essential to a critical appraisal of the capability of the central organizing concepts employed by those who wish to test theories against empirical data" (Auyero 2012, 96).

⁴ *Linha de Passe* refers to the *keep-appy* football game in which a group stands in a circle and the ball may not touch the ground. The metaphor is used by Salles as descriptive of the brotherhood within a working class family living in a poor neighbourhood known as *Cidade Lider* in São Paulo. This neo-realist tradition film (Solomons 2008), portrays a few months in the lives of a pregnant mother Cleuza with her four sons (Dario, Dinho, Denis and Reginaldo; each of another 'disappeared' father). The film depicts how the characters are trying to reinvent themselves in the world of a city that is anonymous but crowded (footballers waiting to tell their names at scouting event), uncertain (the disposability of a housekeeper), and extremely unequal (the businessman and the 'motoboy').

⁵ In this approach, I do not equate ethnography with participant observation, but refer to “a more general ethnographic sensibility” (Schatz 2009, 6). Ethnography for me implies the use of multiple tools of inquiry amongst which participant observation is simply one and can vary according to the *styles* of ethnography (Wacquant 2003; Madden 2010).

⁶ The first extension, *intervention* stands for “extending” towards a role as *participant* rather than the distant *observer* precisely because it distorts and disturbs. As Burawoy puts it, “the most seismic interventions are often entry into and departure from the field [where] leaving the field is also an “intervention” since it is then that participants often declare well-kept secrets, or pose revealing questions that they had never dared ask before” (Burawoy 1998, 17). In this extension, on the other hand, the participant cannot avoid the “power effect” *domination* since in an intervention domination goes in both directions (researcher → informant) and as such is “always there to render our knowledge partial” (Ibid, 23). The second extension, *process*, is about observing over space and time, On the other hand, in extending observations over space and time, the “power effect” *silencing* takes place. It is inevitable not to exclude, simplify, or distort, voices of some of the many people encountered. In the third extension, *structuration*, the participant goes *from process to force* in a search for causal mechanisms. As Burawoy puts it, the extended case method “is about *tracing the source of small difference to external forces* [...] Instead of reducing cases to instances of a general law, we make each case work in its connection to other cases” (Ibid, 18). On the other hand, there is always the danger here to exaggerate the role of social forces (*objectification*). That is, make exaggerated claims based on an always-limited amount of observations over time and space. If exaggerated too much there is an impossibility to explain change. Last, in *theory reconstruction*, “we do not look for confirmations but for theory’s refutations” (Ibid, 19) in order to extend theory. However, there is a “power effect” of *normalization* where the world is reduced and categorized. It is necessary to fit data to theory and theory to data. In sum, *political ethnography* and the *extended case method* have their inherent strengths and limits. But then again, this is also the case in a *positivist research model*. Although *intervention*, *process*, *structuration*, and *theory reconstruction* (Burawoy 1998, 4) are also the constitutive elements of *reflexive ethnography*, the *extended case method* and *reflexive ethnography* differ in how they emphasise the relation between these elements (Burawoy 2003). More specifically, “The extended case method stresses the *augmentation* of social processes studied through participant observation with external forces and the reconstruction of theory; reflexive ethnography stresses the *dialogue* between constructivism (observer as participant and reconstructing theory) and realism (internal processes and external forces)” (Burawoy 2003, 649n4). In other words, the *extended case method* operates on a realist epistemology (see also Wacquant 2003), whereas reflexive ethnography depends largely on a poststructuralist one.

⁷ While walking on *Coque’s* streets, I was always accompanied by children who were sent by *Jucelia*, *Aderbal’s* wife, to make sure I would not get lost or robbed. Moreover, when I walked with *Aderbal*, he would tell me to “interview these people, they are from here!”. However, he would then stand next to us, which often did not get conversations further than “*Aderbal* is the best, he is the best *lider comunitário*!”.

⁸ Mother’s reaction—while cleaning a fish—to a child learning how to become a fisherman when he tells her they found a dead body in the river while fishing. Taken from a documentary about the dream of youngsters who want to become professional football players (Putter 1994).

⁹ *Recife City Hall*, <http://www2.recife.pe.gov.br/a-cidade/perfil-dos-bairros/rpa1/ilha-joana-bezerra>

¹⁰ When I was residing for more than a month in *Coque* it turned out, I was all the time pronouncing the name wrongly. While trying to find out what a little boy was doing and what his thoughts were for the World Cup, I discovered he was fishing “to catch a shark” in a polluted canal. Then he asked me “Sir, why do you say *Coqè*?” “*Coqè*, because that is the name of this place right?!” I replied to the little man. “No it is not!” he replied with some disgust, “It is *Cocky*!” I would later make a note of this encounter, not only because it was a funny thing that the little boy was fishing a shark, but also because in this phonetic way it would translate in English to being arrogant and stubborn. This reminded me of a story of the origins of *Coque* which I remember having read before I left the Netherlands.

¹¹ Freitas (2005) explains *Galeguinho* was a character created by the media, which influenced the stigma *Coque* bears until this day. I suppose a complete Pernambucan detective book could be written about the controversial *Galeguinho*. However, I will keep it shorter. In his teenage years, *Galeguinho* started using weapons to display his power, while thieving in the commercial centre of Recife. The police in different areas wanted him. This resulted in the fact he had to hide in *Coque*, which provided him with a perfect place to hide, due to the near mangroves. As such, he got the nickname that he was from *Coque*.

He managed to stay out of hands from the police for four years. During this period, which was also a period in which people in *Coque* were fiercely resisting the military dictatorship, he created a clandestine network to confuse the police while making use of minors. A look at some newspaper headings (Lira 2008b) summarizes what happened when he was caught; “Arrested bandit accused of assault at Rua Imperial (1974); Marginal [Galeguinho] receives Bible (1975); Galeguinho is preaching to thieves (1976); “Galeguinho do Coque” wants to prove he is fully regenerated (1982); “Galequinho” and “Bui” became legends (1996). Years later, he was found dead in the city of Moreno next to a Bible. However, it was hollow inside and it was hiding a revolver. The investigations have not been completed and the cause of death remained undetermined. *Chico Science & Nação Zumbi* refer to both these legends in a song named *Banditismo por um questao de classe* (Banditry as a social class matter). Part of the song goes as follows: *Galeguinho do Coque* was not afraid, no he wasn’t. He was not afraid of hairy legs. Bui with the green eyes had sex, yes he did. He had sex with your pliers.

¹² < <http://www.lacan.com/symptom/?p=36> > (last accessed 16-7-2015)

¹³ Participants of the *Coque (R)existe* network are: Ação Darmata; Students and teachers of Degree and Postgraduate Social Communication, Sociology, Education and Urban Development UFPe; Ameciclo – Associação Metropolitana de Ciclistas (Metropolitan Association of Cyclists); Associação Esperança do *Coque*; AVIPA – Associação dos Moradores da Vila do Papelão (Casinha) (Association of Residents of the “Village of cardboard”); Biblioteca Popular do *Coque* (Popular library of *Coque*); Centro de Estudos Budistas Bodisatva de *Pernambuco* – CEBB (Center for Buddhist Studies Bodhisattva of *Pernambuco*); Centro Popular de Direitos Humanos – CPDH (Popular Centre for Human rights); Cine *Coque*; Coletivo de Luta Comunitária – CLC; Coletivo Desclassificados; Espaço Rosa dos Ventos; Igreja de São Francisco de Assis do *Coque*; Live to Love Recife; Movimento Arrebentando Barreiras Invisíveis – MABI; Movimento de Direitos Urbanos; *NEIMFA* – Núcleo Educacional Irmãos Menores de Francisco de Assis; Ponto de Cultura Espaço Livre do *Coque*; Pré-Vestibular Paidéia

¹⁴ Recife is the place where the worst football team in the world trains and plays its matches. The team is called Ibis. The club spent almost four years without winning a game, with a negative goal difference of over 2000. The ex-number 10 of this club now has a famous hairdressing saloon, known as Mauro Shampoo. Even a brilliant film has been made about Mauro in 2006 inspired by the way he takes his phone calls; *Mauro Shampoo: soccer player, hair dresser and man* (Lima and Fontenelle 2006). The last becomes clear when Mauro says in the FIFA magazine episode “there are many beautiful things here in the North” after he lists the beaches and shopping. Then he adds “and the women of course!” putting his thumbs up. I borrow from this title introducing *Aderbal*.

¹⁵ The club claims to have the most passionate fans of Brazil and if not in the world. In 1914, a group of boys between 14 and 16 years old, who lived in the neighbourhood of Boa Vista, and who used to play football in the courtyard of the Church of Santa Cruz, decided to found a club named at that time “Santa Cruz Foot-Ball Club”. Contrary to *Nautico Capibaribe* being the team of ‘the rich’, Santa Cruz from then on has been the club of ‘the people’. Initially they chose the colours black and white as club colours symbolizing the inclusion of all races, something that was rare at that time. This made the club one of the first clubs to accept black players. “Here in *Coque* 90% of the people are for Sporting [popular football club next to *Coque*], but I am for Santa”, *Aderbal* would say.

¹⁶ Žižek explains *jouissance* in the Lacanian sense, as “the disturbed balance [...] which accounts for the passage from Nothing to Something; it designates the minimal contraction [...] which provides the density of the subject’s reality” (2008, 60). It is “that notorious *heimliche* [secret, (me)] which is simultaneously the most *unheimliche*, always-already here and, precisely as such, always-already lost” (ibid).

¹⁷ Joran van der Sloot is being accused of involvement in the disappearing of the American Nathalee Holloway on the Island of Aruba. The case has gotten a lot of media attention both on the island of Aruba and in the international media. A few years ago the well-known Dutch crime detector Peter R. de Vries tried to get a confession of Joran der Sloot on camera. Together with Patrick van der Eem it was possible for Peter R de Vries to trick Joran to “confess” his story to Patrick van der Eem on a secret camera while riding in a car and smoking marijuana. Many people in the Netherlands watched these recordings in a TV-show, but it was not possible to put Joran in jail based on this “confession”.

¹⁸ Jornal do Commercio - *Comunidades vizinhas ao Cais José Estelita* on YouTube.