The London School of Economics and Political Science

Fighting for a Place in the City:

Social Practices and State Action in Maceió, Brazil

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Declaration of Originality

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Débora de Barros Cavalcanti
20th January, 2009

Abstract

Our understanding of urban poverty has been broadened during the last decade to focus less on economic characteristics and to include concepts such as exclusion, vulnerability, and violence. The spatial components of poverty have received less attention despite concepts such as the *right to the city* entering the academic and policy reform agenda. This thesis explores the dynamics of spatial and social integration by surveying the everyday life of precarious settlements in a medium-sized city in North-East Brazil. A qualitative approach that links poverty, mobility, social networks and state action is employed to argue that informal settlements are spatial traps where the individual perspective and exploitative relationships surpass collective approaches. The use of life stories and interviews with residents in three settlements and with planners are used to deconstruct preconceptions and show how the fight for a place in the city takes shape. For the most part the state is absent from the poor's lives. This absence has some advantages in that the Brazilian state has a record of infringing human rights that leads to a loss of economic, social and spatial links. However, the lack of adequate intervention and community organisations means residents employ in their *daily round* various tactics including violence, opportunism, and economic and political bargaining to challenge the state and society to rethink the politics of invisibility and what I term as the *territorialisation of poverty*. The generational legacy of vulnerability and exclusion in the everyday life of the urban poor reveals the difficulties of implementing the *right to the city* when faced with the *worst practices* of state and social organisations. Continued mobility and spatial segregation, vulnerability and exclusion reveal that beyond a rhetoric of a *right to the city* the fight for a place in the city is not over.

Acknowledgements

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AGAHU	Agência Alagoana de Habitação e Urbanismo [Alagoas Agency of Housing and Urban Development]
ASMOVE	Associação dos Moradores da Vila Emater II [Vila Emater II Residents' Association]
BID	Banco Interamericano de Desenvolvimento [IBD, Inter-American Development Bank]
BNH	Banco Nacional de Habitação [National Housing Bank]
CAIC	Centro de Apoio à Criança [Child Support Centre]
CAPES	Fundação Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior [Brazilian Federal Agency for Post-Graduate Education]
CARHP	Companhia Alagoana de Recursos Humanos e Patrimoniais [Patrimonial and Human Resources Corporation in Alagoas]
CEAL	Companhia de Eletricidade de Alagoas [Alagoas Electricity Company]
CEARAH Periferia	Centro de Estudos, Articulação e Referência sobre Assentamentos Humanos [Centre for Studies, Discussion, and Information on Human Settlements]
CEASB	Centro de Educação Ambiental São Bartolomeu [St. Bartholomew Environmental Education Centre]
CEF	Caixa Econômica Federal [Federal Savings Bank]
CEI	Centro de Estatística e Informações [Centre for Statistics and Information]
CEPAL	Comissão Econômica para América Latina e o Caribe [ECLAC, The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean]
CLT	Consolidação das Leis Trabalhistas [Amalgamation of Labour Laws]
CMP	Central dos Movimentos Populares [Central Committee of the People's Movements]
COBEL	Companhia de Beneficiamento do Lixo [Urban Waste Treatment Company]
COHAB	Companhia de Habitação Popular [Social Housing Company]
COHAB-AL	Companhia de Habitação Popular do Estado de Alagoas [Alagoas State Social Housing Company]
COHRE	Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions
COOPLUM	Cooperativa de Recicladores de Lixo de Maceió Ltda. [Waste Recyclers Co-operative of Maceió Ltd.]

DI	Desenvolvimento Institucional [Institutional Development]
ECLAC	The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
EMATER	Empresa de Assistência Técnica e Extensão Rural do Estado de Alagoas [Corporation of Technical Assistance for Rural Areas in Alagoas State]
EU	European Union
FGTS	Fundo de Garantia sobre Tempo de Serviço [Unemployment Benefit Fund]
FGV	Fundação Getúlio Vargas [Getúlio Vargas Foundation]
FHC	Fernando Henrique Cardoso (former President of Brazil)
FJP	Fundação João Pinheiro [João Pinheiro Foundation]
FNRU	Fórum Nacional da Reforma Urbana [National Forum for Urban Reform]
FNHIS	Fundo Nacional de Habitação de Interesse Social [National Social Housing Fund]
FSE	Federal Social Expenditure
GEPUR	Grupo de Estudos sobre Problemas Urbanos [Study Group concerned with Urban Problems]
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
HBB	Programa Habitar Brasil BID [Housing Brasil IDB Programme]
IBGE	Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística [Brazilian Institute for Geography and Statistics]
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IETS	Instituto de Estudos do Trabalho e Sociedade [Institute for Labour and Social Studies]
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPASEAL	Instituto de Previdência e Assistência aos Servidores do Estado de Alagoas [Institute of Social Security and Assistance for the Civil Servants of Alagoas State]
IPEA	Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada [Applied Economics Research Institute]
LABHAB	Laboratório de Habitação e Assentamentos Humanos [Housing and Human Settlements Laboratory]
LSE	The London School of Economics and Political Science
MDF	Movimento em Defesa dos Favelados [Movement in Support of the Dwellers of Shanty Towns]
MNLM	Movimento Nacional de Luta pela Moradia [National Struggle for Housing]

MNLM-AL	Movimento Nacional de Luta pela Moradia em Alagoas [National Struggle for Housing in Alagoas]
MP	Member of Parliament
MST	Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais sem Terra [The Landless Workers' Movement]
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NUTAS	Núcleo Temático da Assistência Social em Alagoas [Action and Research Group for Social Assistance in Alagoas]
OC	Orçamento Cidadão [Participatory Budgeting]
OEI	Organização dos Estados Ibero-Americanos para a Educação, a Ciência e a Cultura [Ibero-American State Organisation for Education, Science and Culture]
OIT	Organização Internacional do Trabalho [ILO, International Labour Office]
OXFAM	Oxford Committee for Famine Relief
PCB	Partido Comunista Brasileiro [Brazilian Communist Party]
PC do B	Partido Comunista do Brasil [Communist Party of Brazil]
PEMAS	Plano Estratégico Municipal para Assentamentos Subnormais [Strategic Municipal Plan for Substandard Settlements]
PET	Programa Educação do Trabalhador [Worker' Formation Programme]
PETI	Programa de Erradicação do Trabalho Infantil [Programme for the Eradication of Child Labour]
PETROBRÁS	Petróleo Brasileiro S.A. [Brazilian Petroleum S.A.]
PM	Polícia Militar [Military Policy]
PNAD	Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios [National Survey of Households]
PNUD	Programa para as Nações Unidas para o Desenvolvimento [UNDP, United Nations Development Programme]
PROÁLCOOL	Programa Nacional do Álcool [National Programme on Alcohol]
PRODETUR/NE	
	Programa de Desenvolvimento do Turismo no Nordeste [Programme for Developing Tourism in the North-East]
PRODOC	Documento de Projeto [Project Documentation]
PSB	Partido Socialista Brasileiro [Brazilian Socialist Party]
PSDB	Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira [Brazilian Social Democracy Party]
PT	Partido dos Trabalhadores [Workers' Party]
PV	Partido Verde [Green Party]

SEAC	Secretaria Especial de Ação Comunitária [Special Department for Community Action]
SEPLAN-AL	Secretaria de Estado do Planejamento e do Orçamento de Alagoas [Alagoas State Planning and Budgeting Department]
SETAS	Secretaria do Trabalho e Ação Social de Alagoas [Department for Work and Social Action in Alagoas]
SFH	Sistema Financeiro de Habitação [Financial Housing Scheme]
SLUM	Superintendência de Limpeza Urbana de Maceió [Department of Urban Hygiene in Maceió]
SMCCU	Superintendência Municipal de Controle do Convívio Urbano [Municipal Department for the Management of Urban Living]
SMHPS	Secretaria Municipal de Habitação Popular e Saneamento [Municipal Social Housing and Sanitation Department]
SMPD	Secretaria Municipal de Planejamento e Desenvolvimento [Municipal Planning and Development Department]
SNHIS	Sistema Nacional de Habitação de Interesse Social [National Social Housing Scheme]
SPU	Secretaria do Patrimônio da União [Federal Secretary for Property]
SUS	Sistema Único de Saúde [National Health System]
TAT	Thematic Apperception Test
UEM-HBB	Unidade Executora Municipal - HBB [Municipal Executive Body - HBB]
UFAL	Universidade Federal de Alagoas [Federal University of Alagoas]
UMM-AL	União de Movimento de Moradia em Alagoas [United Housing Movement in Alagoas]
UN	United Nations
UNCHS	United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UN-HABITAT)
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UN-HABITAT	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNMP	União Nacional por Moradia Popular [National Union for People's Housing]
WV	World Vision

List of Illustrations

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

I want to open this thesis with an extract from a life story of one participant, a leader in Conjunto Denisson Menezes, a case study settlement. When I interviewed Maruza about her life story, she showed me a manuscript she had written. I consider the story to be genuine and in some senses to be *untranslatable*, for which reason I have decided to present the original text in Portuguese and then English. With some poetic licence I have tried to retain the flavour of the original.

Extract from Maruza's Life Story

'No dia 23 de Julho de 1950 em um dia de domingo às 15 horas, na grota do Surrão, entre Murici e União, onde o vento faz a curva, nasceu uma menina negra, com o destino traçado de trabalhar para tantos e pouco recompensado... Só levou paulada pois se criou sem pai. Na vida sofreu demais... Sua luta começou aos seis anos de vida cuidando dos seus irmãos para sua mãe poder trabalhar e lhe comprar comida...

Com treze anos de idade veio o destino cruel, o sofrimento foi tanto que inverteu o papel, em busca da felicidade que parecia o céu, fugiu pela madrugada para pegar um troféu, foi parar no inferno pois no canavial foi sua lua de mel. Aumentou o sofrimento de uma adolescente, com um ano e quatro meses ganhou seu presente, nasceu um filho homem pequenino e doente. Quinze dias após o parto ela tentou ir embora porque não queria levar a vida de senhora, dona de casa com um filho nos braços, ter um marido chato e comendo somente peixe na brasa. Sua mãe chegou valente, falando rangendo os dentes, prometeu dar-lhe uma pisa, que lhe deixava doente se ela fosse embora deixando aquele inocente, pequeno, desprotegido, abandonando a casa e também seu marido.

Ela parou e gritou: meu Deus que vou fazer? Continuo com o marido outra vez: vou sofrer. Com um ano e sete meses viu outro filho nascer. Em companhia de outro demônio que já não era o pai, por que o primeiro já não existia mais em sua vida. Por que tinha lhe trocado por um travesti por nome de Rosimão que foi sua separação. Quando ela descobriu foi um quebra pau do cão. Terminou com tremenda bagaceira, ele com a cabeça lascada de uma boa pedrada e ela com o rosto roxo de levar bofetada... Quando chegou ao conhecimento do administrador da fazenda, ele ficou indignado de ver homem marcado de pedra, unha e dente. Para ferir seu coração foi separada do filho e expulsa pelo patrão: mulher tinha que apanhar, bater não podia não... Chorando ela partiu em busca de um trabalho para seu filho criar, com dois meses de gravidez era mais um que ia chegar. Assim mesmo se passou com todos os seus oito filhos, como ovelha desgarrada que tinha

perdido o pastor, sozinha e sofrida foi sua vida em busca de um amor que na estrada da vida até hoje não encontrou.

Com sua alma ferida nada mais tem sabor. Possuiu sete maridos, fora os amantes que arrumou. Entre tantos que possuiu nenhum era o seu amor. Uns eram ciumentos, outros nem ligam para a vida, alguns eram mentirosos, outros morrem na bebida. Um evangelista, outros pedreiros e carpinteiros, lixeiro ou motorista e até um engenheiro, todos com os bolsos furados, uns tremendos biriteiros…

Esta é a história de uma negra sofrida, queria ser alguém, não achei quem desse a mão nem mesmo meus irmãos, a quem tanto amei na vida... Hoje vivo abandonada, eles nem perguntam se sou viva, se tenho paz e saúde ou um prato de comida. Com 52 anos bem pouca coisa mudou. Meus filhos se casaram e a velhice chegou. Não paro de trabalhar nem perdi meu vigor. Cada dia que passa eu aprendo muito mais. Jogo fora o que não presta e o bom eu corro atrás. Por que no curral do mundo só encontrei animal que morde ao invés de rir, chuta ao invés de abraçar, dá tapa no pé do ouvido ao invés de acariciar...

Na luta com o poder público para defender os pobres estou vendo uma favela tornar-se um conjunto nobre: Conjunto Denisson Menezes está lindo e decente e a cada esquina que passo vejo o povo sorridente. Foram seis anos de sofrimento, mas valeu a pena o presente…

No período de eleição esqueço um pouco de mim. Querendo transformar este mundo em um belo jardim, sem guerra, sem desemprego, sem maldade, sem medo de tanta coisa ruim. Quando passam as eleições, vejo que nada mudou, só me resta pegar a espada pois a luta começou, peço coragem a Deus e para o campo eu vou, em busca dos meus direitos em qualquer lugar que estou... Uns procuram me ajudar, outros para rir de mim...

O ano se vai e o sonho também, espero realidade no ano que vem. Não sei como consigo planejar tanta beleza no mundo de tanta inveja que só pensa em riqueza, procuro viver em paz com a própria natureza. Espero em Jesus Cristo que um dia vai mudar…'

English Version of Maruza's Life Story Extract

'One Sunday, far, far away, in the valley of Surrão, between Murici and União, a little black girl was born (at 3 o'clock, on 23rd July, 1950). Her prospects were miserable in the life that lay before her - endless bosses, a meager reward… The curse of her birth was the lack of a father and each day of her life her suffering grew worse… From the age of six, she had to look after her siblings to let her mother eke out a precarious living…

At 13, bad luck stepped in and turned her life upside down. As she tripped through the dawn to seize the trophy of happiness that gleamed in the sky, she became trapped in the prison bars of the sugar cane fields, her honeymoon stuck in their

sweet hell. One year, four months later, her wild teenage grief yielded its nightmare gift - the birth of a sickly, puny child. Two weeks to the day, she tried to run away- anything to escape a housewife's chores with a son cradled in her arms, a dreary husband picking out burnt fish from the dying embers of the household fire. Then came her intrepid mother - grinding her teeth - vowing she would strike a blow that would lay her daughter out low if she dared to leave that tiny innocent creature unprotected and deserted her home and husband. She would teach her!

Maruza paused and uttered a cry - my God what can I do? If I stick with my husband, it will make me sick. But soon, her first husband no longer featured in her life; he had taken a transvestite called Rosimão as a wife… and there then followed rows and violence, a bust-up and blows - his face gashed by a well-aimed stone; hers swollen, bruised to the bone… The farm-manager was angered at what he saw, the gaping wound, the scratches of tooth and claw. She was fired by her boss and separated from her son. 'Women should stick to their husbands; they've no right to fight.'… It broke her heart to be torn apart…

Sobbing, she left in search of work to bring up her first son, while already two months' pregnant with another child. Driven out with all her children, a stray sheep in the wild that had lost its shepherd - solitary, she sought out the love that her life had never brought. Her soul was so wounded that nothing had any meaning for her. One year seven months later, another baby was born, and Maruza the object of another man's scorn. Altogether, she had seven husbands, not to mention any lovers she could get hold of. But none of them won her love. Some were jealous, others were shiftless, some were dishonest and others died from drink. They included an evangelist, masons and carpenters, dustmen, a driver and even an engineer - all were broke and raging alcoholics...

This is the story of a tormented black girl - she wanted to be somebody but found no one to give her a hand; not even the siblings she had loved so much seemed to understand. Today, I am cast out, they don't want to know if I'm alive, if I have peace and quiet or health or a plate of food. At 52, little has changed. My children are married and old age has crept up. But I haven't stopped work or lost my strength. Each day that goes by I learn more. I throw away what I don't need and hoard what I can. Penned up in the enclosure of the world, I only find animals that bite and kick or give me a clip around the ears - they don't know how to laugh or embrace or soothe away my tears…

In the struggle with the state powers to defend the poor, I'm witnessing how a shantytown can become a dignified settlement. Conjunto Denisson Menezes is pleasant and respectable and I see people smiling on every corner as I pass by. It took six years of suffering but the change was worthwhile…

At election time, I forget myself a bit - wishing to change the world into a beautiful garden, without any wars, unemployment or evil and without any fear of anything bad. After the elections have been held, I find nothing has changed. It only remains for me to wield a sword because the struggle has begun. Wherever I am, I seek courage from God to fight for my rights… Some people seek to help me; others just laugh at me.

The year goes by and with it my dream - I expect something real to happen in the year that lies ahead. I don't know how I'm going to plan so much beauty in a world that is full of envy and only concerned with material prosperity. I seek to live in peace with nature itself. I hope that through Jesus Christ, one day everything will be changed.'

1.1   General Points of Departure

This thesis sets out to understand how people, such as Maruza, who live in situations of economic poverty, experience urban space in the context of persistent social and spatial segregation. More specifically, the thesis analyses the everyday lives of residents in three precarious settlements in the city of Maceió in the North-East of Brazil.[1] By means of a range of methodologies, in particular life stories, the study has sought to explore daily social practices and their relations with state actions. These two planes of analysis challenge the conventional ways of studying urban segregation and exclusion, which tend to concentrate on economic processes and spatial characteristics, and examine the relationships between the micro scale of social practices and the macro scale of public policies.[2] An appreciation of the dialectic relationships between social practices and state actions helps one understand the segregation of the urban poor and precarious settlements more generally both in a theoretical sense and through improved urban planning and better policies.

A broad context for the research is the realisation and concern for the social and spatial effects of urbanisation on very poor people, especially in the light of recent economic and political changes in developing world cities that have become more extreme as a result of globalisation. As Castells (1998) has observed, globalisation has proceeded selectively by both including and excluding segments of economies and societies from the networks of information, wealth, and power that characterise

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[1] The term *precarious* is used to cover a range of conditions from illegality, stigmatisation and infrastructural problems, that are common to the settlements studied in this thesis and which are often referred to as shantytowns and slums or, in Brazil, are usually known as favelas.

[2] Social and spatial segregation means the state of being denied access to social and economic opportunities and not being given the necessary space required for personal and social development.

the new dominant system. Under these arrangements, the capacity to produce jobs and wealth is limited to a few countries, or indeed a few cities, in which *local* economic development strategies have made a virtue of economic and social polarisation (Wacquant 1999; Sassen 2001). Moreover, while the gulf between the rich and the poor has widened, urban policy is also often concerned with the interests of the elite, rather than addressing inequality and spatial segregation (Smith 1996, 2002; Mitchell 2003). As a result, inequality has increased in the last quarter of a century both on a global scale, and within individual countries and cities (Robinson 2002; Sutcliffe 2004; Milanovic 2005).

In the case of developing countries, the rapid rates of urban population growth over the past 40 years have not been accompanied by growing equality and inclusion. Rather, as countries have shifted from being predominantly rural to having over one-half their population living in urban areas, there has been an abrupt change from a situation of rural to urban poverty (Satterthwaite 2004).[3] As Dupas points out for Brazil: 'in the last fifty years, as a consequence of changes of migration and the dynamics of population for technological reasons, in the countryside, Brazilian cities have increased from 12 million to 130 million people, which represents one of the biggest population displacements in the history of the world' (Dupas 1999:124; author's translation). In 2000, the census recorded that 81% of the population was now living in urban areas. A significant part of this urban population has migrated from the countryside, with former rural labourers now becoming workers who are unqualified for urban activities (Albuquerque 2002; Rocha 2005). At present, between 20% and 50% of the urban population in Brazil lives in precarious settlements (LABHAB 1999; UN-HABITAT 2006; Ministério das Cidades 2007).[4]

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[3] Statistical forecasts suggest that the urban population will continue to increase for at least the next 30 years (UN-HABITAT 2003: XXXI).

[4] There is some disagreement about these figures. The Ministry of Cities (2007) data refer to 12.4 million people (7% of the national population) living in precarious settlements, which can be assumed to be an underestimate. The social movements, international institutions and most academics agree that approximately 52 million Brazilians (28% of the population) live in these settlements. There are local studies that suggest that in Belém 50% of the population are living in precarious settlements; Recife 40%; Salvador 33%; Fortaleza 31% and São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Belo Horizonte 20% (LABHAB 1999).

In the case of Brazil, the state has demonstrated incapacity and sometimes a lack of will to provide services and facilities for the newcomers (Banck 1986; Sposati 1988; Campos Filho 1992; Santos 1993). One result is the production of precarious, and usually, isolated zones where housing, work, education and health care, are unavailable or inaccessible. This concentration of poverty in particular spaces in the city is not a new phenomenon, nor is the exclusion of the poor from equal rights to services, land, and work (Katzman 2001; Souza 2001; Saraiva and Marques 2005). While this situation is, generally, quite longstanding, the growing division between the *haves* and *have-nots*, the fragmentation of space, the lack of projects designed to bring about improvement and the realisation that the poor communities have been abandoned by the state is quite recent. Indeed as will be outlined in Chapter 4, contemporary urban conditions in Brazil are characterised by worsening housing conditions, more widespread illegality, growing exclusion, and violence. While it is the responsibility of the state to intervene to improve these conditions, the planners complain that they have limited resources and little scope to achieve success.

In order to clarify how people gain a place within and experience the city the thesis sets out the idea of *territories of poverty* as a conceptual contribution to describe spaces where the different facets of urban segregation - social, economic, and cultural (including stigmas of race) - are all found together at the same site, which makes everyday life insecure and risky. I develop the term *territories of poverty* as an expression that synthesizes a powerful combination of economic, social, and physical features that characterize the spaces of the poor in contemporary cities. These conditions, I argue, have worsened over the past two decades as well as emphasized some characteristics such as the intergenerational cycle of poverty (and the decline of confidence in social mobility) and the prevalence of ethnic homogeneity in particular spaces. Other newer dynamics such as violence inside the settlements exacerbate the difficulties of living within spaces where 'everybody's trying to get out' (Wacquant 1996:126).[5]

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[5] Residential mobility can be high but these moves are often to houses in the same favela or to similar settlements in the same city or elsewhere.

In Chapter 2, there will be a detailed discussion of exclusion, inequality and the resulting segregation that are condemned in the policy literature and also of urban theory that increasingly emphasises the *right to the city* as a requisite of social justice. In no country, perhaps, has the idea of a *right to the city* been more hotly debated than in Brazil where urban social movements have argued for the rights which formed the basis of the revised Constitution in 1988. In specifically urban terms, social movements, and non-governmental organisations [NGOs] have continued to pressure the state to include a *right to the city* as a normative principle in legal reforms, which ultimately resulted in the 2001 Statute of Cities, and the operations of the newly created Ministry of Cities (Fernandes 2007). These constitutional changes have supported other innovations, in particular the participatory budgeting in cities such as Porto Alegre and Recife, and now across much of Brazil (Wampler 2004; Santos 2005). In addition, with the election and re-election of President Lula (2003-2006; 2007-2010) emphasis has been laid on policies directed at the very poor, the most well-known being the Programa Fome Zero [Zero Hunger Campaign]. As a context for the present thesis, these shifting priorities represent an unparalleled opportunity to evaluate the impact of state actions on the day-to-day life in precarious settlements.

Yet, the territorialisation of poverty plays a dual role in illustrating both the visibility and invisibility of poverty. While, in some quarters concern is expressed about the level of urban poverty, many measures have been taken to ensure that poverty is kept away from the *better* areas. The measures adopted now go beyond the construction of walls, and other physical features in the cities, and include zoning regulations (based on environmental criteria as a justification) and the strategic building of road networks to de-link the city (Auyero 1999; Caldeira 2000 [1992]; Villaça 2001; Rodgers 2004; Jones and Moreno-Carranco 2007). The combination of social and spatial segregation, state action and the experiences of people who must deal with these conditions have not been sufficiently explored by research. The segregated urban location of poor people has been largely understudied over the last two decades, despite its increasing occurrence, and the territories of poverty continue and are possibly more pronounced. Urban policy-making, and in particular planning, appears to be an inadequate response to the problem and may even be contributing to

exclusion and segregation. What is more certain is that academic research has not sufficiently highlighted the implications of exclusion, segregation, and inequality for individual poor people. We do know, of course that life in precarious settlements is tough and survival is paramount (Scheper-Hughes 1992; Kowarick 2000; Goldstein 2003). What is less clear is how daily social practices relate to and possibly achieve a place in the city in the midst of exclusion, economic poverty, and the abandonment of the state (Assies 1991).[6]

When investigating social practices I employ the concept of the *daily round*, the second conceptual contribution of the thesis. The term *daily round* captures a sense of how macro-scale state policies affect day-to-day life in the micro-space of the family or community. The *round* draws attention to the fact that there is a constant fight for a place in the city. In particular, the daily round highlights the prevailing time dimension for social activities within discreet arrangements involving individuals, their familial unit, sometimes neighbours, but only rarely other agents. It is a crucial variable especially for the urban poor that seem to live within a timeframe different from that expected of modern society, in so far as everything is delayed, late, or under the threat of being abandoned.

The life stories, the principal methodology used in the research, reveal how time features in an ethnographical analysis centred at a micro-level which cuts through debates on poverty that lay stress on culture *versus* structure. The meanings attributed by the interviewees to the experiences of the daily round are keys to interpreting their private lives, social practices, and relationships with state officials. In considering the experience of living in poverty and how this experience influences the perceptions of those involved, it is important to note that the study sought to avoid idealising the views of the residents and to weigh up how the concepts of social and spatial exclusion can be understood, and including the views (and the prejudices) of the planners.

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[6] Apart from the extensive literature on the *informal sector*, studies have shown that there are numerous ways in which people *get by* in the city (Simone 2004), including the establishment of rules and networks of solidarity (Santos 1977).

Despite the efforts described during the interviews and synthesised in the *daily round*, social practices and state actions are combining to produce and reproduce territories of poverty. It is well recognised that for a long time the (un) official policy approach to precarious settlements was to ignore or to stigmatise these territories (Rolnik 2001), and not to implement economic or social development policies. However, despite the rhetorical *right to the city*, the formation of so many settlements demonstrates that there is a pervasive and consistent exclusion which requires a more thorough examination of the contribution of the state to social and spatial segregation. One agent of the state, whose role is rarely analysed, is the urban planner who, it appears, hardly ever co-operates with residents or even engages in a dialogue with them. Rather, the planners seem to draw up plans based on quantitative data without an understanding of daily practices. Thus, one of the objects of the research is to understand to what extent the state itself is responsible for poverty (in collaboration with the market and social practices) and how far the pattern of segregation is either changed or maintained, by action or neglect.

The question of social practices will also be scrutinised in this research. These practices can be defined as the activities of people in their social life related to the process of urban social and spatial integration. The urban poor react to their disadvantageous status by adopting social practices aimed at alleviating poverty and enabling them to be integrated into the urban fabric. In examining the most significant social practices that contribute to the territorialisation of poverty, attention will be paid to the residential mobility of inhabitants, their tactics and strategies for survival and their ability to become integrated in *sociability* networks. Mobility in the search for better housing involves an enormous expenditure of time, energy, and money, and in an economic sense a delay in the family's accumulation of wealth. Added to the economic impact, the constant moves can weaken the basis for co-operative action and thus reduce any potential benefits derived from collective action. Although the excluded spaces have remained places where the traditional working class reproduce themselves and obtain a transitory place in their upward mobility, they are now increasingly desolate spaces of survival for a part of the population that is socially immobile. Thus, the question of residential mobility has become an important issue. Residential mobility can either be a positive factor when

it provides an opportunity to improve living standards, or a negative factor when a crisis leads to worse conditions. This intra-urban mobility and its counterpoint inertia are issues that have tended to be overlooked.

The tactics and strategies of survival and integration depend on physical stimuli. The tactics cover a wide spectrum, ranging from acquisition of assets (land invasion) to political bargaining (votes by services or goods, especially during election times). These measures sometimes result in further inequalities inside the precarious settlements where the poorest are also excluded from the communities because it is economically and socially impossible to struggle for the same conditions with those who are better off. The concept of sociability networks in this thesis focuses attention on the benefits of sociability and the fact that it is not only monetary forms of wealth that can be important sources of power and influence. Being members of social networks or other social structures may secure benefits depending on the ability of the agents. However, the extent to which certain people are included in, or excluded from, trust, benefits and support of a given form of social organisation depends on the interests of the group which maintains it.

In my view, in spite of advances in the field of human rights, there does not appear to be equality among citizens with regard to the integration of the economically less-privileged in the urban fabric of contemporary cities. The forms and strategies of resistance and struggle for a place, adopted by the populations that are affected, and their adjustments to the new circumstances, by means of social networks and identity, are thus crucial points to study. This research takes account of how poverty is experiential and hence different for each person, community or organisation. It addresses the challenge of understanding how, what Jovchelovitch (2007) calls different *knowledge systems in social life* operate and attempt to make an assessment of any corresponding dialogue. Finally, I would like the research to consider how understanding poverty as an experience that becomes spatialised in the form of territories of poverty, can be a relevant theme to urban planning studies by improving policy and enhancing the living conditions of the urban poor.

1.2 Personal Points of Departure

The previous section provided a general case for my doctoral research. However, conceptual and empirical motives cannot be separated from more personal concerns about the suitability of projects and plans and the desperate but barely heard experiences of the urban poor. The research, therefore, was motivated also by my 15 years of professional work and research in the field of social urbanism, with local and international NGOs, grass-roots associations, universities and state agencies. In particular, I was directly involved in the work of one important Brazilian NGO that proposed an integrated approach to the question of precarious settlements. The approach involved a positive interaction between the planners and residents, the construction of *bridges* between civil society and public authorities, and an understanding that housing is a structural aspect of sustainable urban development.[7]

The NGO CEARAH Periferia offers extremely valid and innovative experiences that are diametrically opposed to the lack of state concern with regard to poor urban housing. However, even when account is taken of the creative potential demonstrated by the social movements, these experiences have not resulted in significant advances in the quality of life of the excluded population as a whole, nor is this their aim. The extent to which CEARAH Periferia can intervene is limited; mass mobilisation and political organisation do not depend exclusively on action, and hence there is limited scope for negotiation with the public authorities by exerting pressure. In view of this, I began to question the limited sustainability of non-conventional programmes, in Brazil and elsewhere. Despite the prizes and accolades these programmes have received (such as an award for *Best Practices*), many projects are unsuccessful even within the limited and supposedly generic criteria, and most have proved impossible to apply in different contexts.[8] What happens is that the projects usually function well until the closing stages of the technical and/or social intervention by

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[7] NGO Centro de Estudos, Articulação e Referência sobre Assentamentos Humanos [CEARAH Periferia, Centre for Studies, Discussion and Information on Human Settlements] based in Fortaleza.

[8] CEARAH Periferia was part of a project that awarded a prize at the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements - HABITAT II in Istanbul, as one of the 12 *Best Practices* projects in the world. The key criteria to become a prizewinner are empowerment, citizen participation, training and capacity building, partnerships, comprehensive approaches, and simplicity in problem solving.

professionals from the state or NGOs, after which, when the people have to assume the responsibilities themselves, many appear to resemble *worst practices*.

This frustration drove me to consider how research might offer insights and a change of approach. In 2001, the Fundação Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior [CAPES, Federal Agency for Post-Graduate Education] of the Brazilian Government granted me a scholarship to study a PhD. My unease with the praxis of palliative and non-sustainable projects and the lack of a theoretical framework that could be applied locally, led me to undertake an initial research project that sought, in the traditional way, to analyse the housing policies of the municipality of Maceió, my hometown. The research project was subject to numerous modifications during the period preceding the fieldwork. The greatest difficulty was how to fix the parameters of the research in terms of policies and the complexity of urban life forced me to reflect on the best way to understand the precarious settlements. Starting from my personal sense of disquiet with the housing schemes set up by the state and NGOs, I turned to the process of integration and adjustment of poor people in the urban fabric. In view of the clear signs of urban fragmentation in low-income countries, this integration has been of limited extent. Consequently, I sought to analyse integration by means of its antonym, segregation, or more precisely social and spatial segregation. My main dilemma was how to combine all my departure points: the social-spatial exclusionary process of people in cities, the intense mobility of people in housing projects, the inefficiency of state policies and the limited knowledge about the every day life of the urban poor - in a coherent and useful research process.

The more traditional forms of carrying out urban research appeared to be poorly adapted to the reality of the deprived urban settlements and the objectives of the thesis. Following two years attending courses and seminars that provided an appropriate methodology for the analysis of the data, I felt able to embark on an improved research project that allowed a sensitive examination of the perspectives of the people. I believed that understanding the situation at a grassroots level might provide key elements when drawing up appropriate polices for tackling poverty in

deprived spaces where poverty has been concentrated and stigmatised. The details of the methodological approaches are outlined in Chapter 3.

After the fieldwork, the research data were organised and analysed with the aid of the accumulated theoretical-conceptual and practical knowledge acquired to write up the thesis. I processed the field notes and recast the outline of the thesis in the light of my fieldwork experience. The initial questions of this research were reformulated mainly by moving the focus away from state actions and directing it more towards social practices in the struggle for survival and integration in the urban environment. The aim was to work on a more personal plane by examining the individual in a micro-scale and to give less weight to the macro-scale of state policies and social networks.

Although the theoretical basis of my thesis is underpinned by a review of the international literature, the research was set in the context of Maceió, capital of Alagoas, one of the poorest States in Brazil (see Maps 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 for location).[9] In 1991 and 2000, Alagoas was ranked the second lowest State (of 27) in terms of the Human Development Index (PNUD, IPEA and FJP 2006). The development model of the State, which preserves the typical conservatism and power of its elites through *coronelismo*[10], and a form of production based on the monoculture of sugar cane, is reinforced by the paternalistic action of the state and patronage-based politics and this perpetuates and increases its social inequalities (Kenny 2002).[11] In these circumstances, the urban growth of Maceió has been characterised by a high level of

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[9] I use the word State with a capital letter to distinguish the state as a public sphere from the State as one of the members of the Brazilian Federal Republic.

[10] Coronelismo, literally colonel-ism, is a system in which a rural elite, dominated by military figures maintains economic and political superiority through fear and violence.

[11] According to Neto (1997) the regional economy retains the influence of the historical expansion of slave labour and the long transition to a free labour market, with a capacity for retaining populations and absorbing significant numbers of the work force. It also includes the bargaining power of employers resulting from the presence of abundant labour which has made it possible to keep wages low. These historical conditions have favoured the accumulation of surplus value by a powerful landowning class.

inward migration: the city's population increased by 274% from 1970 to 1996.[12] According to the 2000 census, Maceió possessed 797,759 inhabitants, with perhaps as much as 80% of the city area illegally occupied (UEM-HBB 2001).[13]

Map 1.1: Location of the North-East Region in Brazil

Map 1.2: Location of Alagoas in the North-East
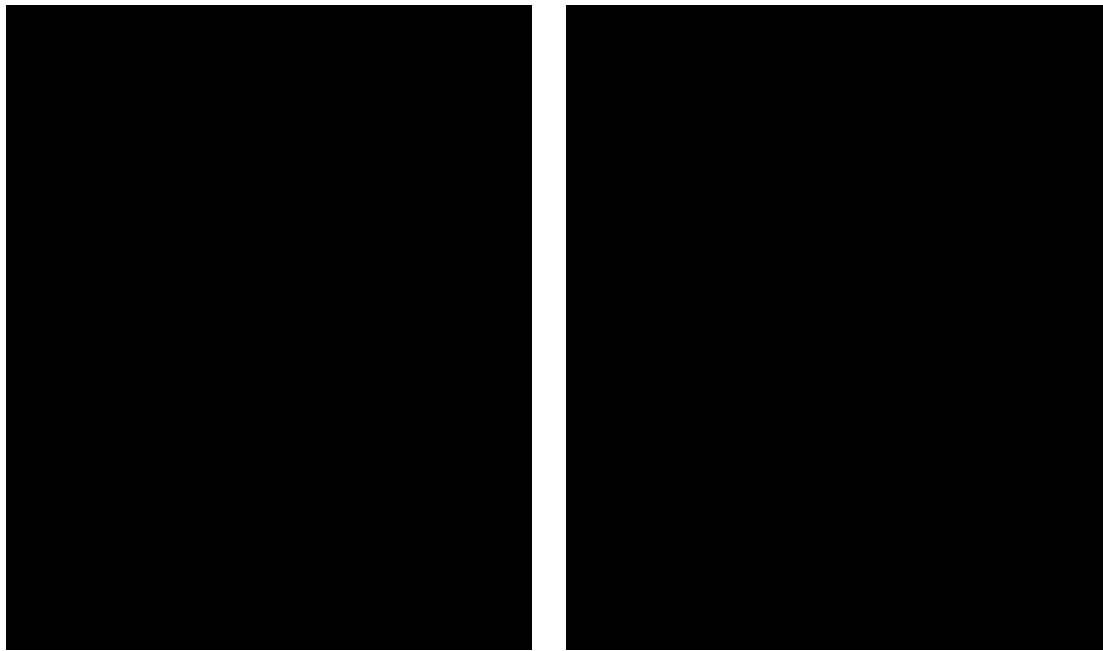
Source: Brasil, Governo do (2007) *IBGE Mapas*. Rio de Janeiro: IBGE.[14]

Maceió was chosen as the research location for personal and professional reasons. It is my urban reference point, a city to which I always return even though I have lived more than half my professional life away from it. In addition to the fact that local, national or international academic works on the precarious settlements of Maceió, are still in their infancy, the urban poverty existing in the city has characteristics that

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[12] Maceió began as a fishing village and a trading centre for sugar, timber, tobacco and other regional products, and gradually establishing itself as the main trading and service centre for Alagoas State specially in supplying the needs of the alcohol-sugar sector. Population data from 1970, 1980, 1991 census and the Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios 1995 [PNAD, National Survey of Households] of the Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatistica [IBGE, Brazilian Institute for Geography and Statistics].

[13] Illegal land occupation is not the preserve of the poor. Many middle class areas are also deemed illegal in planning terms.

[14] All maps, tables and figures reproduced in this thesis have been amended by the author.

are appropriate for the objectives of the present study, including the existence of a widespread debate on the problem of segregation in times of the *new poverty* in medium-sized cities (Satterthwaite 2004).

Map 1.3: Location of the Maceió Micro-Region in Alagoas
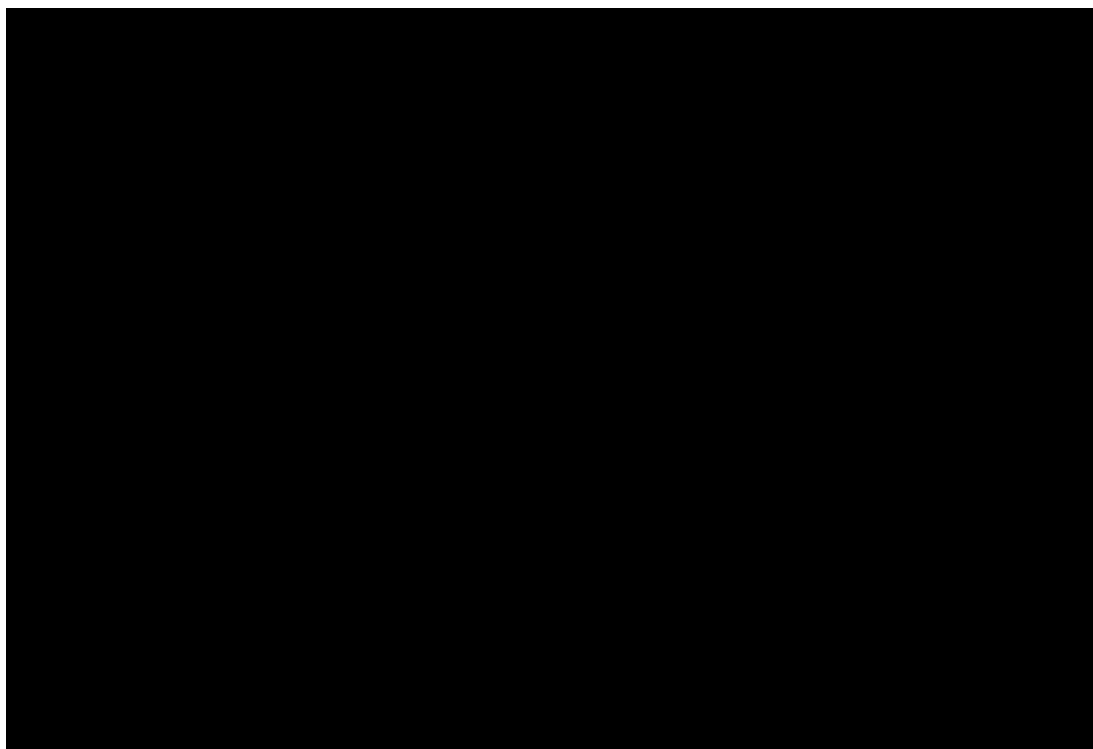
Source: Brasil, Governo do. (2007) *IBGE Mapas*. Rio de Janeiro: IBGE.

The urban structure of North-East Brazil is organised as a network of small and medium-sized cities and three metropolises with approximately six million inhabitants representing 12.5% of the total regional population (47,741,711 according to IBGE 2000). In the North-East, as throughout Brazil, medium-sized cities have grown faster than larger cities. However, given the lower levels of economic development in some of these cities, enclaves of poverty persist and with fewer resources there is less chance of eradicating them. Indeed, according to research statistics based on a series of social and economic census data, 53% of Maceió's population lives in conditions of *social exclusion* - understood as the lack of basic health, housing, employment and education (UFAL 1998). With regard to the question of housing, 50% of the population in the municipality live in sub-

standard housing conditions. These settlements are made up of 96,607 homes and shelter a population of 401,895 inhabitants (UEM-HBB 2001).

1.3   Research Questions and Thesis Structure

In my view, an analysis that links different views of urban poverty with the mechanisms of the territorialisation of poverty can result in valuable contributions to the understanding of spatial integration and segregation of the urban poor. While the varied nomenclature and concepts developed which have been employed in the last few years have revealed various interpretations about the causes of urban poverty, a debate on segregation and mobility can enhance the understanding of how precarious settlements form an isolated world. For this reason, this research will seek to investigate the social and spatial integration of the urban poor and in doing so will be based on two sets of research questions.

First, in investigating the life experiences of the poor and their degree of social and spatial urban integration, the research asks what is the influence of the personal and familial history on the processes of social and spatial integration. What are the characteristics and circumstances of the everyday life of the urban poor in the precarious settlements? And how do the poor try to mitigate poverty and become integrated in the fabric of society? Second, to gain a fuller understanding of state action with regard to the production of territories of poverty, the thesis asks how state action affects the everyday lives of the urban poor. How does the state, by means of its agents, perceive and deal with the residents in the precarious settlements? What is the impact of the state on the production of territories of poverty?

Chapter 2 sets out a review of the literature on urban segregation to establish conceptual links between poverty, space and state, and attempt to consolidate a framework that can combine the differing perspectives of urban poverty with the varied terminology and concepts ranging from *the culture of poverty* to *new marginality*, and models and mechanisms for *territorialising* poverty. This framework is combined with the theoretical and empirical reactions that lead to the establishing of certain academic and professional practices related to territorialising

poverty, as well as a discussion of the role of social networks in urban integration. I conclude with a revision of questions of research and focus.

In Chapter 3, there is an account of the methodological rationale for the research. I discuss the research design and the main features of the research strategy, ranging from planning, to collecting, analysing and evaluating the data and writing up the thesis. The use of life stories was the qualitative strategy chosen for exploring the daily round of the urban poor and the perceptions and the attitudes of the planners to the settlements. The Chapter also makes an evaluation of the choice of ethnographic techniques.

In Chapter 4, there is an overview of Brazilian urban development, with special reference to the North-East and Maceió. This draws on material from 37 life stories and interviews with planners, NGOs and social movement leaders, with regard to segregation policies and public practices. In this way, the Chapter seeks to contextualise the urban situation of Maceió on the basis of two sources, one that is documentary and the other reflecting the views of policy makers, planners and others that are representative of the way the state and society interacts with the precarious settlements.

In Chapters 5, 6 and 7 there is an analysis of the fieldwork material which is based on the 75 life stories of residents in three precarious settlements. Chapter 5 examines the differences between two of the precarious settlements studied that were generated by the urban poor's need for shelter. Chapter 6 adopts a different approach to consider the similarities of the experience of poverty in these same settlements. Chapter 7 focuses on a third settlement which is a pro-poor housing project that has been established by the state. Two broad themes have emerged from this investigation of the settlements: the degree of action/inaction of the state, and the tactics employed by the residents in their fight for a place in the city. In the final Chapter, there is an examination of the theoretical, policy, and research implications of the findings.

Chapter 2 - Territories of Poverty: Theoretical Framework

This chapter reviews the theoretical and empirical literature on urban poverty and spatial segregation. The concepts and terminology are analysed chronologically and range from the culture of poverty, marginality, exclusion and the new marginality to associated spatial patterns including squatter settlements, ghettos, gated communities and hyper periphery. A part of my framework combines concepts of exclusion and segregation, which are embodied in a definition of the territories of poverty. The survey conducted on the role of state action and social practices to bring about urban integration or deal with segregation completes the discussion of a theoretical framework. Different perspectives of these issues are examined on the basis of both the international and Brazilian literatures. The conclusion provides a brief revision of the research questions in the light of the theoretical discussion.

2.1 Urban Poverty

Tackling poverty has remained a constant problem despite the scientific and economic progress that has occurred in many fields. The concept of poverty however has changed over time. Broadly, there has been a shift from definitions based on economic factors that rely on income and consumption as the measurement criteria (Morduch 1994; Rocha 1997; Ferreira *et al* 1998), to an inclusion of qualitative dimensions such as independence, freedom, and self-esteem (Ravallion 1996; Sen 1999; Frey and Stutzer 2001). Here I will adopt the classification of approaches to understanding poverty suggested by Marks (1991), and examine cultural explanations, structural theories, and ethnographic approaches in order. No single approach has been hegemonic in our understanding of poverty. Although economic (income) definitions have returned to common usage with the Millennium Development Goals, the explanations for poverty employed at the present time are more plural than in previous eras.

2.1.1 Cultural Explanation: the Culture of Poverty

In ushering in a culturally determinist approach, the anthropologist Oscar Lewis was a pioneer in trying to understand 'the way of life of the lower classes, their problems, how they think and feel, what they worry about, argue over, anticipate or enjoy: the psychology of people' (Lewis 1959:1-3). The determinism of poverty seemed to Lewis to operate as a kind of universal destiny, where individuals are locked into poverty by culture. There are three key contributions that Lewis made to clarify this issue. The first stems from the absence of systematic knowledge about the family life of poor people in his time. Lewis stressed the need to live with poor people to acquire an understanding of their culture, their language, and behaviour, and to identify with their problems and aspirations. He stated that in many underdeveloped countries, the educated native elite had little familiarity with the culture of their own poor people because of the hierarchical character of their society. This restricted communications across economic classes and increased the gap between rich and poor. Since then, there have been no substantial changes on the part of the elite concerning the knowledge of, or engagement in the situations in which poor people live. The second contribution, closely bound up with the first, is shown in the methodology used for collecting data, which seeks a closer reading of the reality of the daily lives of the residents. The third contribution of great significance is the concept of generational poverty, which continues to be used today, though more extensively and with the added phrase *chronic poverty*.

The main drawback of Lewis' approach is that it adopts a rather exotic view of the poor person, as being the *other*, the different one, and a remote person, holding attitudes that are somehow inappropriate for modern urban living. This is, in spite of Lewis' positive vision of slum life where in his view everyday life is creative, resourceful and entrepreneurial. Another criticism that can be made concerns his *individual* treatment of problems and his attempts to solve them, without taking account of collective and political factors. The emphasis he lays on the biographies of people and families is a methodological signal of this individualist way of analysing poverty. According to Lewis, society is ready to integrate the poor people but they are not yet capable of taking advantage of urban life (Beall 2000). The people themselves therefore appear to be to blame for their poverty, and the state is

responsible for aggravating the situation by making the poor dependent on welfare policies (Atkinson 1995; Goodin *et al* 1999). As a result, the welfare policies are seen in a bad light.

A variant of cultural determinism found its major exponent in Nicholas Lemann (1986) who introduced the idea of the underclass. This return to cultural determinism in the mid-1980s can be attributed to the worsening of the economic crisis in the US at that time and the failure to assimilate the African American population into the mainstream culture. However, in my view, the main line of reasoning of Lemann has a racist element as he asks 'why have millions of all races found enough economic opportunity to permit an escape from the same inner cities where millions of others [referring to the black population] seem trapped forever?' (Lemann 1986:61). In negative terms, what derives from this determinist approach that classifies poor people into deserving and undeserving - is prejudice. In the same tradition of the culture of poverty where there is a lack of solutions to social problems, the system redirects the question to the individual, charging him/her with being responsible for his/her own precarious living conditions. As a counterweight to the emphasis on the individual, the idea of the *poverty trap* is put forward; this allocates a space to poverty, especially in ghettoes, and is constructive in terms of theory. However, in realistic terms, this attitude means that the adoption of territorialised urban planning processes is incomplete since different people who have different problems are lumped together. On the positive side, the value of the welfare state is partly restored although it does not carry out work of a social value. The North American variant represents a path towards structuralist explanatory theories, which attach importance to work as a means of solving the problems of poverty.

2.1.2   Structural Explanations

The crisis of modernity makes it possible to go beyond a culturalist view of poverty and seek structuralist explanations. These are based on economic factors and represent a return to Marxist ideas. The poor in countries such as Brazil suffer from the decline of educational values, which does not allow them to be integrated into the labour force. Moreover, there has been an increasing awareness of the incapacity of the economic system to absorb more workers (Husson 1996; Antunes 2002). This

inability can be regarded as part of the rationale of the capitalist system (Harvey 1996; Hofling 2001). In spite of the introduction of these structural elements, terms like *pathology* and *malady* continue to be used in explaining social and economic problems. William Julius Wilson, for example, rejects the culture of poverty thesis and lays stress on 'the sharp increase in social pathologies in ghetto communities'…'black crime, teenage pregnancy, female-headed families and welfare dependency…'. However, he concludes by adding that 'cultural maladies have structural origins' (Wilson 1987:21-22), which is not a complete rejection of culturalism, but rather a search for a common ground for both approaches. This is the case in spite of the internal criticism of some authors who warn of the danger of continuing to denigrate those aspects that are considered to be cultural. Katz (1989:8) says that 'poverty slipped easily, unreflectively into a language of family, race and culture rather than inequality, power and exploitation' and drew attention to the way culturalism was used to conceal the relations of oppression caused by the accumulative processes of capitalism.

One recurring factor, to which a structuralist approach has yet to provide an answer is the ethnocentrism displayed in the persistent lack of knowledge of the studies on families suffering from poverty. The lives of the poor in precarious places (like inner cities) remain unknown, academics and society only have a very limited knowledge and this is usually of the unattractive areas of their life (Billingsley 1989; Marks 1991). This is a significant criticism that can be made and that leads later on to the emergence of an ethnographic approach. This aims at obtaining a more intimate knowledge of the life of the precarious settlements and values the opinions of the poor individuals more highly than the external professionals (Wratten 1995). In spite of the paralysis caused by the inability to overcome macro-structural problems, there has been an emphasis on policies and actions that seek to integrate poor people through work (qualifications and creation) and through a transfer of resources. With regard to urban development policies, a clear contradiction is apparent. The recommended solution is to remove the precarious settlements (following the former culturalist idea of structure) and clean up the city by building highways and huge housing projects far from the town centre. However, rather than bringing about

spatial integration, the effect of these policies has been to force these people to live in a remote location.

Structuralist theory was influential in Latin America through theories of marginality and dependence (Stavenhagen 1965; Furtado 1966, 1967; Frank 1969; Oliveira 1972; Kowarick 1975). In Brazil, the dependence theory sprang up in the 1950s and 1960s with the concept of *underdeveloped* countries and this has been gradually modified since then. The contribution of Cardoso and Faletto with their book 'Dependence and Development in Latin America' (1970) was to have a great influence on subsequent Brazilian and Latin American thinking. The general purpose of the dependence theory is to show that external determinants (imperialism) of the situation of dependence are closely tied to internal determinants (class structure). The emphasis on relationships of domination and dependence locates the origins of poverty outside the individual range of action and this is a positive aspect of the approach. In addition, there is a return to a viewpoint that is less heavily loaded with negative connotations of life in the precarious settlements. Rather it offers a lively and strong network of relationships, which enable us to regard precarious settlements as a step in the direction of a better life. The stigma attached to them is somewhat reduced: it is recognised that they have to work and find the means to support their families even if their work is in the informal labour market. However, in spite of this apparent accommodation of the slum residents within the urban fabric, the state continues to pursue a policy of removing them from the privileged areas, and investing a lot of money in urban infrastructure, and building huge housing estates on the outskirts of the city. This strategy of planning housing schemes in these locations increases the value of the adjoining land and clearly benefits the real estate market.

A number of Brazilian authors (Leeds and Leeds 1978; Maricato 1979; Sposati 1988; Gohn 1991; Santos 1993; Ribeiro 1997; Taschner 1997; Zaluar and Alvito 1998; Valladares 2005) have written about poverty and the precarious settlements of this period (1970-1985). I would like to draw attention to the work of Lúcio Kowarick who analyses the process of *espoliação urbana* [urban deprivation] in the city of São

Paulo (1979).[15] The advantage of this approach is that it takes into account other factors, apart from working conditions, to explain why and how people are uprooted from their environment. Some attention is paid to problems linked to the transport system, housing, education, health, sanitation and safety, which are needed by a work force.

In 1993, Townsend, influenced by studies of globalisation, adopted this approach again in the form of his *New Structuralism*. The poor individual is no longer regarded as being responsible for his/her situation even though he/she continues to figure as a victim whose human needs are socially created and who is excluded from local or even national policies. Global systems determine and structure the configurations of the cities and the living conditions of their residents. This view is therefore a macro-structural one, which, I suggest, discourages people from seeking local solutions. The economic system erects a barrier against the residents of the poor ghettos and working neighbourhoods and prevents them from obtaining essential living standards, including even a minimum level of nutrition.

2.1.3 Ethnographic Approaches: Culture and Structure Combined

Throughout the 1980s, the two paradigms: culture on the one hand and structure on the other, contended for academic pre-eminence (Rose 1987; Hagedorn 1988; Sullivan 1989). In successive phases, there was a move away from this counter-positioning of the two paradigms and a return towards a kind of culturalism where there was an anthropological shift towards a micro-level (Marques and Bichir 2001). In the view of these authors, an attempt was made to combat the analytical paralysis that emerged from macro-structural determinism. This was expressed in a process that involved seeking out the actors themselves and highlighting their day-to-day lives, experience and construction of identity as a basis for collective protest and action. In short, ethnographic approaches gave rise to more pluralist visions whereby poverty was understood as multidimensional, affected by cultural conditions and

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[15] Kowarick (1979) classifies the segregation process as urban super-exploitation and deprivation [espoliação urbana] - which means the systematic exclusion of the poorer people from access to collective consumer services. The outskirts are seen as a region prone to deprivation.

interpreted subjectively by people depending on their gender, age, ethnic origin, and skills (International Forum on Urban Poverty 1998).

These experiences are not reflected in conventional poverty charts, graphs, or tables (Katz 1989). Anderson (1989) adopts an ethnographic approach involving a part-culturalist and part-structuralist position by means of which he examines the meaning of values and identity of black males in Chicago and Philadelphia, where a power structure dominates a historical ghetto. The respective positions of this first phase entail humanising the problem of poverty in so far as it affects the daily lives of the residents in the precarious settlements and regards these people as men and women with similar needs to other citizens. It also involves consolidating an understanding of universal basic needs that treats the question of guaranteeing human rights to citizens as the main objective of each nation. However, as Kowarick (2000) states, while the studies in the 1970s tended to position structure over subjects, by the 1990s one could detect in studies that subjects were much freer from structural constraint.

The expression *social exclusion* was first used in the debate about social assistance in the 1970s but by the 1990s social exclusion and vulnerability had become substitutes for the word *poverty*. However, there has been some controversy surrounding the use of the terms, with a variety of definitions that depend on contexts and are accompanied by *theoretical and ideological baggage* (Silver 1994). Some scholars (Chambers 1989; Lipton 1996; De Haan 1997; Jackson 1998; Martins 2003) view the term exclusion with scepticism and regard it as an imprecise category. In the view of Martins (2003:11), the problem with the term is that it reflects several ambiguities and eventually denies what the concept sets out to say.

> 'That is why, strictly speaking, exclusion does not exist; what exists is contradiction, since the people excluded are the victims of social processes while also being, political and economic excluding agents. There exists a conflict in which the victims of the excluding processes proclaim their rejection, ill-feeling, revulsion, hopes, demands for greater power and bitter complaints. Insofar as they are not strictly a question of exclusion, these reactions cannot take place outside of the economic or power systems. They correspond to what is indefinable in such a system and form a part of them even though they deny them.' (Martins 2003:13-14, author's translation)

The concern is that by changing the word poverty to exclusion one may be concealing the fact that what are really being changed are its form, context, and effects. Exclusion is discussed instead of the precarious forms of inclusion. Many community organisations with different degrees of geographical outreach, NGOs and international bodies refuse to use the word poverty, and prefer to speak of exclusion as the absence of rights and not merely the lack of access to any kind of goods or assets. In this controversy what stands out in general terms is the long-standing tension between structuralism and culturalism.

In denying the existence of exclusion, some of the theoreticians seek to maintain an analytical framework based on the social division of labour and the labour markets of advanced capitalist countries (Burrows and Marsh 1992; Esping-Andersen 1993; Dupas 1999). In this way, they wish to show that a capitalist society uproots and excludes in order to include, and also includes in other ways, in accordance with its own rules and logic. On the other hand, others adopt a more culturalist approach which differs from the previous model and is less restrictive with regard to how social exclusion is socially constructed (Jenks and Petersen 1991; Massey and Denton 1993; Grusky 1994). They attribute social exclusion to the denial of social citizenship status to certain social groups: this leads to stigmatisation, restrictive or oppressive legislation, and forms of institutional discrimination, which are linked to the social division of welfare. What both sides have in common is the sense of social isolation and a feeling of being segregated from the formal structures and institutions of the economy, society, and state (Somerville 1998).

In spite of the controversy, the term exclusion has become widespread over the last 15 years as a means of explaining the mechanisms that hinder social integration in the urban environment. It is mainly directed at the practices of international organisations and aimed at fixing parameters in countries that are increasingly making efforts to devise indicators that are capable of measuring the level of poverty and social exclusion both in the North and the South. These indicators depend on a more culturalist perspective, as they do not usually take account of political relationships. There is, so to speak, a return to human development as the centre of discussion (most notably through the work of Amartya Sen and Mahbub ul Haq - the

conception of the Human Development index and reports). The idea that we need to assess the quality of life and not the average distribution of national resources is especially pertinent to Brazil which is characterised by a historical context of socio-economic inequality (Sposati 2000). The approach has also underscored a willingness to confront gender, the *feminisation of poverty* and to a lesser extent of power relations inside households (Kabeer 1994; Chant and Gutmann 2000).

Although the concept of exclusion is still being constructed, some implications have emerged that have strengthened some aspects of the *part culture and part structure* approach. Among these, the so-called *advanced marginality* has come to the fore in the last ten years, as a means of describing new forms of poverty in highly developed societies. According to Wacquant:

> '…the characterisation of the regime of urban marginality emerged in advanced societies at the close of the Fordist era… There are four logics that combine to produce it: a macrosocietal drift towards inequality, the mutation of wage labour (entailing both deproletarianisation and casualisation), the retrenchment of welfare states, and the spatial concentration and stigmatisation of poverty… To cope with emergent forms of urban marginality, societies face a three-pronged alternative: they can patch up existing programmes of the welfare state, criminalise poverty via the punitive containment of the poor, or institute new social rights that sever subsistence from performance in the labour market.' (1999:1639)

There is a close link between the concept of *new marginality* in the South and the requirement to widen social rights for all citizens, which in fact is not new. Since the mid-1980s and the wave of democracy in Latin America the concept of marginality has been replaced by exclusion, inequality, injustice and spatial segregation and linked to the new debate on citizenship, rights, participatory democracy and transparency (O'Donnel and Reis 1988; Jacobi 1989; Avritzer 1993; Dagnino 1995; Carvalho 2001; Baquero 2002; Hopenhayn 2002; Santos 2002). In the middle of the 1990s, the concept of marginality was revived in academic circles, and applied to the persistent poverty in the developed world. Terms such as the *underclass*, *new poverty*, and *new* or *advanced marginality* are used to describe the chronic poor in advanced capitalist countries (Perlman 2004).

In the face of every day 'hopelessness, deproletarianisation, racist classifications, violence and divisions, diminution of social trust, disconnection from larger society and subsequent isolation' the questions first asked by the marginality school three decades ago remain just as pressing - how do people survive? (Auyero 1999:65). Whereas in the past, poor people had the prospect of rising socially by means of acquired savings at the cost of personal privation or through schooling, the new poverty no longer offers this alternative: it integrates poor people in a different, unsatisfactory, and partial manner in mechanisms designed to consolidate and reproduce society as it is today. Inclusion is taking much longer to occur (Martins 2003).

Modern society is creating a large number of people who can be regarded as *leftovers* that is people who have little chance of really being re-absorbed into present-day patterns of economic development (Sader and Gentili 1995; Dupas 1999; Oliveira 1999; Picanço 2007). In countries such as Brazil, one can identify the emergence of an ever-increasing group of people that is living outside the class structure.

> 'These populations had fallen into a zone of social liminality wherein a specific tropism operates that effectively isolates them from others around…' (Wacquant 1996:129)

At best, it is a parallel society, which is *including* from the economic point of view but *excluding* from the social, moral, and even political point of view.

> 'Former workers who used to obtain the most important urban services through their collective organisation and whose survival needs were provided by means of the monetary income received from their paid employment, are now unemployed or underemployed: with a meagre cash income. Their reciprocal network of resources of help are being depleted and they now face problems other than the infrastructural improvement of their habitat, like that of sheer survival.' (Auyero 1999:57).

The positive aspect of the rebirth of the *marginality approach* in the analysis of the conditions of residents in precarious settlements has been its emphasis on how poverty becomes worse and permanent. This has led to life in the slums no longer being considered as something transitory and has re-established the concept of chronic and inter-generational poverty.

2.2   Spatial Segregation

Spatial segregation is usually understood as an undesirable phenomenon because it separates and locates people in different places, on the basis of individual characteristics associated with socio-economic, religious, or ethnic factors. However, there are academics that consider segregation as one of the principal tools available in the social process of assimilation when striving to achieve solidarity inside the *segregated* group (Peach 1996). In this case, there is a distinction between *voluntary* segregation and *involuntary* segregation. The former occurs when the individual, on his/her own initiative, seeks to live with those who belong to his/her own social group and seeks segregation to strengthen social identity or if one accepts the most recent explanation, to protect themselves against the violence that can be found outside the walls of fortified upper and middle-income residential and commercial enclaves (UNCHS 2001).

Involuntary segregation occurs when the individual or a family find themselves obliged by a variety of forces, to live in a certain district or to stop living in a certain neighbourhood. Thus, the segregation of excluded people on the outskirts of the city is an involuntary form of segregation. This kind of involuntary segregation is the focal point of this research. The complex forces involved in urban segregation combine coercion, opportunism, and voluntarism. Legislation and increased land and housing prices have displaced poor groups and forced them to move to the remote outskirts of the city. According to Villaça (2001:147-148, author's translation) what causes segregation to be a process of conflict is that the victors choose voluntary segregation, while the vanquished are forced to accept involuntary segregation: 'In reality there are not two types of segregation, only one. Segregation is a dialectical process whereby the segregation of some leads, simultaneously and through the same process, to the segregation of others.'

Spatial segregation, defined here as the spatial division or separation of different population categories of people based on their socio-economic position in society, is the spatial face of urban poverty. Urban poverty and spatial segregation can both be considered historical phenomena. Although the deteriorating conditions of poor families in contemporary cities are evident, the spatial concentration of poverty is a

feature of human experience. To understand this pattern, it is of crucial importance to clarify the evolution of the social, economic, and political conditions that cause residential segregation and the social differentiation of space. One of the main indications of physical segregation is restricted access to land (caused by factors such as location, infrastructure and security of tenure): 'the crucial dividing-line in the city separates those who have legitimate and reasonably secure access to urban land, and those who do not.' (Berner 2000:556).

As in the case of the various approaches to urban poverty discussed in the previous section, spatial segregation has also been described in different ways over time and in accordance with particular social theories. When one speaks of *spatial segregation* and its components, various terms are used along with their associated connotations: territorial exclusion, spatial separation, residential differentiation, spatial polarisation, ghettos, gated communities, substandard informal housing, enclaves of slums, subnormal settlements, peripheral communities, and precarious settlements. In this thesis I have chosen to use the term spatial segregation with the aim of clarifying a situation that is already quite complex, that of physical separation and the lack of a spatial integration of poor families within the urban fabric. I also employ the term *territories of poverty* as an empirical combination of urban poverty and spatial segregation.[16]

Other terminology reveals the segregationist aspect of the precarious settlements: their dichotomous nature or polarisation, exclusionary *closure* (Parkin 1978), neighbourhoods of relegation, territories of exclusion and socio-spatial relegation, these last being linked to the emergence of the term exclusion. These territories do not only refer to favelas, as Rolnik (2001:472-473) states: 'the ´excluded´ territories may be part of inner city slums, illegal sub-divisions in the peripheries or other forms of informal housing marked by some form of ´precariousness´ of the built

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[16] Although not only, the *territories of poverty* can be understood as coterminous with favelas, shantytowns, barrios, villas miseria, bairros de lata, and slums (see Peattie and Aldrete-Hass 1981:157-158).

environment.'. However, the favelas are of interest to the present thesis as they are currently the *preferred* residential spaces of the poorest people (Valladares 2005).[17]

The use of the term favela has become generalised in society, in the academic world and among official bodies. With the intensification of the struggle for urban land in the 1980s, the use of the term *invasion* became popular to describe informal and illegal settlements with the same characteristics as favelas but which introduced the problem of land tenure. Social movements and organisations prefer to use the term *occupation*, which means occupying a piece of land that is empty and without any social purpose, in a situation where a group of poor people do not have anywhere for their family to live: the term *land occupation* reflects their political action (Morais *et al* 2003:17). In official terms, the definition of substandard districts or informal settlements comes from IBGE [Brazilian Institute for Geography and Statistics]: 'a group of [50 minimum] dwelling units (huts, houses, etc…), occupying or having occupied until recently lands belonging to other people (either public or private lands), generally laid out in a scattered and dense manner and lacking essential public facilities or services' (author's translation).

Taking account of the required speed to alter spatial structures caused by changes in social structures, I have drawn on theories that explain both the relationship between urban poverty and social integration and the meaning of the terms determinism, structuralism and pluralism. As with the approaches to poverty, there is no strict chronological sequence and the last period reflects nuances from previous lines of thought, without any precise boundaries being drawn.

2.2.1 Determinism

Setting out from a determinist perspective, several authors believe there is a direct relationship between residential space and social exclusion, especially the adverse effects of confining the poor to specific neighbourhoods, namely ghettos. Although some empirical studies show that the so-called neighbourhoods of poverty (Friedrichs 1997) have little influence on social interaction, Skogan (1990) states that

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[17] The term favela was then generalized with some local variations in other Brazilian cities: mocambos (Recife) and alagados (Salvador) with almost the same connotation.

the visibility of certain characteristics in the area (litter, physical decay, visible aggression and crime, and drug use) affects human behaviour (cited in Somerville 1998). Although this view has now been superseded as a means of forming a concept of poverty, it is still held today with regard to the question of space. This means that the subject is confused by his/her surroundings especially when the physical integrity of the *others* (those outside of the segregated spaces) is being threatened.

According to several authors there are new spatial forms of social segregation, which are provided by new concepts of housing and public space (Ribeiro 1996; Caldeira 1997; Briceño-Leon and Zubillaga 2002). These are fortified enclaves - that protect the elites from contact with what is perceived as potentially dangerous. There is an implied fatalistic belief that the culture of poverty affects everything including the space. When the poor are moved to a new location, they remain socially and economically handicapped, even if the new place offers better opportunities. (Rosenbaum *et al* 2002). There is an opposing model, called the *geography of opportunity* (Galster and Killen 1995) that argues that there is no cultural determinism in the relationship between space and urban poverty. In fact there is no empirical evidence that a place with more social, economic, cultural, and political opportunities has a significant effect on the abilities and behaviour of the poor.

2.2.2   Structuralism

Together with the culturalist approaches to the problem, there have been a number of structuralist interpretations that have sought to ascribe segregation to economic and ideological processes. Each of these interpretations - neoclassical, Marxist, and industrial, based on location and accumulation, or underdeveloped industrialisation - has added its own view of how industrialisation affects spatial segregation (Castells 1972, 1978; Harvey 1989; Kesteloot 2002; Mustard and Deurho 2002). In spite of disagreements, some generally-agreed conclusions have been reached such as the direct connection between income inequality and segregation and the need to take account of the different stages of economic development when examining the effects on segregation (Kowarick 1979; Savage and Warde 1993; De Rango 2001; Villaça 2001). In the case of the less industrialised countries, including Brazil, urbanisation is a more important explanatory key than industrialisation. Unlike high-income

countries, industrialisation here decreases segregation, while urbanisation increases it (Telles 1995). In addition to this economic structuralist perspective, there is an emphasis on the political and ideological processes that maintain situations of segregation (Young 1990; Cross and Keith 1993; Sibley 1995).

According to several authors (Campanário 1981; Harvey 1973; Kowarick 1979; Pinçon-Charlot *et al* 1986; Vetter and Massena 1981; Villaça 2001) segregation occupies a central position in the attempts of the ruling class to exert domination and supremacy: 'more than simply a metaphor of political power, spatial separation was a central component in the wider project of ordering and managing society' (Robinson 1998:533). Access to services is linked to the location and the question of whether or not it is relatively near to the centre. Even a person living on the outskirts of a city would be to some extent included in the urban fabric if he was provided with spatial accessibility and urban mobility. The urban format is thus a determining factor in explaining social and spatial segregation. Obviously, this model is applicable to a situation where a person is included in the labour market and has the economic means to undertake the necessary journeys. In this view, spatial segregation can be linked to political and economic power and allows the state to carry out a policy of investment in social services and basic facilities on an unequal basis and in this way dominate the land market. The classes with the highest incomes exercise control over the production of urban space (Villaça 2001).

2.2.3   Territorial Exclusion and Inequality

As was the case when defining the concept of poverty, in the middle 1990s, various authors introduced the issue of spatial exclusion although without adopting a specific term such as *territorial exclusion* (Brun and Rhein 1994; Sabatini 1997; Schteingart 1997; Torres 1998; Rolnik 2001). The term territorial exclusion, which has been used more recently, is a way of emphasising the situation of being denied access to citizenship - that is, the opportunity to enjoy the spatial advantages of urban life. This perspective seeks to bring together cultural and structural factors by taking into account the differences in the segregated cities where spatial and social polarisation are taking place as a result of cultural and of economic influences on the social structure. There is a tendency for those who are economically similar to integrate

even when they are spatially apart. Those who are economically different are polarised socially and there is no integration even when they are not geographically far apart.

In the case of territorial exclusion, the emphasis is thus on the difficulties poor families have in joining the labour market or having access to educational opportunities which are normally located at the other *pole* of the city. Studies on segregation in the Paris region (Pinçon-Charlot *et al* 1986) bring in another element whose activity influences segregation: the state and production of collective equipment (Villaça 2001). Moreover, new spatial models and terms have appeared in response to the state's incapacity to plan and guarantee to the citizens certain minimum rights, namely those regarding personal security and the security of their property. These models include: risk urbanisation - a situation where the poor gather together in areas which are unsuitable for building on, and; the gated community where the rich are concentrated in fear of the dangers of urban life. Caldeira (2000 [1992]), for example, in her study of the closed condominiums and the high walls of the city of São Paulo reveals the defensive nature of segregation that has resulted from the increasing proximity of the different social groups. When there is a change in the patterns of land occupation that results in a move to the outskirts by the elite in search of larger spaces, then this proximity to those economically less well off leads to segregation, which is apparent in the building of high walls and fences.[18] According to Auyero (1999:48), in Latin America an 'invisible wall of economic redundancy, educational exclusion, state abandonment and sustained stigmatisation has been erected'.

Hence, segregation is harmful when it brings with it implicitly discriminatory messages of rejection of different life styles, ethnic groups, beliefs and economic resources. In this way, segregation can impede the possible integration of differing social groups by making it difficult for them to enjoy complete use of the city's

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[18] The periphery considered as a space far removed from the city centre is no longer a space relegated to poor inhabitants but has come to shelter the well-off classes as well, who on leaving the city centre for more modern and spacious neighbourhoods offset the problem of long distances with express-ways, highways and a high-degree of motorisation.

spaces and denying the benefits of urban life to the great majority, as is the case in Brazil, for example. In pluralist terms, it can be stated that urban spatial segregation no longer simply expresses socio-economic differences, but has become the spatial embodiment of societal fragmentation and *irreconcilable* inequality (UNCHS 2001). In the last two decades, there has been a visible increase in the number of academic studies on the growing situation of fragmentation of the urban fabric typified by an increasing isolation of the less-favoured social groups. Social inequality tends to be reflected spatially and when social inequality widens, socio-spatial inequality will become wider as well (Musterd *et al* 1999:17).

2.2.4 Spatial Poverty Traps

The cultural determinist approach introduced the idea that poor sections of the community were trapped in certain spaces. Pahl (1965) suggests that the higher income and better-educated groups tend to make an active use of space whereas poorer groups tend to be trapped by it. More recent research suggests that the trapped tenants' thesis may well be a myth (Taylor 1995). However, due to the non-homogeneity of the precarious settlements or housing estates, it could be that it is only the *organised* who are residentially mobile, while the *excluded* are indeed *trapped* (Somerville 1998:776). The *new marginality* paradigms have reintroduced spatial poverty traps as a materialisation of segregation, since the forms, locations, and access to services and facilities of these spatial traps could prevent their occupants from becoming progressively integrated in economic and social urban life. To own or rent a house in a certain location can prevent a family from becoming integrated in the urban economy.

> 'Advanced marginality tends to concentrate in well-identified, bounded, and increasingly isolated territories viewed by both outsiders and insiders as social purgatories, urban hellholes where only the refuse of society would accept to dwell. Stigma of place, poverty and race - penalised spaces.' (Wacquant 1996)

The fact is that studies of poverty still do not adequately reveal the underlying factors that explain why some people have access to better living conditions and others do not, and what it is which enables some people to escape poverty, while others become caught in the poverty trap indefinitely (Beall 1995).

2.3   State Action and Segregation: Theory and Practice

After discussing the meanings attributed to urban poverty and its appearance as a form of spatial segregation, in this section I deal with theories regarding the role of the state and planning in urban integration, including concerns about human rights. I also examine the theoretical reactions to the territorialisation of poverty, which have led to certain professional and academic practices being adopted. This is followed by an analysis of the way in which urban planning treats the question of urban segregation. To conclude the section, the practical implications of this theoretical investigation will be analysed with regard to the state's actions, policies and projects, either in favour of or against the territorialisation of poverty. This is followed by a theoretical configuration of social networks where I seek to link socio-spatial organisational models to questions of segregation and aggregation.

2.3.1   Theoretical Reactions to the Territorialisation of Poverty

The problem of the integration and segregation of the poor has not gone unnoticed by theoreticians and urban planners. Theoretical planning forms the basis of urban actions, which, depending on the predominant interests, can lead to either segregation or integration. The idea of individual rights, when set above private interests, is of crucial importance in the framework of social segregation and integration. The right of individuals and groups to social integration has now been accepted by society in spite of practices that do not match the discourse. In the present investigation, priority will be given to the actions of the state, which is supposed to be the guardian of citizens' rights but at times acts in a way that hinders integration. In view of this, the question of academic reactions to spatial segregation will be addressed by focusing on human rights and how this issue influences the construction of social space.

According to Lefebvre, with the advent of capitalism, space comes to be understood as social space. Social space contains - and assigns (to some extent) appropriate places for: i) biological reproduction; ii) the reproduction of labour power; and iii) the reproduction of the social relations of production. A social space with greater equity requires the provision of spaces where both social and individual needs and

desires can be satisfied. Needs can be defined under a number of different categories: i) food; ii) housing; iii) medical care; iv) education; v) social and environmental services; vi) consumer goods; vii) recreational opportunities; viii) neighbourhood amenities; and ix) transport facilities. In addition to the objective needs that are manifest in particular activities, there are subjective needs, many of which are personal, but still necessary and constructed in a collective way. On the basis of a dialectical perspective, Lefebvre states that non-material needs are:

> '…opposed and complementary, they include the need for security and opening, the need for certainty and adventure, the organisation of work and of play, the needs for the predictable and the unpredictable, of similarity and difference, of isolation and encounter, exchange and investments, of independence (even solitude) and communication, of immediate and long-term prospects.' (1968:367)

It is clear that human needs are not confined to material possessions that can be provided by commercial and cultural structures. According to Lefebvre, the full extent of needs can be defined in terms of an opposition between utility value (the city and urban life - as a subject) and exchange value (spaces bought and sold, the consumption of products, goods, places and significance, urban life - as an object). The choice between the city as a utility value or exchange value brings about segregation which may be: (i) spontaneous (coming from income and ideologies); (ii) voluntary (establishing separate spaces); and (iii) programmed (under the guise of planning and subject to an overall plan). That is to say, whoever has access to consumption and financial resources may choose where to live and practice. Thus, a political and social class strategy (whether conscious or unconscious) clearly leads towards segregation (Lefebvre 1996).

In such circumstances, Lefebvre (1996) argues that the right to the city has become more essential than ever. However, the phrase *the right to the city* does not just refer to the simple right to visit the city. What it calls for is a renewed urban society, a renovated *centrality* that entails *rhythms* and allows full usage of time and spaces. The right not to be excluded from *centrality* and to be able to participate politically in decision-making are particularly significant for the less privileged classes.

Acquiring the right to the city has taken on a more definite meaning in Brazil where civil society (particularly social movements, NGOs, and universities) advocated setting up a new legal framework after the end of the dictatorship period in 1985. While the Statute of Cities [2001] recognises the right to the city, the implementation of the law has yet to be effective. The concept however also suffers from other difficulties. As Sposati (1998) has argued there is a direct tension between social exclusion and universality, as well as the concepts of social rights and citizenship. As a negation of citizenship, exclusion refers not only to material conditions but also discrimination and stigmatisation.[19] A right to the city represents a step towards urban integration for the poor but the question is how to reconcile this with the general interests of society and the particular interests of all social groups of inhabitants. In Brazil, rights are not granted to everyone; only to those who are *well* positioned, that is with a good income, and belonging to a certain race or gender group. Even with rights on the agenda, Carvalho (1999:91, cited in Kowarick 2005:7) defines third-class citizen as 'the majority of people who earn very little, or belong to the millions of unemployed or insecurely employed, illiterate or inadequately educated, people who live in sub-standard housing, in short, most of the inhabitants of Latin American cities'.

Harvey believes there is a direct relationship between Lefebvre's *right to the city* and the idea of *social justice*. The right to the city is linked to social justice in its opposition to both social separation and the exploitation of people as producers, consumers of products, and consumers of space. Harvey (1973) states that two possible attitudes can be adopted when faced with the phenomenon of social and spatial segregation: (i) to consider this situation as natural, historical, permanent, and even acceptable from a liberal viewpoint or, (ii) to explore the prospects of making changes in this situation by borrowing the principles of social justice. Harvey outlines a normative theory of spatial organisation based on territorial distributive justice and states that it has to fulfil the needs of the people, and should be measured

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[19] The *materialisation* of the right of the poor to the city means allowing them to have access to: i) housing and basic facilities; ii) services: health, education; iii) public space: the right to participate in civil life; iv) jobs; v) mobility; and vi) leisure.

by socially just methods. In a later work, Harvey has broadened the concept of the right to the city:

> 'The right to the city is not merely a right of access to what already exists, but a right to change it after our heart's desire. We need to be sure we can live with our own creations (a problem for every planner, architect and utopian thinker). But the right to remake ourselves by creating a qualitatively different kind of urban sociality is one of the most precious of all human rights.' (2003: 939-941)

He considers social justice to be a particular application of the principles of justice to conflicts which arise out of the need for social co-operation in seeking individual improvement (Harvey 1973).

The problem of applying this theory of spatial organisation is that the city is invariably designed to serve its own capitalist ends and these ends are not consistent with the objectives of social justice. In Harvey's view, the way to bring about a socially fair city is to carry out urban policies aimed at redistributing wealth, encouraging action in the poorest sectors and restricting it in the middle and upper income districts. This change is impossible to affect within the capitalist market structure where wealth is generated and shared among the most powerful, despite (or because of) government control. At the same time, he believes that after more than 30 years discussing theories of social justice that the right to the city is still being frustrated by the application of *neo-liberalism* on the part of the state, and that 'justice is simply whatever the ruling class wants it to be' (Harvey 2003:939). The supposed equality among consumers of the city produces greater wealth for those who are well-situated and greater poverty for those who do not enjoy the support of the economic system. The spaces in the city become fragmented and to use his own words: 'cities become more ghettoised as the rich seal themselves off for protection while the poor become ghettoised by default' (940). His vision of a wider right to the city overcomes the constraints of property speculators and state planners and encompasses a more inclusive city where there is a different hierarchy of rights and pro-poor political-economic practices.

2.3.2 Practical Implications: State Action

The marginality of certain groups in society, in particular poor families, has been a permanent structural feature, which has never been absorbed by the capitalist sector of the economy, even during its expansionary cyclical phases. On the whole, the precarious settlements have been set up without the presence of any official public sphere - and thus without control or assistance. Wacquant even considers that 'such neighbourhoods of relegation are *creatures of state policies* in matters of housing, urban and regional planning' (1999:1644; emphasis added). In this section, I analyse the state, its activities, and the agents who are responsible for either strengthening or opposing spatial segregation.

One approach to inequality is to rely on the welfare state which may both assist with the maintainance of living standards for the poorest and undertake public actions to redistribute resources to the less well off. However, Musterd *et al* (1999:9-12) in analysing the greater economic disparities and sharper segregation patterns of the 1990s say that 'even the most successful cities will face the paradox of generating a lot of wealth and a lot of inequalities'. They go on to highlight the historical role of the welfare state in fostering greater social and spatial segregation. Indeed, as noted by Wacquant:

> 'Welfare states are major producers and shapers of urban inequality and marginality. States not only deploy programmes and policies designed to mop up the most glaring consequences of poverty and to cushion (or not) its social and spatial impact. They also help to determine who is relegated, how, where and for how long.' (1999:1642)

In his studies on *new marginality*, Wacquant stresses the responsibility of the welfare state for aggravating the spatial and social isolation of poor people in the United States.

One way in which the state, even a welfare state, acts against the interests of poor people and may aggravate inequality and segregation is through land and housing policies. As John Turner (1967) observes, public housing estates rarely meet the needs of poor people, and impose additional burdens through transport and service costs, while later work showed the cost to public budgets of even modest public

supply (Jones and Datta 1999). As Somerville (1998:772) makes clear: 'social exclusion through housing happens if the effect of housing processes is to deny certain social groups control over their daily lives, or to impair enjoyment of wider citizenship rights'. Urban planning too has failed to recognize the housing needs of the poor and by not offering suitable housing programmes has ended up *offering* precarious settlements as an alternative (Berner 2000). As Rakodi (1993:207-235) states, 'planners have little understanding about how the poor survive… as a result, urban plans and policies generally have little relevance to the situations which the poor face and may well make it far worse'. Zoning regulations and service decisions mean that land is too expensive for low income groups in areas near to employment, forcing them to locate at the urban peripheries (Campos Filho 1992; Marcuse 2001; Villaça 2001).

As a result of neo-liberalism, the conventional argument is that the power of the market has been increasing to the detriment of state power. In the view of Marcuse (1996), however, what has happened has been a change of direction of the state's actions. It has ceased to have a social and redistributive character and preferred to seek a line of profit and economic growth at any price and thereby turned into an 'instrument of private business purpose' (Musterd *et al* 1999:11). At the furthest extreme, the state absents itself and transfers responsibility to organised civil society, especially to community organisations and NGOs (Sposati 1999; Carrion 2001; Ivo 2003). While sustained poverty and spatial exclusion are produced by structural factors, this shift in policy both weakens social movements by urging broader reform and addresses most problems on a small scale, with the communities of poor people becoming detached from one another except through NGOs, thus furthering their isolation and the trend to individualism (see Auyero 2000).

2.3.3   Theory *versus* Practice in Brazil

Slums were only officially recognised by the local governments in Brazil after the 1940s (Morais *et al* 2003). For a considerable time, what characterised the districts on the outskirts of cities in Brazil was the absence of the state and the weakness of planning (Arantes *et al* 2002). In the opinion of Kowarick (1979), the Brazilian state only managed to keep up a relentless pattern of capital accumulation by accepting

high levels of poverty (including a vast reserve army of unemployed industrial workers) through the authoritarianism of dictatorship. Research has shown that favelas are inhabited by people with the lowest incomes and precarious links to the labour market (Bonduki and Rolnik 1979; Kowarick 1979).

However in the mid 1980s, there was a slight change in the treatment meted out to the peripheral spaces by the state. According to Gonh (1991), urban social movements had put pressure on the state to obtain urban facilities. Marques and Bichir (2001:12-25) argue that two mechanisms stimulated the state to implement certain policies to the detriment of others. First, the existence of left-wing state officials changed the dynamics of the state's activities. Second, electoral considerations proved influential, with greater investments destined to the urban poor in the period immediately before an election. This pressure of social movements on the planning and budgeting of the state ran contrary to the Marxist belief that a state is hostage to the interests of capital. However, there were no changes in the patterns of socio-spatial segregation experienced by the poor people. As later studies were to reveal, planning and other interventions had largely been used as an instrument to maintain segregation and strengthen the markets (Rolnik 2001:477).

The lack of sensitivity on the part of the urban planners to the question of social and spatial integration can be explained by the positivist matrix found in the work of the planners and particularly engineers (Ferreira 1993). The segregationist pattern can only be preserved through a technical knowledge of the professionals, the bureaucratic workings of the state machine and the decisions of politicians. Marques and Bichir (2001) state that a particular combination of positivism and a lack of social knowledge, has historically led officials to form a vision of society and of their aims when making an intervention that is extremely technocratic and *naïve*. Their attitudes are fertile ground for various types of conservatism. The traditional policy approach to the precarious settlements has been to *forget* or to stigmatise these territories (labelling them as *subnormal*) in technical language and 'to invest in them politically' by resorting to the practice of using clientelism as a tool (Rolnik 2001:480). The outcome is that after more than 30 years of laws, plans and projects in Brazil, Kowarick points out that it is no longer possible to talk about marginal

groups as an aberration; they have to be regarded as comprising the majority of the urban population but only one third of the labour force (Kowarick 2005).

2.4   Social Practices and Networks

In the absence of a positive state capable of tackling poverty, inequality and spatial segregation, poor people are left to follow *life-survival strategies*. These may involve cooperation between neighbours, friends and relatives, with networks of reciprocity to help find occupational opportunities, build houses and become united in a demand for services such as schools, nurseries, health centres and basic facilities (Peattie and Aldrete-Hass 1981:161-165; Kowarick 2005). At their most dynamic, we might consider these networks to be *social capital* that, as Portes describes, are concerned with the positive consequences of sociability and on how non-monetary forms of wealth can be important sources of power and influence (Portes 1998:1-6).[20] Yet, despite the enthusiasm shown for *social capital* by international agencies, the economic crisis of the 1980s showed that solidarity had been eroded or was weak. Schapira (1999:135) states that 'solidarity among neighbours, which used to be strong in poor neighbourhoods in Latin American cities, has become less perceptible'. As Auyero notes:

> 'Proximative networks of reciprocity with neighbourhood and kin' are well-studied elements in our understanding of how poor people confront the challenge of survival. With the generalisation of unemployment, these networks do not cease to exist but stop performing their usual functions, being a 'surrogate social security system'. (1999:58)

When the majority of residents are jobless it is difficult for family, friends, fictive kin or neighbours to help find employment for others: social capital is undermined when households can no longer sustain the underlying principle of reciprocity (Moser 1996). An increasing emphasis on greater individualism, and a withdrawal from struggle, caused frustration among the *solidarity theoreticians* who 'have an implicit tendency to idealize communities, which are treated as existing without structured

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[20] In addition to bringing benefits through extra familial networks and support, Portes also points out that social capital is a source of social control.

power relations and conflict' (Molyneux 2001:183). As Wacquant observes, as a common identity or interest declines, settlements become 'an empty space of competition and conflict, a danger-filled battleground for the daily contest of survival and escape.' (1999:1644)

While *social capital* remains a useful concept I prefer the expression *social networks*, which refers directly to ideas of *connectivity* and *sociability* but without reading into them hoped-for notions of social development. Kowarick (2005:7-8) draws attention to the willingness of the poor to form ties that he describes as 'a kind of primary sociability involving mutual help that is based on the ties of extended family relationships and friendships in the neighbourhood communities' in spite of conflicts, violence and quarrels. Sociability as a public construction is limited by the violation of poor people's rights, but supports a notion of private citizenship where 'the search for security enhances the need to move into private spaces, as if the fragile society could no longer bear the vulnerability of public spaces, which are associated with poverty and violence' (Schapira 1999:136). Nevertheless in the search for housing, employment and safety, people use social networks to acquire resources and hang onto those already in their possession.

That said, it should be recognised that the search for better housing represents a huge investment of energy, money, and time, and in an economic sense causes a delay in the accumulative activities of the family. Despite their restricted opportunities, the urban poor regard living in precarious settlements as only temporary. As Auyero (1999:54) points out: 'they perceive themselves as part of a general movement of upward mobility of the working classes; slum dwellers believe they are going to leave the slum'. The slum is understood as something temporary, a bridge to urban integration for newly-arrived people. Owing to a belief that their presence is likely to be temporary, they make a minimal investment although it will clearly be impossible for many of them to move on.[21] As a result, the precarious areas become a refuge of physical and social destitution (Eckstein 1990).

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[21] Mobility is often vital to the strategies of survival of the poor but Portes (1998:11) insists that 'leaving a community tends to destroy established bonds, thus depriving family and children of a major source of social capital.'

Conclusions

An analysis that brings together different views of urban poverty and the mechanisms of the territorialisation of poverty can lead to a better understanding of spatial and social integration and the segregation of the urban poor. While the varied terminology and concepts adopted in the last few years reveal tendentious interpretations of the causes of urban poverty, the debate on spatial segregation can clarify how the precarious settlements become an isolated world. The study of the urban planning and public policies of the state is one of the challenges faced by research. The combination of the theoretical and empirical concepts of urban poverty and the models of spatial organisation and location of poverty form a framework which can be used for analysing urban spatial integration or the segregation of the poor. Some themes stand out from the review of the literature and serve as a reference-point for the research design. These include the following: *new* and *hyperpoverty*, spatial patterns of segregation, rights and social justice, the presence or absence of state policies, the knowledge of planners and social networks.

In spite of the large number of studies on urban poverty, *new poverty* and *new marginality* are recent concepts that need more empirical research. The lack of consensus about the use of the word *exclusion* for describing recent poverty divides theorists and practitioners. There is some general agreement that the *new poor* suffer discrimination, do not have their rights recognised, and are denied the right to have rights. But research has yet to focus on specific details and there is a lack of ethnographic studies of particular locations.

The relationship between the social and the spatial is still the subject of a lively debate in the sciences that deal with space. The existence of spatial traps (or conversely spatial levers) can inhibit or support the well-being of families in the territories of poverty. Yet, the occupation, appropriation and regulation of territories of poverty by the residents are issues that have not been extensively studied. Although the spatial and social inequality faced by the poor is condemned in terms of social justice, the contemporary city accepts inequality as a question of opportunities, and the discourse on the *right to the city* has not led to greater inclusion. How, then, planners understand the lives of the poor and the territories of poverty is vital,

especially if the very agents entrusted with improving inclusion and respecting rights stigmatise *other* people.

Social networks must be taken into account in the definition and implementation of urban policies. Networks might have beneficial or adverse effects on social practices and spatial segregation but they cannot be treated as a panacea for the alleviation of poverty. Poverty itself generates social networks where kinship ties are strengthened in times of shared adversity; but poverty also erodes the fabric of social life. A missing element is an understanding of how sociability and connection are linked to poverty in conditions of heightened and lasting segregation. Do social networks challenge or maintain urban segregation?

Finally, a word about language. As Katz points out (1989:3), 'the vocabulary of poverty impoverishes political imagination'. Labels stigmatise people for suffering from economic poverty or project onto them values of employment, culture or education - terms such as lumpen proletariat, the undeserving poor, and the culture of poverty. These terms may add little to our understanding of the lives of poor people (Billingsley 1989) and mostly deny any possibility of a change of status. Moreover, the indiscriminate use of the word *poor* generalises the problem and does not clarify the reasons for the existence of poverty or the different types of poverty that can be found. The absence of a more appropriate and sensitive alternative to the word *poor* may affect the way a situation is treated. In Brazil, the NGOs decided to employ terms such as *camadas populares* [working classes], communities, families with scant economic resources, low-income families (replacing the term low-class families), and more recently, the terms *marginal* and *excluded*. Retaining some link to income and resources is important but it is essential to appreciate the difficulties arising from the fact that professionals brand the poor in their own terms and not in the way people describe themselves (Wratten 1995). In this thesis, I make use of the terms *poor people* or *residents of precarious settlements* in order to draw attention to their limited access to monetary resources and the insecurity of the places where they live, but offer accounts of these conditions at length, using the subjects' own words whenever possible.

Chapter 3 - Methodology: A Qualitative Approach

The opening chapters of this thesis introduced the research questions and theoretical focus. Chapter 1 presented the case for investigating the process of social and spatial integration of the urban poor by considering two objectives. The first was to investigate the life experiences of poor people and their degree of social and spatial urban integration. In particular, the following questions were raised: what is the influence of the personal and familial history of the residents on the urban process of social and spatial integration; what are the characteristics and circumstances of the everyday life of the urban poor in the precarious settlements and how can the poor try to alleviate their poverty and become integrated in the fabric of society? Second, the thesis argued for a fuller understanding of state action with regard to the production of territories of poverty. In particular, we need to know the following: how state action affects the everyday lives of the urban poor; how the state, by means of its agents, perceives and deals with the residents in the precarious settlements and what is the impact of the state on the production of territories of poverty. This Chapter discusses how a research methodology was constructed to evaluate these objectives in the context of Maceió. The Chapter provides a conceptual discussion of methodology, an explanation about the choice of a qualitative approach, and maps a shift from initial methodological ideas to the eventual arrival at a research design in the field. The Chapter evaluates the final design and identifies its strengths and weaknesses.

3.1   Qualitative Research Design

My principal interest in looking at how social exclusion and spatial segregation were related to state action and social practices was to appreciate the viewpoint of the individual. My personal interest in the topic was to understand the much talked about *right to the city* through the eyes of those to whom this right is denied. The deliberate emphasis on the individual and his/her perceptions and social practices, including an interest in mobility and social organisation, suggested that a qualitative approach

would be most appropriate. Under conditions of poverty, my motivation was not to define or measure poverty, but rather to analyse how people understood those conditions materially and socially, how they adapted to them and how these conditions were perceived to be the consequence of state action or inaction in real-life circumstances. This motivation was thus designed to prompt an appreciation of the diversity of individual social experience rather than consider poverty as a largely homogeneous characteristic of discrete neighbourhoods, a view that often emerges from statistically-based approaches. When devising my original research focus, I believed that this diversity might be a way of exploiting social and spatial interrelations inside and outside the communities. This applied, for example, to their relation to micro location, environmental conditions, and the quality of public and private spaces; in short, it involved a scale of spatial analysis that cannot be found in the official sources.

The methodological challenge was how to capture these micro movements, and show how locally generated processes of identity-based social segregation combine with other scales of connectivity, including the local, regional and national. Social and spatial connections operate on a number of different scales and in ways that may be contradictory. Isolation, the distance from the city centre, and the low visibility of communities among some departments of the state can influence social perceptions and practices. What can be regarded as vertical relationships, however, (for example with social movements or with the state through its institutions, planners and politicians, and with the labour market), might involve a high degree of connectivity and affect the way communities are seen and view their surroundings. Internally, horizontal connections, with the family, with neighbours and local leaders can strengthen patterns of segregation or may alternatively represent a space for opportunity, autonomy, and equality.

Social practices and their spatial form at the level of the individual, require an awareness of what I call the *daily round*. The daily round, as a theoretical-empirical category is essential to understand the processes of social integration and segregation experienced by individuals. The daily round captures a sense of how macro-scale state policies may affect day-to-day life in the micro-space of the family or

community. A concern with the individual and the daily round made an ethnographic perspective possible by using a number of suggestive techniques, including life stories, participative observation, interviews with key informants, focus groups, photography and visual research methods. Here, I outline the qualities of these techniques, although not all of them were subsequently employed in the fieldwork.

3.1.1   The Case for Ethnographic Techniques

A first and useful means to explore the interaction between the social and spatial, and become sensitive to the temporality of the daily round, is through the employment of life stories. According to Schwandt (1997), a life story is a generic name for a diversity of approaches centred on the generation, study, and presentation of an individual's experiences over time. The methodology presumes that human acts can best be understood from the accounts and perceptions of the people implicated, and thus the focus is on an individual's subjective meaning and experience of life. Because most qualitative inquiries assume that the subjective world of experience is constituted inter-subjectively, the life story approaches seek to link the private and the public, the personal and the social, through subjective perspectives linked to meanings, definitions, concepts, and practices (Chanfrault-Duchet 1991; Creswell 1994; Atkinson 1998).[22]

The use of life stories, as an appropriate strategy of inquiry, stems from the need to balance individual histories with social-historical contexts. Members of different social groups construct different histories and the ways in which they differ can be important in obtaining a more complete view of daily life. Here, it is necessary to appreciate two points. First, life stories favour the reality of what is *experienced* by the storyteller: the reality of a life story refers to what is real to the storyteller. Thus life stories do not represent exact accounts of a reality of the world outside the self: rather, they offer particular interpretations of the world and as such, are not subject to

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[22] Implicit in the methodology is the decision to work across scales, from the individual, the family, organisations and the community (defined in spatial terms). The research therefore is endowed with a certain methodological individualism, a belief that in principle all social phenomena can be reduced analytically to the level of individuals (Morais and Ratton Jr. 2005:130).

proof (Bertaux and Kohli 1984; Miller 2000). Second, life stories are always embedded in the socio-historical: the particular voice in a life story can only be understood within a larger context.

A second technique, participative observation, regards direct firsthand eyewitness accounts of daily social action as crucial to 'answering the classic fieldwork question - what's going on here?' (Schwandt 1997:106). Ideally, participant observation incorporates the idea of the active participation of the researcher and the person being researched, thereby lessening the distinction of 'the location of power in the research process' (Cornwall and Jewkes 1995:1667). Participation allows for locally defined priorities and perspectives to be brought into the research design, by offering an opportunity to empower the subject while conducting research into their daily lives. Observation gives opportunities for the researcher to identify non-verbal cues and gauge reactions to specific events as these unfold rather than through reflection in an interview or later discussion (Cook 1997).

Third, as a way of counterbalancing a vision that was solely centred on the individual within the settlements, it was decided to collect life stories together with semi-structured interviews of governmental institutions and NGO technical staff and policy makers, leaders of social movements and university researchers. The aim was to understand the link between the viewpoints of these professionals and the basis (theoretical and empirical) of their work with the precarious settlements, community organisations and social and spatial segregation. In significant ways, these professionals hold a power over the settlements, even in the absence of state interventions for example, and have both a practical and normative influence on the lives of the residents.

Fourth, it was also thought useful to supplement the interviews and life stories with Focus Group discussions, as a more active and dynamic method to gather opinions on the changing circumstances of their daily lives. Focus Groups allow people to become involved directly with the research process and to engage critically in discussions, when prompted by the researcher. In an ideal scenario, Focus Groups should 'have a life of their own' with spontaneous discussion being most likely to be

stimulated when points of disagreement are identified (Morgan 1997; Bloor *et al* 2000). In line with the general methodological standpoint of the research, a Focus Group allows a variety of viewpoints to be forwarded rather than assuming there is a consensus of opinion between all the planners and politicians or that all the residents of the precarious settlements have the same view and attitudes. In this particular research, people were invited to a Focus Group meeting after the life story interviews had been completed, the purpose of which was to follow up on themes that emerged from the individual meetings. It was hoped that people would recognise the contrast between their individual and group experience, and feel encouraged to justify the ideas put forward individually in a group setting.

The concern with spatial aspects of everyday social practice opened the possibility of a fifth technique, the use of visual methods. Visualisations provide opportunities for people to explore, analyse and represent perceptions in their own terms, facilitating rather than replacing discussion (Cornwall and Jewkes 1995). Two kinds of visual experiments were selected which would be relatively easy to carry out and would not require expensive material. First, the settlement participants would be provided with disposable cameras so they could represent their daily lives pictorially and were encouraged to lay emphasis on the changes that had taken place since the beginning of the settlement occupation. Second, it was decided to apply a Thematic Apperception Test (TAT). The TAT consists of 31 pictures that depict a variety of social and interpersonal situations. The subject is asked to tell a story about each picture. The original purpose of the TAT was to reveal the underlying dynamics of the subject's personality, relationships and social situations, such as internal conflicts, dominant drives and interests, motives, the need for achievement, power, and intimacy, and problem-solving abilities (Cramer 1996; Dana 2000; Teglasi 2001). TAT is a technique widely used in behavioural and social psychology, and if suitable adapted, seemed to me a useful way to explore the meaning of narratives and reveal the individual social relations in this research.[23] According to Cramer (1996),

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[23] TAT is a systematic approach to storytelling that offers an insight into the psychological reality of each individual. There is little reference to the use of TAT in the assessment of cultural and cross-cultural issues with individual effects in areas such as immigration, familial life, language, acculturation, ethnic identity and gender conflicts. One example in the research was the use of TAT to elicit people's

the TAT production can be considered as reflections of a storyteller's life story. This close relation with life stories and its psycho-cultural approach suggested that it might be possible to apply the technique in this research study because of its emphasis on the experience of poverty that is an overall part of individual nature and a multicultural facet of Brazilian society.

3.2   Research Steps

The research process was broken down into three main phases: planning, data collection and analysis.

3.2.1   Planning and Design

The research was planned over two years during which time I undertook research training at LSE, completed a literature review and conducted two preliminary field visits, in Rio de Janeiro in April 2002 and Maceió in May 2003. During this phase, the research proposal was refined and the methodological building blocks adapted to local circumstances and objectives. While these changes were made *on paper*, two short trips to Brazil helped to clarify the practicality and demand for the research. During a trip to Rio de Janeiro, I visited the Fundação Centro de Defesa dos Direitos Humanos Bento Rubião [Bento Rubião Foundation for the Defence of Human Rights], an NGO that works with urban housing. The aim of the visit was to validate some of my early assumptions. I held informal conversations with a team of social workers and an architect, and paid visits to three projects: *Mutirão* de Ipiíba in São Gonçalo, Herbert de Souza Cooperative (then under construction) and the *Conjunto*

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perceptions and assessments of different environmental features and agricultural practices. Nazarea *et al* (1998) outline a method and a case study based on an applied ethno-ecological approach which involved adapting the TAT pictures of scenes around the Manupali watershed in Bukidnon, Philippines. The informants' stories were assessed on the basis of dominant themes to identify indicators of sustainability and quality of life relevant for different ethnic, gender, and age groups. According to the authors, these local sensitive indicators diverge considerably from externally defined indicators and fluctuate systematically as a function of socio-economic and socio-demographic parameters. Taking this into account, relevant cultural indicators can help shape development trajectories that local people can identify with and benefit from in the short- and long-term.

Colmeia in Campo Grande.[24] At the Mutirão de Ipiíba, I interviewed five residents and in the two other projects, I held informal conversations with a community agent and a resident respectively. In Maceió, I visited three settlements, Vila Brejal, Vila Emater II and Conjunto Denisson Menezes, that I thought would be suitable candidates for field research because of their apparent spatial and social segregation. I was familiar with the three settlements since I had formerly worked at Vila Brejal and Conjunto Denisson Menezes as consultant for both a World Vision project and for the Secretaria do Trabalho e Ação Social de Alagoas [SETAS, Department for Work and Social Action in Alagoas]. My work was short term and related to housing issues. Vila Emater II had intrigued me because the settlement consisted of waste pickers, and in Fortaleza a number of projects on which I worked involved waste picker settlements, but also because I had been involved with a potential EU-funded NGO housing project to work in Vila Emater II. Unfortunately, the project never got started due to a lack of social organisation in the settlement at the time. When I visited the settlements, I took some observational notes and collected maps and documents.

These early discussions and visits were useful in the subsequent design of interview topic guides. I realised the project and methodology would need to incorporate six particular points. First, the life stories were intrinsically bound up with mobility and a non-progressive and non-linear trajectory in the urban environment. Second, there are various reasons for the high degree of mobility and it is a rational choice for each resident. Third, the space as well as the social practices is more important than I had believed it to be to bring about integration. Fourth, the state housing policies seemed indifferent to the events described in the life stories. Fifth, the individual and collective style of living, and in particular, the difficulties with neighbours, and prejudices found both inside and outside of the precarious settlements, were important issues that led to discussion. Sixth, I realised that there was a need to understand the complex relations between urban professionals and community associations, and between urban professionals and families, as well as the tensions

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[24] *Mutirã*o means mutual help or collective effort in carrying out a task such as building houses or working on the land. The name Conjunto means *whole* but roughly corresponds to a housing estate in English.

between the social and technical areas within the urban agencies (NGOs or state agency).

With these considerations in mind, the Interview Guides drawn up in London were revised several times. They needed to be sufficiently flexible to allow the themes of interest to surface but at the same time to be consistent to allow me to gather information on similar themes. It was decided to structure the Guide in two parts: the first dealing with the chronological sequence of the major events in the life cycle and the second starting off from a discussion of daily life: the *comings and goings* of the daily round in the settlement. Before the 2003 field visit, I had believed that 30 interviews would be sufficient, but on reflection, it was clear that capturing the diversity of social practices would require a larger number of life histories. Eventually, I chose not to fix an *a priori* target number but to let the quantitative ambition be dictated to by the openness of participants to the investigation.

3.2.2   Collecting Data - the Fieldwork

Following the Maceió visit, I was able to select the settlements in which to conduct the research. It was decided that the settlements being researched should have different physical and social characteristics so that they could illustrate the wide range of situations that can be found in the same city. Moreover, settlements were chosen which have experienced some form of public or private intervention or other forms of support. The settlements should have to face the threat or even the reality of displacement/eviction, and be considered generally to be socially and spatially segregated. Each settlement should possess some kind of community organisation or leadership, in order to gain a point of contact and relate discussions about the resistance of the settlement to removal and the assumed exclusion of their everyday lives. It was decided that the three settlements should have been formed or consolidated during the 1980s, a period when Maceió grew significantly and there was a return to political democracy.

From the initial field visit, it was decided to conduct research in three sites - Vila Brejal, located on the edge of the Mundaú Lagoon, Conjunto Denisson Menezes, located to the North of city in a peripheral area, and Vila Emater II, a settlement on

the waste dump close to the sea. However, during the first few days of fieldwork, scheduled from October 2003 to March 2004, a fourth settlement was visited, Cidade de Lona, which was under threat of imminent eviction.[25] I had previously visited this settlement several times before in the course of planning an intended NGO-State government housing project that never got off the ground. Cidade de Lona consisted of 800 families occupying a site which was undergoing a legal dispute and subject to a third eviction order in the settlement's short history. These conditions convinced me to substitute Cidade de Lona for Vila Brejal, even though the settlement was located close to my second study site, Conjunto Denisson Menezes. This Conjunto was a settlement formed as a result of a project carried out by Maceió Municipality with resources and project details provided by the Federal Government to attend to the needs of families squatting on public land. The Conjunto Denisson Menezes is an official project which is regarded by the local government as a *Best Practice* and represents a *Day After* the formal land conquest in the present study. The third settlement was Vila Emater II, where the families lived in seriously deprived conditions and where the state appeared to be largely absent. All three of the selected settlements were formed during the last 15 years on the perimeter of the city.[26] Table 3.1 provides a sketch of the characteristics of the original three settlements (including Vila Brejal) and the final three study sites (including Cidade de Lona) and their relative physical locations are shown on Map 3.1.

Prior to the interviews in the settlements, a sequence of visits was made to the Alagoas section of Central dos Movimentos Populares [CMP, Central Committee of the People's Movements] which brings together the constituents of the União dos Movimentos de Moradia de Alagoas [UMM-AL, United Housing Movement in Alagoas].[27] In the meetings with the leadership, an attempt was made to grasp the

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[25] Cidade de Lona means *the Canvas City*.

[26] When appropriate the abbreviations CL, VL and DM will be used for Cidade de Lona, Vila Emater II and Conjunto Denisson Menezes respectively.

[27] The CMP is a national entity of different social movements that has its roots in the fights for better living conditions for the population and for the democratisation of Brazilian society in the 1970s. The CMP forwards a socialist project that is broadly sympathetic to the politics of the PT and other Left parties, the PCB, PC do B, PV and PSB. The UMM-AL is the Alagoas section of the União Nacional por Moradia Popular [UNMP, National Union for People's Housing] that brings together 150

experience and the discourse of the grassroots organisations with regard to the issues of housing, eviction and social and spatial segregation. As a way to clarify the aims of my research intentions I collected the life story of the person in charge of the CMP/UMM-AL, one of the most active urban community leaders in Maceió. We had previously worked together on various projects and this experience served as my *credentials* and allowed me unrestricted access to information held by the CMP that is usually confidential.

Although my relationship with the social movements in Maceió took place in the 1980s when I was an architecture and urban planning undergraduate student, after my work at Cearah Periferia NGO in Fortaleza, I established close ties with urban social movements at a national level. During my stay in Fortaleza, whenever I could, I tried to include Maceió (social movements, academics, state planners and politicians) in projects, capacity building, and research. When I returned to Maceió after five years in Fortaleza, I built up a closer relationship with local movements including the UMM-AL in particular due to its emphasis on housing. This involvement *opened the doors* to social movements and their organisational work. The UMM-AL was of great assistance for the research in Conjunto Denisson Menezes and Cidade de Lona, two communities where the UMM-AL has carried out educational projects and has given political/organisational support.[28] The UMM-AL helped me to identify other social organisations that dealt with housing in Maceió, the Movimento em Defesa dos Favelados [MDF, Movement in Support of the Dwellers of Shanty Towns]. An interview was carried out with its leader. In the third settlement Vila Emater II, access was made easier through the assistance of an NGO called Centro de Educação Ambiental São Bartolomeu [CEASB, St. Bartholomew Environmental Education Centre] which introduced me to one of the leaders of the Associação dos Moradores da Vila Emater II [ASMOVE, Vila Emater II Residents'

housing movements in 17 Brazilian states. The UNMP is a more independent housing movement based in São Paulo where in the 1990s the Uruguayan idea of autogestão comunitária [community self management] of housing was introduced. There are also strong connections with the PT.

[28] In addition, I participated in preparing two projects for CMP which helped them to obtain resources for capacity building and training activities for leaders.

Association], and enabled me to have access to information, documents, and maps during my research.

On the basis of these contacts, I met the community leaders in the three sites. I had already talked to the leader of the Conjunto Denisson Menezes at the headquarters of UMM-AL. In a short time it proved possible to organise and begin the interviews, with the second and third sites to be defined as the research progressed.

Map 3.1: Location of the Three Research Sites
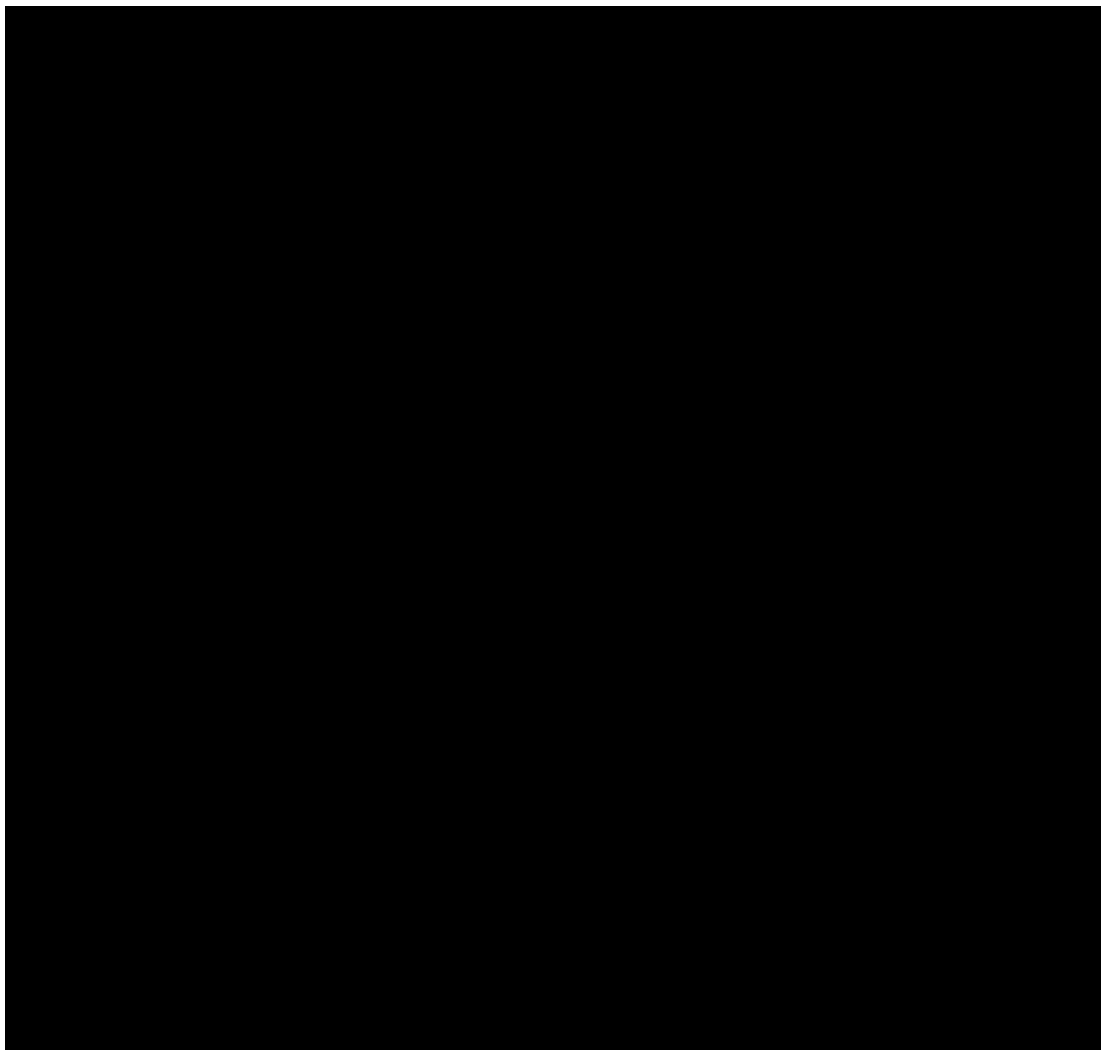
Source: Maceió, Prefeitura de (2000) *The Official Basis of Cartography.* Maceió: Maplan.

Settlements	Vila Brejal	Conjunto Denisson Menezes	Cidade de Lona	Vila Emater II
Location	Central, surrounding Mundaú Lagoon	20 km from centre, behind the prison	25 km from centre, on BR 101 highway	12 km from centre beside the Garbage Dump
Origin	Through clandestine squatting over a period of years	Set up by the Maceió City Hall with resources from the Habitar Brasil/BID project, to house families that had occupied a piece of land with the support of UMM-AL[29]	By means of successive squatting and evictions with the support of the UMM-AL, on land belonging to COHAB	By means of clandestine squatting over a period of years
Population[30]	16,410	2,930	4,000	1,250
Degree of consolidation - years of occupation	Squatting began in the colonial period with sharp increase in the 1970s and 80s caused by a crisis in the sugar industry	Effective occupation was completed over a period of four years but the last houses were only built in 2005	Squatting began in 1995 then there was an eviction order and right after that a new occupation, which persists up to today	Since the 1970s with a considerable increase in population during the 1990s
Density	High, since there were few areas not subject to flooding	Medium high, as there has been a division into lots and subdividing them is forbidden	Medium, as there has been a division into lots and the terrain is spacious	High, as people have occupied all the space available
Tendency	Replaced for other purposes	Consolidation	Eviction	Consolidation or Eviction
State or NGO intervention	State: Paving of roads, removal, construction of housing schemes NGOs: child education schemes, improvements to the houses.	State: urbanisation[31], building houses and community equipment[32] as well as social monitoring	UMM-AL together with the University organised work on nutrition guidance and with the financial support of PET[33] organised a literacy training course for adults	State: PETI grants NGOs: support for the waste pickers' organisation, cultural projects, construction of a crèche
Social Organisation	Various residents' associations tied to political parties	Resident's association at present run by a vote-seeking political agent	There is no association but the UMM-AL runs a political organisation	Resident's association and COOPLUM - pickers' co-operative
Research conditions: degree of access and sources of information	Easy access, community very scattered and reputed to be violent. Residents assoc., NGO WV, little inform. in public bodies	Easy access, concentrated community. UMM-AL, Municipal Housing Department, Federal Savings Bank - CEF	Easy access but community reputed to be dangerous. Mission Report of the National Reporter on the Right to Housing, UMM-AL	Easy access but very precarious sanitary conditions. NGO São Bartolomeu, SLUM[34]

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[29] União dos Movimentos de Moradia de Alagoas - UMM-AL [United Housing Movement in Alagoas].

[30] The population figures are based on an estimated average of 5 inhabitants to each house.

[31] Includes paving, drainage, and sewage systems, electricity and water supply.

[32] School (basic education), health centre, public squares and sports grounds, a community centre and police station.

[33] Federal Programme for supporting trainee workers.

[34] Superintendência de Limpeza Urbana de Maceió – SLUM [Department for Urban Hygiene in Maceió].

After evaluating the first interviews held at Conjunto Denisson Menezes, I concluded that the Guide was too long and repetitive, and increased the length of each interview to over one hour, which the respondents found excessive. The Interview Guides were improved and in their final form concentrated on six topics dealing with the major events in the life of each interviewee, in particular, the following: (i) birth, studies, dreams, marriage, struggle for survival; (ii) raising children, relations with neighbours, associations and network of social relations; (iii) the daily round, displacement, eviction, migration, adapting to places; (iv) house construction, structure of ownership, segregation; (v) public policies and the job situation; and (vi) review of lives and future prospects.

These topics underlay the Interview Guides that are set out in Box 3.1 but were applied in a semi-structured manner to allow for the reconstruction of life stories in accordance with the wishes of the participants. In addition to the subjects mentioned above, and depending on the person being interviewed, some more general themes were also discussed such as: poverty and wealth, vulnerability; rights and responsibilities; social networks and solidarity; relations with the state; risks and violence (the police, gangs, the state); the family; prejudice and stigma; thoughts about conditions before and after the Lula government.

Box 3.1: Guide for Interviewing Residents

Name, address, age

A.   Major events in the life cycle

1st phase: birth, family situation, dwelling place, geographical origin, problems and joys of childhood.
- Where were you born?
- What was life like with your parents and brothers and sisters?
- What was the house where you lived like?
- What was your family's social and economic situation?

2nd phase: schooling, religion, plans and dreams.
- What was your life like in school? What was the most important thing you learned in school?
- Do you practice any religion? What difference does it make to your life?
- What were your plans and dreams?

3rd phase: marriages, political participation, struggle for survival and for housing, family structure.
- Who lives with you in your home?
- Who works in your home? When did you begin to work?
- How does your family support itself?
- How did your struggle for a house begin?
- What is your relationship with politicians or political parties?
- What kind of relationship is there between the government and the association/leaders?

4th phase: raising the children, family life, relationship with neighbours, the role of the associations, network of social relations.
- Tell me a little about your children, your joys and your sorrows, worries, and the kind of support you are given.
- Have any of your children died or had a serious illness or suffered from some kind of handicap?
- Do any of your relatives live near you?
- What are your relations like with your family and with the neighbours?
- Do you think that there is prejudice against people who live in a neighbourhood like yours?
- Do you belong to any group within the neighbourhood? Which groups?
- Do you think that you live in a community?
- Who are the leaders? Do you like the way they act?
- Is there an association? Do you participate in it? Why? In what way?
- What is your relationship with the leaders like?
- Do you think that the association helps with the development of the community?

B.   Day to day life, the daily comings and goings of life in the slums.

1st theme: life in the neighbourhood.
- What are the most serious social problems in the neighbourhood?
- What is your daily round in the neighbourhood like?
- How do you feel about living in this neighbourhood?
- Are people selling their houses? Who is selling them? Why? How much for? Where will they live afterwards?
- Have you ever been the victim of violence? Has any member of your family? Are you afraid?
- What do you think about the police?

2nd theme: evictions; removals; migration: motives, expectations, adapting to places.
- Where have you lived before in Maceió? Why did you move from these various places?
- Would you like to move away from here? Why?
- Why do people move?
- Are you afraid of being evicted? How do you feel about not having a title deed to the house/the land?

3rd theme: construction of the houses, quality of the space, location, and security.
- Observations on the quality of the building.
- Is the space available enough for your family?
- How many rooms are there in your house?
- What do you think about the location of the neighbourhood?
- How far is it to your workplace or to the school?
- Do you feel safe living here?

4th theme: the quality of urban services, rights, public policies: in what way has the state been a help or a hindrance?
- Classify the quality of the following urban services: water supply, sewage, drainage, rubbish collection, electricity, health and education.
- What is the solution to the problem of poverty and the lack of a place to live in the city?
- What is your opinion of Government actions? With Lula as President, has anything improved?
- What are your rights as a citizen? Are your rights being respected?

5th theme: present and future.
- How would you classify your social and economic position?
- Do you feel safe about the future?
- Is your present life better or worse than before? Why?
- What life would you like to have ten years from now? Where do you think you will be then?
- How do you imagine this place will be ten years from now?

In addition to this Guide, another was prepared for interviewing professionals working on urban issues, with questions on their personal trajectory and included questions on their professional work with the settlements (Box 3.2). The life stories with the urban professionals raised a different set of conditions. In contrast to the considerable emotion experienced by the residents of precarious settlements in telling their life stories, there was a resistance on the part of the urban professionals to recount their lives and expand on meanings. Nevertheless, it was possible to obtain ten life histories from the planners and urban technical staff. Life stories were also collected from two university teachers; three members of the technical staff of the Municipal Housing Department (an architect, a social assistant, and an engineer); two architects of the now defunct Companhia de Habitação Popular do Estado de Alagoas [COHAB-AL, Alagoas State Social Housing Company], the Planning sub-Secretary of Maceió; the technical staff member responsible for the Orçamento Cidadão [Citizens' Budget][35] and a member of the technical staff of an NGO.

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[35] The project presupposed the direct participation of the population in defining the investments to be made by City Hall, so-called *participatory budgeting*, similar to the PT experiences mentioned on Chapter 1. This interview, although it did not deal directly with the question of housing, provided important elements for understanding how decision-making and how public policies are elaborated and put into practice in Maceió and the *space* for participation.

<div align="right">Name, address, age</div>

A.   Major events in the life cycle

1st phase: birth, family situation, dwelling place, geographical origin, problems and joys of childhood.
- Where were you born?
- What was life like with your parents and brothers and sisters?
- What was the house where you lived like?
- What was your family's social and economic situation?

2nd phase: schooling, religion, plans and dreams.
- What was your life like in school? What was the most important thing you learned in school?
- Do you practice any religion? What difference does it make to your life?
- What were your plans and dreams?

3rd phase: marriages, political participation, struggle for survival and for housing, family structure.
- Who lives with you in your home?
- Who works in your home? When did you begin to work?
- How does your family support itself?
- How did your struggle for a house begin?
- What is your relationship with politicians or political parties?

4th phase: raising the children, family life, relationship with neighbours, the role of the associations, network of social relations.
- Tell me a little about your children, your joys and your sorrows, worries, and the support you are given.
- Have any of your children died or had a serious illness or suffered from some kind of handicap?
- Do any of your relatives live near you?
- What are your relations like with your family and with the neighbours?
- Do you think that there is prejudice against people who live in slums?
- Do you belong to any group within the neighbourhood? Which groups?
- Do you think that you live in a community?
- Who are the leaders? Do you like the way they act?
- Is there an association? Do you participate in it? Why? In what way?
- What is your relationship with the leaders like?
- Do you think that the association helps with the development of the community?

B.   Day to day life and working in the slums.

1st theme: violence.
- Have you ever been the victim of violence? Has any member of your family? Are you afraid?
- What do you think about the police?

2nd theme: evictions, removals, migration: motives, expectations, adapting to places.
- Where have you lived before in Maceió?
- Why do people move? What do you think about people that sell houses that were given to them by the state?
- What is your opinion of eviction?

3rd theme: construction and location of social housing projects, public housing policies and slums.
- What is your opinion of housing policies for low-income families?
- What, in your opinion would be the most important aspect of a public policy on slums?
- What should low-income housing scheme houses be like?
- Could you comment on the location of the poorest neighbourhoods in the city?
- Which slums do you know in Maceió?
- What is your opinion about invasions/squatting?
- How does the integration of the slums into the urban fabric take place?
- What do you think about the question of homogeneity and heterogeneity in the neighbourhoods?

4th theme: working with slums, NGOs, public policies: in what way has the government been a help or a hindrance?
- What is the solution to the problem of poverty and the lack of a place to live in the city?
- What has been the impact of your work on the slums?
- What is your opinion of Government actions? With Lula as President, has anything improved?
- What is your opinion of the projects of the NGOs?
- What reasons led you to work in the area of low-income housing?

5th theme: present and future.
- How would you classify your social and economic position?
- Do you feel safe about the future?
- Is your present life better or worse than before? Why?
- What life would you like to have ten years from now? Where do you think you will be then?
- How do you imagine this place will be ten years from now?

My fieldwork lasted six months, which was the longest that my sponsors, CAPES, would allow. Because of the limited time available for the life story interviews, which took about one month per settlement, I began to think about collecting 75 life histories, 25 from each settlement. I attempted to form a varied sample of people from each settlement for the interviews. In this task, the leaders or key informants were helpful, especially in finding people who had been the victims of repeated evictions. Once the interviews began, more suggestions of interviewees were added. These were passed on by the respondents or through conversations as I walked around the settlements. I deliberately conducted some interviews at random by analysing the settlement map and selecting people who had disagreed with the association leadership. This proved worthwhile as, in Conjunto Denisson Menezes for example, the leader (a member of the UMM-AL) pointed out people who lived in her street and were her supporters. In every case, the interviews were conducted without the presence of anyone else that might embarrass or influence the

interviewee although in a few cases close family members were nearby some of the time.

When I arrived at each settlement, my local support person[36] had usually already contacted an individual to be interviewed and given his/her assurance with regard to the work that I was carrying out. This established a pattern of solidarity and cooperation from the beginning. At the outset of a meeting, I would introduce myself as a researcher and inform the person on the use that would be made of the information and the need to record the interview. I asked to take a photo of each interviewee and they were given a copy of this at the end of my stay in the settlement. The interview started with an invitation to the interviewee to prepare an account of their life story (using a timeline) with special attention being given to their happiest and saddest moments. This would then serve as a visual support for recalling dates and events during the course of the discussions. Although I had an Interview Guide, the meetings were unstructured, and this meant that the interviewees were asked to tell their life stories with occasional prompts when the discussion verged on a topic on the guide.

In all the three settlements, conducting the research was restricted by practical considerations. Increases in the levels of violence in recent years have created a tense environment and imposed restrictions on the times and locations for discussions. The hard living conditions of the participants, including a lack of food and jobs, also influenced the reliability and degree of collaboration. In some cases, it was necessary to wait for days for a particular interview because the potential participant had lost his or her source of income and would not be in a position to talk about life but had to get out and get a job or secure another means to survive. The particular conditions of each settlement also affected the research. The first 25 life stories were undertaken in Conjunto Denisson Menezes. During these interviews, it was clear that people had difficulty speaking about their own lives so I decided to concentrate on constructing

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[36] At Conjunto Denisson Menezes I received support from Maria José (Zezé), a local leader and member of the UMM-AL Board. In Cidade de Lona my local person was Luzenira (Lú), a local leader, and in Vila Emater II due to difficulties making contact with the leader, who worked nights as a picker, I was helped by Fabiana who became an interviewee.

a more simple biography. I also abandoned the idea of distributing cameras for a visual exercise as people found the idea complicated and it threatened to undermine the confidence of the interviewees in the research generally. The interviews in the next settlement, Cidade de Lona, posed additional problems. There was an ongoing threat of eviction which made meetings especially sensitive; people cried and often seemed to be confused especially about dates and places. Moreover, the interviews were interrupted by the heavy rains that flooded the area, tore down the canvases used for housing, increased respiratory diseases and led to the presence of insects. All of these conditions distracted the attention of the residents and it was not feasible to continue with the interviews. Finally, in Vila Emater II, the visits were affected by the conditions of the garbage dump, which attracted large numbers of insects that on a couple of occasions disrupted the interviews.

In two of the settlements studied, Conjunto Denisson Menezes and Cidade de Lona, after the interviews had been conducted I held Focus Group meetings where the preliminary results were examined and people raised questions and discussed issues of community organisation and settlement improvements. There was a good participation of the interviewees in these meetings (18 out of 25 in Conjunto Denisson Menezes and 15 out of 25 in Cidade de Lona). The discussions at Conjunto Denisson Menezes were mainly about the problems of the location of the settlement and the lack of participation by and confidence in the local leaders. In Cidade de Lona the debate was principally around the land situation and the high level of violence. Participants at both sites expressed their satisfaction at being part of a Focus Group and being interviewed. Some stated that participating in the research was one of the few opportunities they had ever had to talk about their difficulties and be regarded as citizens. In Cidade de Lona one person observed:

> 'I liked to be interviewed, we that live in a canvas shack feel more accepted by society. Someone came here and interview us inside a canvas shack, living with us and sharing our daily suffering, with the temperature, the lack of electricity power, lack of job and the prejudice against us from our own neighbours. We feel valued; it was great, very good!'

The only negative aspect of the Focus Groups was the tendency for leaders to monopolise the speech. On a couple of occasions I intervened to allow everyone

present to participate and the participants had the opportunity to share what was being said individually in the interviews with each other.

There were more dramatic deviations from the original plans of the fieldwork with regard to participant observation.[37] Time constraints in the field and the desire to capture the diversity of experiences from a range of communities, each with complex social and political contexts, meant that direct observation was employed in place of participant observation. A series of walks around each settlement enabled me to assess the quality and the collective and individual uses made of public and private spaces. With regard to visualising and spatially locating the settlements being studied, digital photographs were taken of the settlements as well as of the people interviewed. Photography was thus used as part of the observation process (Prosser 1998) with the physical appearance of the settlements, including streets and shacks, infrastructure, scenes of daily life and meetings all being noted. The photographs became an essential part of the research as a record of social images of the settlements.[38] The photographs also proved valuable to capture situations too complex to be described with words, such as the suffering shown on the faces of the interviewees and the poor conditions of the settlements. These momentary images, frozen in time and space, were useful as a means to remember an experience or as an aide memoire to lend significance to the history of a photo. The reality thus becomes more poignant, the day-to-day life more evident, and allows a close-up view and interpretation of the linked life stories. Allied to this technique, observations were recorded in a field diary with personal remarks on how I interpreted the daily round and whatever was happening in the city on a particular day. These annotations provided useful talking points with the interviewees and leaders.

Although life histories and other ethnographic procedures constitute the main material for the thesis, it also relied on other sources such as the following: reports and documents of the state or NGO projects, articles published in the local newspapers and statistics supplied by the Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística [IBGE, Brazilian Institute for Geography and Statistics]. The departments

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[37] Participation did consist of being an occasional *go-between*, passing information to different institutions and people in the communities.
[38] All the photographs were taken by myself, unless indicated otherwise.

of Architecture and Urbanism, and of Geography, at the Universidade Federal de Alagoas [UFAL, Federal University of Alagoas] were useful as was the Núcleo Temático da Assistência Social em Alagoas [NUTAS, Action and Research Group for Social Assistance in Alagoas] a university research group, which in 1998 carried out studies into social exclusion in Maceió. The lack of empirical data with regard to the integration of the urban poor is evident in Maceió; however there are few records of previous state actions and records have been lost with the demise of the Banco Nacional da Habitação [BNH, National Housing Bank] and Companhia de Habitação Popular de Alagoas [COHAB-AL, Alagoas State Social Housing Company]. The bodies that have replaced them, the Caixa Econômica Federal [CEF, Federal Savings Bank] and the Secretaria Municipal de Habitação Popular e Saneamento [SMHPS, Municipal Social Housing and Sanitation Department] have few, described accounts of their projects and programmes although the CEF is the largest funder of urban development activities nationally and in Maceió and obtains finance from the Inter-American Development Bank [IDB], among other sources.

Several visits were made to the SMHPS which is responsible for administering Conjunto Denisson Menezes and provided some general data on housing in Maceió and specific data on the Habitar Brasil BID - Conjunto Denisson Menezes project.[39] Visits were also made to Secretaria Municipal de Planejamento e Desenvolvimento [SMPD, Municipal Planning and Development Department] and Secretaria de Estado do Planejamento e do Orçamento de Alagoas [SEPLAN-AL, Alagoas State Planning and Budgeting Department]. However, the Alagoas Planning Department no longer deals with urban and housing issues as a specialised agency, the Agência Alagoana de Habitação e Urbanismo [AGAHU, Alagoas Agency of Housing and Urban Development] was set up in September 2001. Other organisations were visited including the Superintendência Municipal de Controle do Convívio Urbano [SMCCU, Municipal Department for the Management of Urban Living] and the

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[39] Habitar Brasil BID is a loan granted by IDB [Inter-American Development Bank] to finance a series of housing projects in different cities; include Maceió and consist of several activities. During my fieldwork, the Housing Department was in the process of drawing up the Terms of Reference for contracting of a company to undertake the Plano Habitacional da Cidade [Housing Plan for the City] and I was invited to assist with preparing the document.

Superintendência de Limpeza Urbana de Maceió [SLUM, Department for Urban Hygiene in Maceió], the agency responsible for the area of the Municipal Garbage Dump.

Finally, I interviewed the Public Prosecutor who was responsible for urban issues including evictions, displacement of families and irregularities pursuant to urban laws in Maceió.

Visits were also made to three NGOs that work in Maceió. Although none is involved directly with housing policies, they do carry out activities related to the social and economic development of vulnerable populations. The Vila Brejal Project, which works with communities on the shores of the Lagoon, supports children under ten through its educational activities. The Centro de Educação Ambiental São Bartolomeu [CEASB, St. Bartholomew Environmental Education Centre] works on environmental issues and organising the waste pickers that live in the Vila Emater II. CEASB acted as an important bridge for making contact with the leadership and families in Vila Emater II, and as a responsive gesture, I collaborated with them in the preparation of two projects.[40] The Pastoral da Favela is a social and pastoral service project run by the Catholic Church that seeks to offer support to slum residents, especially in emergency situations such as floods and landslides.[41] General issues regarding the public policies adopted for the urban poor were discussed with these technical and activist personnel as well as specific questions related to the settlements under study.

3.2.3   Analysing the Data

After the fieldwork, came the phase of tabulating the data with special emphasis being laid on the transcription of over 100 hours of taped interviews and shorter summaries of each interview containing detailed notes about the context. Altogether, 75 life stories were completed with the residents of the three settlements; 11 life

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[40] The first was a project for capacity building among the waste pickers in order to set up a co-operative organisation and the second a project for building houses financed by the Ministério das Cidades [Ministry of the Cities].

[41] For research on the Pastoral da Favela see Boran (1989), Puleo (1994), Gay (1999), and Serbin (2001).

stories with urban professionals and community leaders and 26 interviews with community leaders, directors of public bodies, the technical staff of NGOs, university teachers, and the public prosecutor. The focus meetings held in Conjunto Denisson Menezes and Cidade de Lona were also transcribed.

The first step of the data analysis process was to read the corpus of the transcriptions carefully several times, in order to become thoroughly familiar with it and able to identify features and patterns. Following this, an analysis of the life stories was undertaken in batches of 25, corresponding to each settlement. The material from the life stories was organised in such a way as to allow me to crosscheck similarities or contrasting features with local and national statistical data and with social studies available for Conjunto Denisson Menezes and the Vila Emater II, - these data had been the outcome of state and NGOs projects. On analysing the life histories, an attempt was made to establish a relationship between the life of the urban poor and the political, economic, and urban changes in Maceió over the last 20 years. In addition to this historical framework, each batch of interviews was analysed in the light of topics from the Interview Guides or new issues (as these became evident through the transcription process). These themes provide a flexible and instrumental *theoretical-practical* analytical framework, which is of great value in obtaining answers to the research questions. Analysis of the objectives of the research can be divided into 2 sections: a) social and spatial integration of the urban poor, and b) state action and the setting up of territories of poverty. Each area has 3 subdivisions that correspond to issues arising from the following research questions: a1) the personal and familial history; a2) the everyday experience of poverty; a3) social practices towards integration; b1) the impact of public policies on the urban poor; b2) methods, instruments and agents, and b3) production of urban space. See Table 3.2 for a summary of the main factors inherent in each of the areas investigated.

Table 3.2: Dimensions of the Analytical Framework

	a. Social and Spatial Integration of the Urban Poor
a1. Personal and Familial History	▪ Origins, family and education ▪ The formation of one's own family ▪ Demographic and social data.
a2. Everyday Experience of Poverty	▪ Economic activities: occupation, income level ▪ Living standards: health, education, security, and consumption ▪ Housing and environmental standards: housing, sanitation, transport, public spaces, land security ▪ Power relationships inside and outside the communities ▪ Vulnerability and risks: stock of assets ▪ Politics and citizenship ▪ Social links and solidarity ▪ Social representations and cultural meanings
a3. Social Practices towards Integration	▪ Mobility and inertia: search for work and housing ▪ Survival strategies and tactics ▪ Land occupation ▪ Vertical relationships: social movements, the labour market, state officials and other sectors of the urban population ▪ Horizontal connections: family, neighbours, local leaders ▪ Social organisation and political relationships ▪ Reactions to housing, social and urban policies ▪ Social, spatial and economic barriers to integration
	b. State' Action and the Setting Up of Territories of Poverty
b1. Impact of Public Policies on the Urban Poor	▪ Historical and spatial approach to housing and urban policies towards deprived settlements ▪ Pro-poor policies of social assistance and types of welfare schemes
b2. Methods, Instruments and Agents	▪ Theory and practice of urban planning and policies ▪ Politics of planning: finance, forms of legitimisation and political behaviour ▪ State officials: knowledge of the life of the urban poor, motivations and social representations
b3. Production of Urban Space	▪ Level of state presence in the precarious settlements ▪ Social and spatial cohesion or fragmentation: visibility or invisibility ▪ Structure of opportunities controlled by the state, the market and other institutional elements of society

The life stories provided a rich source of material but, frustratingly, much of the material was repetitious and this made it difficult to use in the empirical chapters. Although, to some extent, the chapters draw on all the life stories, it was decided to concentrate on around eight life stories that were in some way representative of the stories as a whole and to edit these down to summary length. As appropriate, shorter quotes from the discussions were used to illustrate specific themes or points. By contrast, different issues had to be dealt with in the case of the life stories collected

from the urban professionals. Their stories spoke less about their personal lives and more about professional practice. This allowed me to analyse the transcripts on the basis of the stances adopted towards the questions of spatial and social segregation - such as evictions and displacement, housing projects, the future of slums - as discussed in Chapter 4, which contextualizes the urban development of Maceió.[42] However, it proved difficult to delve into the more personal motivations and reflections arising from these themes.

3.3   Evaluation of the Research

Evaluating the results of the investigation process means analysing the methodological decisions made during the design, fieldwork, and analysis. I want to highlight *efficacy* (the objectives set against the results), and *efficiency* (the advantages and limitations of the methods), as the two criteria employed for a critical examination of my research. Overall, I believe the research proceeded with a good degree of efficacy because compared to the general points of departure that inspired the project (see Chapter 1), the design of methodology and field research involved a sharper focus on themes concerning social exclusion and spatial segregation. The adoption of ethnographic methods was helpful in that they allowed the research to be adapted to the issues raised by the participants. More material was collected in the research than could be analysed and this, in my view represents its least efficacious aspect. In part, however, the amount of material represents a deliberate policy which was to be in a position to pick out significant features from a diversity of social practices and a wide range of situations that under certain spatial conditions either hampered or improved the lives of the urban poor (as expressed through the perceptions and practices of people within urban space).

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[42]   As already indicated life stories were harder to gather from the urban professionals, perhaps due to a reluctance to open up to a stranger or poor prompts and a lack of forthrightness on my part when presented with a fairly senior government figure. By contrast, the semi-structured interviews worked well. The distance between interviewee and myself formed an appropriate context for asking relatively direct and impersonal questions. In the case of the university teachers and representatives of the legal system this distance was less obvious and the level of critical reflection from the interviewee that much greater.

The life stories form the central component of the field research. These provide an opportunity to understand individual situations that might seem incomprehensible from short and non-sequential conversations or a questionnaire format. The life stories also allow the researcher to have a possible view of the impact of the macro on the micro, here the individual participant, without the intervention of what I would call an *explanatory intermediary*; namely, an individual or organisation that interprets events and practices on behalf of others. By involving face-to-face interaction, the life stories also allow for an immediate *learning curve* to be employed so that an issue raised by a participant can be immediately explored or clarified. Overall, the life stories established a spirit of cooperation and solidarity, and the value of these was supplemented by the quality of contacts and discussions with the leaders or NGOs, and an interest on my part in listening to their stories, which led to an exchange of information and the conduct of subsequent Focus Groups.

Nevertheless, I am aware that arriving at a point of view is a sensitive matter since an engagement between a research participant and the researcher can take different forms. The dissimilarity of positions can be overcome partially by the adoption of three attitudes: (i) to take as much care as possible with interpretations, and constantly attempt to verify the validity of evidence through consultation with other sources;[43] (ii) being aware that however much effort is made, the option that has been adopted will impose some kind of constraint on the interviewee's ability to *produce* knowledge; and (iii) laying emphasis on the voice of the people even if this voice contradicts personal, practical and theoretical positions, and thus allow the urban poor to break their silence (usually imposed on the poor) and no longer be inhibited by their own organisations, allied NGOs, academics and agents of the state.

With regard to efficiency, there are, of course, limitations to the life story approach. Principally, these are that the subject matter was highly emotional - the need to talk about their own lives brought up sad memories to all of those interviewed and in

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[43] This can involve checking dates, locations and events, as well as other stories, in a process akin to triangulation. Of course, the life stories are primarily aimed at gathering viewpoints and interpretation associated with an event.

some cases this prompted a reluctance to go on talking about the subject. Some participants also evinced a difficulty in articulating their views, partly because of their limited formal education and few contacts with people outside their immediate family circle or close friends. The younger participants too, seemed less inclined or able to articulate or expand on their life stories, occasionally steering the autonomous discourse into a question and answer session. Another problem, though less prevalent, was a sense that some of the participants' commentary was informed by social representations that *contaminated* the discourse with jargon; that is; they expressed views not *in their own words* but through terms picked up from leaders. The community leaders gave the impression of being political actors who cut across the formation of life discourses. Whoever is inside this circle of representatives is already part of the spaces of *political education* where relating one's life experiences is a part of the collective reality.

Direct observation was of importance in becoming aware of the public and private spaces of the areas studied. It served to complement the information contained on mostly imprecise and out-of-date maps, which in some cases marked the settlement areas as blank. The number of each house was rarely marked and there was no registration of topographical features such as roads. On the basis of my previous knowledge of cartography and my wish to obtain a good understanding of the residents' spatial perceptions, I decided to carry out some visual experiments. These were intended to extract information about the social hierarchy of the region and the use made of space by the residents. It had the advantage of being light-hearted and was thus not regarded by them as an intrusive technique. However, I was forced to drop this idea because of time constraints and my desire to keep the life story interviews going while my local contacts remained fresh. I also had to overcome a certain resistance on the part of the residents to participate and was met with the usual complaint that they were *not up to it*. In many instances, even the use of a timeline drawn with key dates and events as a reference point for discussion tended to be *hit and miss;* again, the participants seemed wary because they were unaccustomed to dealing with visual material.

Although five Focus Groups sessions had originally been planned, one in each settlement with residents, interviewees, leaders and urban planners; another with state planners and technical staff together with NGO personnel and academics and another with all the people that had been interviewed, only two groups were held. The meetings involved two of the settlements and were restricted to the people interviewed and the community leaders. The meetings were useful in validating certain views that might have been limited to a few of those interviewed and thus provided valuable cross-referenced information. As mentioned earlier, the presence of the leaders caused problems as they tried to monopolise the time which had been allotted to the residents who to some extent felt embarrassed in expressing their own opinions in front of the leaders.

Conclusions

For methodological reasons, my research topic had to be studied from various angles and the time constraints imposed on the fieldwork forced me to make some difficult choices which hampered my desire to adopt a pluralist understanding of poverty and social exclusion. The strengths and weaknesses of using the life stories as a primary source of information worked like two sides of the same coin. The desire to exercise the minimum control over the direction that the stories would take was a source of concern although it allowed new interpretations and new themes to emerge in a way that was meaningful to the participant (even if they were not a part of the Interview Guide). Each interview proved to be a unique occasion; it was impossible to predict what direction it would take. Although occasionally tempted, I decided not to apply a more rigorous interview structure, since I wished to maintain a degree of empathy between the residents and myself and thus make the interviews more pleasurable. However, it was evident that this closeness could prevent me from maintaining a necessary critical distance or perhaps obscure the issues being raised. Despite this I continue to believe on the basis of my fieldwork that exercising a *light-touch* control proved to be a positive factor in the research.

Direct contact with the people involved was a vital aspect of this journey. Listening, observing, and interacting were extremely important for an analysis centred on the

perceptions of the people themselves. The most important factor was how the people think and how they react to certain social practices and the actions of the state. The sensitive area concerned my interpretations and their validity. How does one interpret the discourse and actions of interviewees? Do the empirical conclusions represent the social phenomena to which they refer? My prior experience of working in the field of social urbanism could be either a shortcoming or an advantage because of my empirical and theoretical knowledge of the place and theme. In view of this, I have been concerned not to *sanctify* my empirical and theoretical positions but rather, to break down existing paradigms, thoughts and taboos about poverty, social exclusion, community, planning and mobility. This strategy allied to a process of triangulation, documentation of the data and feedback from other researchers, practitioners and social movements, both during and after the fieldwork, was used to validate my interpretations of the social practices and state actions in Maceió.

Besides the results of the research, there are practical questions that may make a difference during the various phases of the research. The violence and the very hard living conditions endured by the interviewees are two of them. The size of the sample is another. The large number of life stories represents a huge amount of work, not only in collecting the information but also in tabulating and analysis. After about the fifteenth life history in each settlement, I realized that the answers tended to repeat themselves. It is possible that if had I done just 15 interviews in each settlement, I might have been able to give more depth to the collection and to the analysis. Nevertheless, having 25 interviews available has helped to reinforce the validity of the conclusions.

The research also raised a number of ethical concerns. Two points stand out. First, from the beginning of my doctorate I have wanted to produce knowledge that may be useful to improving the conditions of the urban poor. Whenever I introduced myself, I tried to make clear the academic purpose of the research as well as stressing the potential usefulness of the results for the social movements, NGOs and the state. While this approach helped bridge the gap between pure research interests, my personal motivations and the generated interest among the participants, I was aware that unrealistic expectations might be created about how far conditions could be

changed because of the study.[44] The second factor was the sensitive personal information that the research sought to gather. In meeting people I stressed that information would be handled with the greatest care and respect. Curiously, at no time were questions raised about anonymity, and the interviewees from the three settlements were proud to participate in the research and for this reason, I have used their real names. In the case of state officials, NGOs and social movement staff and others urban professionals, I decided to preserve their identity and confidentiality by using descriptor codes (eq. Planner 1) to prevent any possible legal and political repercussions.

The greatest challenge for this thesis has been to deepen knowledge on the question of how to integrate very poor families in an urban context and adopt an approach centred on the user's perceptions. This approach has had implications on the structuring of the research results. Other goals were relegated to a second plane to fulfil the objective of giving voice to those most directly affected. For a deeper analysis, the theme would require observations over a longer period than the six months spent in the field. Thus practical considerations restricted the possibility of a wider view and meant that the moments were recorded exactly for what they were: instantaneous portrayals of a reality being experienced in the years 2003 and 2004 in three locations in the city of Maceió. Obviously the interviews themselves, the contacts with other intervening agencies, and living the daily life of the city provided elements of the history and this makes it possible to trace out a logical and evolutionary sequence of local policies and practices. With both the theories and the living experiences in hand, a parallel can be drawn between the national and global spheres. That however, was not the main reason for choosing life stories as the main part of the methodology. There would not have been enough time to collect the impressions experienced by the residents and simultaneously carry out a documentary and historical analysis of the same size. Priority was given to understanding how urban struggles are conducted from the perspective of the urban poor.

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[44] I did not imply that participation in the study would have definite and positive outcomes for those involved specifically, just that the research might contribute to more general shifts in policy or interventions. My albeit limited involvement in assisting with proposal writing and input to state projects added some credibility to this position.

Chapter 4 - Urban Brazil and the Context of Maceió

> 'We have a history that for the vast majority of its population is the history of hunger and absolute poverty. As a result, we have a society inhabited by two mutually exclusive worlds. They comprise human beings from the same country, living in the same cities, in geographical proximity, but extremely distant from each other in their life experience' (Schlaepfer *et al* 1994:331)

The objective of this Chapter is to contextualise the thesis in the city of Maceió and to analyse the wider context in which events encountered in the case studies unfolded. Before studying the peculiar features of urbanisation in the North-Eastern region of Brazil, it is essential to understand the economic, cultural, social, political and material conditions underlying social practices and state actions. There is an economic and social hegemony that favours the interests of the better-off by means of state power. Hence, any attempt to understand the quest for a place in the city must examine public policies, and in particular, the way in which the state legitimises its policies and reacts against social practices.

The Chapter is divided into three sections. The first provides a brief account of the social and economic environment in the North East of Brazil, in particular the State of Alagoas, and how it is affected by the regional policies of the Brazilian government. The second section describes the urban conditions of the city of Maceió and draws attention to the special characteristics of the city and its policies. The third section discusses the views of the planners, NGOs and social movement leaders on the urban situation in Maceió, and the state and society's response to the problem of housing and poverty. This section is based on life stories and interviews. Altogether, 37 interviews were conducted with 34 participants (three took place in pairs): five members of a social movement; five NGOs officials; sixteen civil servants (four Alagoas State planners including one from the Public Prosecutor's office and twelve municipal planners); seven academics; and four policy makers (two Municipal policy makers, one State and one from the Central government).[45]

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[45] The word policy maker is used to refer to someone who occupies a post at the behest of a politician, and has the power to change and implement policies and programmes or in the case of central government, at least influence their shape.

4.1   Poverty in Alagoas

The present urban situation - worsening housing conditions, widespread lawbreaking, growing exclusion and violence (see page 20) - needs to be understood in the context of a legacy of social inequality, the regional policies of the Brazilian state during the latter half ot the twentieth century, and the economic adjustments that occurred in the 1980s and 1990s.[46] Today the Brazilian North-East comprises 20% of Brazil's land area and has 29% of the total population of the country, 23.5% of the urban population, and 46% of the rural population. Recent data show that the State of Alagoas heads the negative rankings of social indices (IPEA 2006; IBGE 2007; CEPAL *et al* 2008). According to data supplied by IBGE for 2002, of the six categories used to measure quality of life, Alagoas comes bottom in five - work, income, education, health and security - and is the State with the highest rate of infant mortality (IBGE 2002).[47] Let us take a step back and consider how this situation came about and what it means for the urban conditions in the North-East.

Urban growth in Brazil accelerated from the 1930s and the country's population was predominantly urban by the 1970s. The pattern of urban growth and development

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[46] At the end of the 1970s and to an even greater degree in the 1980s, countries such as Brazil had recourse to the international financial institutions (IFIs) to overcome a series of economic problems including a lack of fiscal control, a decline in tax revenue, increases in unemployment and inflation (Tavares and Fiori 1993). Help came in the form of loans to enable the military government to balance the international account, improve productive infrastructure and, in more recent years, for governments to bring about some social development, including through housing projects. However this assistance was accompanied by a set of conditions imposed by lenders to ensure that loan recipients took measures to manage debt. These conditions involved improving economic efficiency, which included allowing *free* trade and laying emphasis on the private as distinct from the public control of the economy. The programmes that arose from this approach were the outcome of privatisation, liberalisation and a greatly reduced role for the state. Although in the opinion of many economists this approach improved general economic efficiency, evidence suggests a breakdown in the state's ability to provide social programmes to address issues of equity and integration (Simon 1998:222-223).

[47] Alagoas workers have the second lowest average real income per capita in the country R$394.50 (U$131.50) and the highest proportion of poor people in Brazil, 62.3% of the State population.

assistance has been uneven. Maps 4.1 and 4.2 show the increase in the number and sizes of cities in Brazil between 1970 and 2002.

Map 4.1: Distribution of Urban Population in 1970
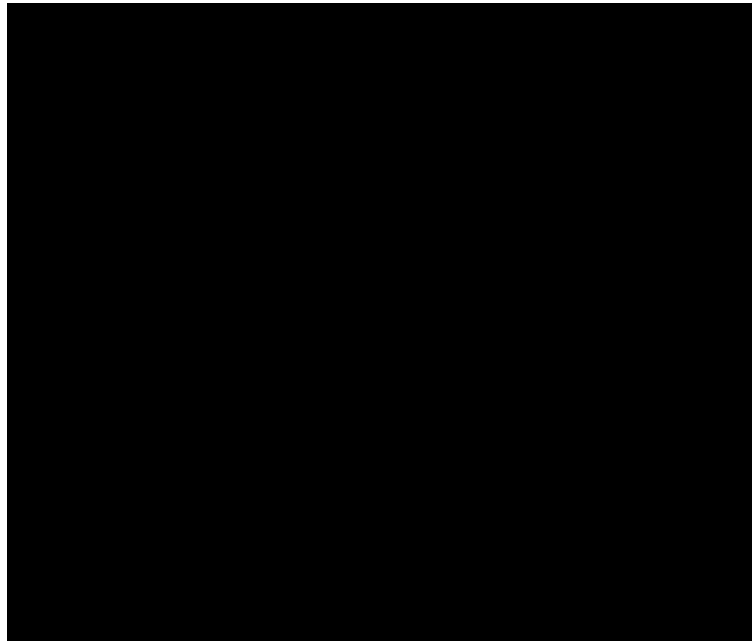
Source: Brasil, Governo do (2004). Brasília: Ministério das Cidades.

Map 4.2: Distribution of Urban Population in 2000
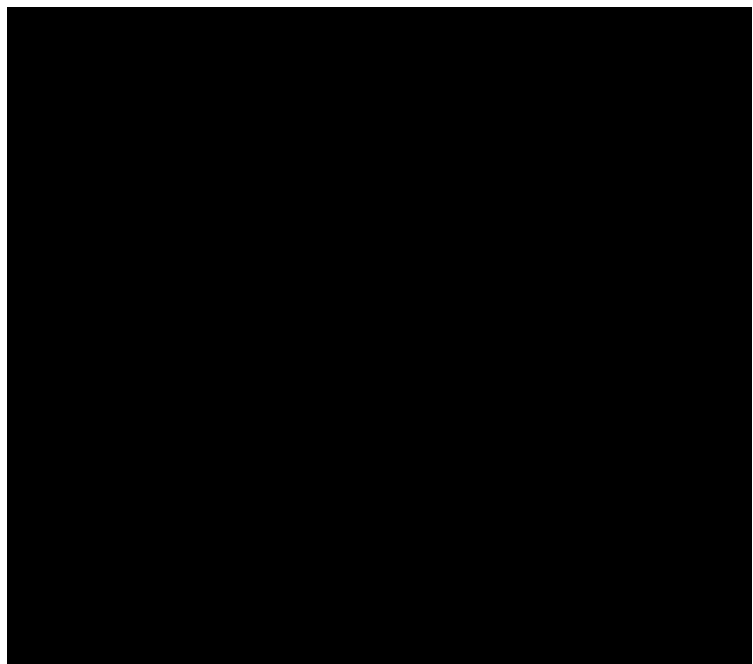
Source: Brasil, Governo do (2004). Brasília: Ministério das Cidades.

The South-East contains the highest concentration of industry as well as wealth and population: the metropolitan area of São Paulo contains 19 million inhabitants (IBGE 2006) and is responsible for one third of the Gross National Product (GNP) (see Map 4.3). Although regional development policies attempted to encourage industrialisation beyond the South-East, many of the industries located away from this region depended on extracting or refining natural resources rather than manufacturing products (Goldsmith and Wilson 1991; Lima 1997; Araújo 2000).[48] Major investment in infrastructure such as the construction of dams and hydro-electric plants in the rural areas of Pernambuco, Alagoas, Sergipe and Bahia took place, especially in the 1970s and 1980s. These investments led to an industrial dynamism in the North-East which is illustrated by a petrochemical industry at Camaçari (State of Bahia), a mineral-metalworking complex in the State of Maranhão, a fertilizer complex in the State of Sergipe, and the salgema complex in the State of Alagoas (Affonso and Silva 1995; Araújo 1997). From 1960 to 1990 the North-East achieved the highest growth rate in GNP in Brazil from US\$ 8.6 billion to US\$ 50 billion (Araújo 1992).

Map 4.3: Distribution of Industrial Employees
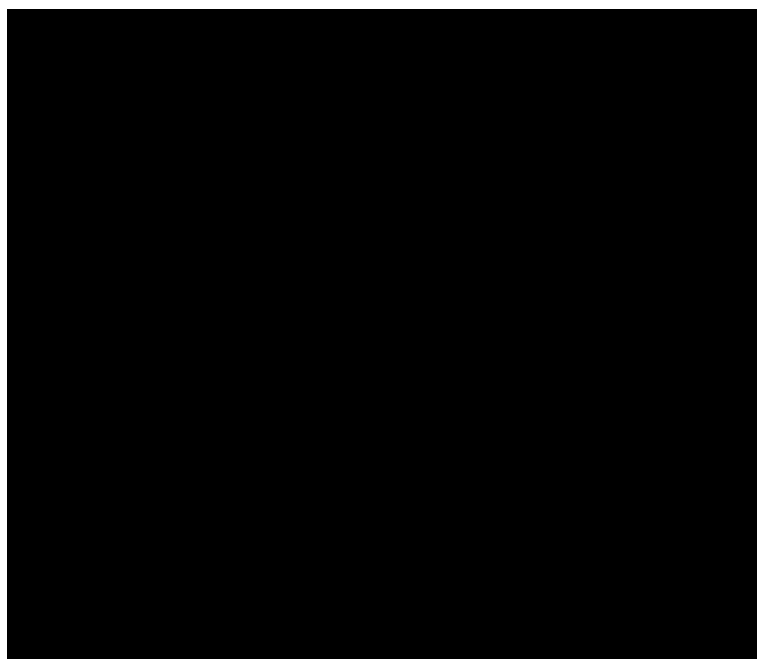
Source: Brasil, Governo do (2004). Brasília: Ministério das Cidades.

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[48] In Alagoas, for example, BRASKEM S/A (which began operating in 1977 with the name SALGEMA S/A) is the major producer of chlorine-soda of Latin America.

The North-East however was less affected by the economic crisis of the 1980s because its industrial base had shifted from non-durable consumer goods (mainly textiles and foodstuffs) to manufactured products largely for the export market. From the mid 1990s there were tax incentives and cheaper labour began to encourage industry to relocate in the North-East and away from the Rio de Janeiro/São Paulo axis.[49] The effect, however, has resulted in high concentrations of population growth in medium-sized towns and cities mostly along the coast and until at least the 1970s, without urban planning on a national level (Davis 2002). The pattern has remained consistent over time. The recent series of international financing ventures supporting the Programa de Desenvolvimento do Turismo no Nordeste [PRODETUR/NE, Programme for Developing Tourism in the North-East] has sought to develop basic services - including water sanitation, sewerage, environmental protection, a transport system and airports - for the coastal tourism industry in the region.[50] The Lula government's regional policies (carried out by the Ministry of National Integration set up in 2003) aims to provide job opportunities but the results are not yet clear. In the new international context of globalisation, the migration of industries in search of ever-cheaper labour has resulted in structural unemployment and jobs in Brazil becoming *precarious*. The North-East is not immune from these conditions.

Away from the cities, a summary of the last 30 years hardly makes for pleasant reading. Some of the large projects of the 1960s and 1970s, included irrigation schemes to assist the agro-food industry, important fruit producing centres and the growth of agriculture and cattle-raising in the North-Eastern States and the *cerrado* [savanna belt] of the mid-Western region. Expansion of sugar-cane industry in the 1970s (historically predominant in the State of Alagoas) was driven by the

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[49] The change is relative and the North-Eeast remains relatively insignificant in global terms compared with the rest of the country and in regional terms within Brazil itself (Neto 1997).

[50] Maceió, with its natural scenic beauty offers great potential for tourism and at the beginning of the 1970s became a focal point for this activity when state aid led to the construction of important hotel complexes. Marketing strategies adopted by public authorities boosted the city economy and led to an increasing number of visitors - at least up until 1986 when problems of economic and political instability resulted in a sharp drop. At present, in spite of the increase in tourist activities, environmental problems stemming from disorganised urbanisation are a threat to its success despite the high level of central state investment by PRODETUR/NE.

PROÁLCOOL Programme to use alcohol as a fuel but relied upon the incorporation of additional land into plantations rather than increases in productivity (Heredia 1992).[51] In the 1990s, there was a financial crisis affecting the State of Alagoas and as a result of intense competition, some factories were forced to halt their activities. Yet the political dominance of the traditional oligarchies (so-called usineiros or sugar barons) persists and the process of acquiring land for the plantations has increased (see Araújo 1997).

Small scale agriculture has been in decline and with the absence of any serious agrarian reform policies; there are few incentives to keep families in their places of origin, especially in the arid sertão [backlands]. The poor farmers or sertanejos are forced to resort to nomadism.[52] These are the retirantes (social fugitives) of the North-East who *move away* [se retiram] to find work and water so that they can survive in the long periods of drought (Kenny 2002). In 1990, of 32 million Brazilians described as *destitute*, 17.3 million were from the North-East (55% of the total) and of these, more than ten million were living in rural areas. Thus of 46% of the total population that make up the rural population, the North-East accounted for 63% of those who were destitute in the rural areas (Albuquerque 1993). One response is to convert temporary for more permanent moves. The city of Maceió appears to show this characteristic, recording an increase of 274% in population from 1970 to 1996.[53] One outcome has been the *urbanisation of poverty*; almost 43.6% of the country's impoverished urban inhabitants live in the North-East (Morais *et al* 2003).

Unfortunately rather than address the difficulty of poverty and deprivation, the Brazilian state has become weakened by the privatisation of services and ineffective

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[51] The Programme relied on substantial state subsidies reducing the price of a litre of alcohol to one-third the price for petrol. When the subsidies were withdrawn the Programme lost impetus until 2005 when the sharp increases in the price of oil made ethanol an attractive alternative fuel.

[52] Sertanejo is a term commonly used to describe a rural agricultural labourer, who is usually landless or a very small landholder, and living in the vast drought prone backlands characterised by a feudal relationship with landowners.

[53] Census data from 1970, 1980, 1991 and from the Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílio [PNAD, National Household Sample Survey] 1995 of the IBGE.

management of public investment. Following the neoliberal explanation of the situation believes that the size of the state and social expenditure is responsible for the increasing public debts and budgetary deficit. The neoliberal solution was based on a drastic reduction of the power of the state and the precedence of the free market about where to invest (Diniz 1996). This situation was incompatible with the new democratic dynamics of the post-1985 era which, after more than 20 years of dictatorship, set out demands for better living conditions and social assistance to no longer be given to groups but rather form part of a social policy on the understanding that poverty is the majority condition including those without social security (the so-called *unproductive* sector) (Sposati 1988). Nevertheless, by the time of the first administration of President Cardoso [FHC] (1995/1999) the idea of minimal state was well established. The Ministry of State Reform was created with the priorities of administrative reform, social security reform and the implementation of programmes for privatisation and public takeovers. This aimed for minimal state was in opposition to the recent constitutional definitions of universal state provision and defence of extended rights. Faced with this impasse - minimal state *versus* extensive inclusion - the state employed strategies to maintain the ideal of the minimal state whilst keeping up an appearance of carrying out a social assistance policy (Carvalho Netto 1999). A distinguishing sign of reform became the return of the family and non-profit social organisations as the agents of social welfare. State withdrawal and transfer of responsibility to organized civil society, especially to community organisations and NGOs, makes no allowance for overcoming social exclusion or for the surveillance and defence of minimum rights, dignity and citizenship (Sposati 1999).

The main features of public management in the last two decades have been bureaucracy, corruption, failure to modernise administrative processes, lack of organisation and information and a concern with profits (Evans 1993; Bezerra 1995; Hagopian 1996; Andrews 2004; Marques 2006). The retreat from pro-poor urban policies is just one outcome. The Cardoso government was forced to make cuts in social expenditure as a way of keeping inflation under control; the poor were most affected by the falls in investment, particularly in the areas of housing, education and health care (Rocha 2000; von Amsberg *et al* 2000; Paes de Barros *et al* 2001;

Pochmann 2002). Some welfare provision was extended however. Approximately 55% of the federal budget (1995-2005) equivalent to around 13% of GDP, was spent on welfare services, in particular social security (Castro *et al* 2008).[54] This sum was partly the result of changes introduced by the 1988 Constitution that extended to rural workers the right to receive retirement benefits.[55] In many villages and favelas, a significant part of economic activity depends on small pensions that are the only source of income for the people. However, of the total amount spent on social welfare, only about 13% benefits the poorest fifth of the population (Gacitúa-Marió and Woolcock 2008). Consequently, data from the PNAD 1996-1999 show an increase in poverty. The Mapa do Fim da Fome [The Hunger Map] drawn up by the Fundação Getúlio Vargas (FGV 2001) found that 55.4% of the population of Alagoas live below the poverty line (defined as an income of less than one dollar a day). A new study based on PNAD 2004 data states that this figure has now risen to 62.5% (IETS 2005).

State actions that favour the territorialisation of poverty bring to mind the observation of Kowarick (1979) that the living conditions of the poorest classes do not stem merely from the degree of poverty but also from the quantity and quality of the public services at their disposal. The Lula administration's launch of the Zero Hunger Programme, with much publicity, promised a partial reversal of the minimum state-inclusion tension. The goal was for all Brazilians to have access to at least three meals a day. The Programme foresaw the donation of an amount of money to be used to buy food. The Programme however has show itself to be unfeasible because of the numbers of possible beneficiaries and the structures of political representation that regard social assistance as a means of social control were not capable of running such a vast programme. Social assistance through a food programme has not addressed the difficulties of unemployment, isolation, prejudice, transport, low schooling levels, appalling health conditions, epidemics and violence found in all Brazilian towns and cities.

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[54] Federal Social Expenditure (FSE).

[55] The response of some factory and mill owners has been to destroy rural housing as a way of annulling employment contracts that might be alleged to exist and thus avoid social insurance contributions.

4.2   Urban Conditions in Brazil

4.2.1   Poor People's Housing: Favelas, Ocupações, Bairros Populares, Cortiços, Conjuntos Habitacionais

The urbanisation of poverty is displayed in the various patterns and forms of housing that are a reflection of the actions of the state and social practices. The private sector does not produce housing for poor people. The provision of rented housing or rooms in tenements or cortiços [alley-ways] were significant in the early to mid twentieth century, as a means to provide an extra income for people in the lower-middle income bracket. But since the rents were low, the owners claimed that they could not afford to pay for maintenance – although there had often been rudimentary communal conditions to begin with - and little new rented accomodation was made available (Bonduki 1998; Piccini 1999; Riley 2001; Taschner and Bogus 2001).

Housing settlements for the poor therefore can be placed in two categories, public provision and those of the people. Public settlement normally takes the form of conjuntos [state housing schemes], and are usually located in areas far from the centre of town, and in large units that practically form towns themselves. In the 1970s and 1980s, a large number of these schemes were carried out all over Brazil and were financed with loans from the Banco Nacional da Habitação [BNH, National Housing Bank] and with generous mortgages that allowed the inhabitants to pay instalments.[56] During the 1980s, when there were higher interest rates, a large number of tenants defaulted on their repayments. This eventually led to the bankruptcy of the system and the closure of the BNH in 1985. The state has continued to operate housing schemes financed by the Caixa Econômica Federal [CEF, Federal Savings Bank].[57] However, these housing schemes are mainly

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[56] Set up after the military takeover in 1964, the Bank was part of the Sistema Financeiro de Habitação [SFH, Financial Housing Scheme] and financed by the Fundo de Garantia sobre Tempo de Serviço [FGTS, Unemployment Benefit Fund]. This Fund was formed from contributions deducted from contracted workers' salaries and used in cases of involuntary and unjustified redundancy, and included a provision for relief on mortgage payments. A large amount of money was used to finance urban development and the Fund received 8% of all salaries, from 50 million regular contributors.

[57] Federal Savings Bank that took on the activities and the real estate portfolio of the BNH. A few activities of the SFH were transferred to the CEF but the latter did not

designed for low-income civil servants that earn more than three minimum monthly salaries. The few housing estates that have been built for families living below the poverty line are either an emergency response to homelessness caused by flooding, landslides or evictions, or the result of political negotiations in which loans for projects will eventually be written off (Azevedo 1988; Santos 1999; Valença 1999, 2001; Maricato 1996).

The housing shortage can be estimated to be in the order of 7.9 million dwellings of which 6.5 million are urban. Table 4.1 shows the results of a survey carried out by the João Pinheiro Foundation in 2007 to measure the Brazilian housing deficit and based on 2006 statistical data (IBGE; PNAD; FJP; CEI). The greatest need for new housing is concentrated in the States of the South-East and the North-East, regions that comprise most of the urban population in the country. The most serious urban housing deficit (90.7%) is concentrated among families with a monthly income of up to three official minimum salaries (approx. US$ 360).

Table 4.1: Urban Housing Deficit by Geographical Region in 2000 and 2006

Regions	Deficit (1000 units)		% Of Levels of Income*					
			2000			2006		
	2000	2006	Under 3	3 to 5	+ than 5	Under 3	3 to 5	+ than 5
North	506	619	82.90	9.50	7.60	91.20	5.00	3.80
North- East	1,811	1,837	91.30	5.50	3.20	95.00	2.80	2.20
South- East	2,162	2,794	77.10	11.50	11.40	89.90	6.20	3.90
South	565	809	78.30	11.50	10.20	85.10	9.00	5.90
Centre- East	424	483	81.90	9.30	8.80	88.30	6.10	5.60
Brazil	5,469	6,543	82.50	9.40	8.10	90.70	5.50	3.80

* Minimum wage monthly

Source: Ministério das Cidades 2008

The main *producers* of social housing are, without doubt, the poor people themselves. The way poor families can find somewhere to live depends on their financial circumstances. Their most likely alternative will be settlements in unsafe

have the technical personnel with practical expertise in the field of urban development.

areas. At the end of the 20th century, there were 3,905 informal precarious settlements scattered around the country Brazil (IBGE 2000). The number of houses in favelas has been estimated at 1,644,266. Moreover, the growth rate for favelas is far higher than the total growth rate for housing in the country. Between 1991 and 2000, the overall growth rate for all housing was 2.8%, while in the precarious settlements it was 4.18% per year. Between 1991 and 1996, there was an increase of 16.6% in the number of houses in the precarious settlements; from 1991 to 2000, the increase was 22.5% (Ministério das Cidades 2004). It should be pointed out that the true number of precarious settlements is probably higher, as the IBGE only took account of agglomerations of over 51 units. New data provided by the Ministério das Cidades (2007) show there is a need to adjust the former IBGE data, since there are more than 3 million houses in the precarious settlements with a population of 12.4 million inhabitants.

The poorest people occupy vacant lots and build with whatever material comes to hand: plastic, wood, metal, dried mud and stakes, bricks, thatch, asbestos sheets, metal sheets or clay tiles. The resulting favelas have no basic facilities initially and usually obtain electricity by means of clandestine connections, and their water supply by means of taps, which are often far away from the house (Jacobi *et al* 1998; Oliveira and Valla 2001; Silva and Rosa 2008). These settlements are located in different parts of the city, and on land unsuitable for building. The land tenure is often *insecure*; the occupation is usually illegal and the occupiers lack title deeds to their land (Maia 1995; Taschner 1995; Lima 2001; Huchzermeyer 2004; Fernandes 2005). Before 1988 (and in practice afterwards), the private ownership of land was condoned and there was no recognition of the principle that land and property have a *social* purpose (Fernandes and Rolnik 1998).[58] Intensive land speculation occurred when landowners kept large holdings off the market in the expectation that public services would be provided in the future: about 40% of property in Brazil's metropolitan areas is privately owned in the form of vacant lots (Fernandes and Rolnik 1998). When services were installed and values rose, the municipalities were

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[58] The concept of the social purpose of land and property was introduced in the 1988 Constitution.

unable to share the benefits with everybody in the city (Déak and Schiffer 1999; Maricato 2002; Marques and Torres 2005).

In general, the state's attempts to finance programmes that could provide alternative housing for the poor residents who possess a legal title to their property have amounted to very little (Kreimer *et al* 1993). Between 1985 and 1995, support for establishing settlemens through collective efforts was in vogue, with the state providing plots and building materials and the families working to construct houses in mutirão [a form of mutual self-help] (Holston 1991; Muçouçah and Almeida 1991; Bonduki 1992; Rolnik and Cymbalista 2004; Lopes 2006; Oliveira 2006).[59] Although numerous projects were carried out across Brazil, the high level of organisation and collective awareness made mutual cooperation unfeasible as a general solution. Similarly, attempts to integrate favelas into the urban fabric retrospectively have mostly been small-scale and sporadic endeavours. Even large programmes such as Favela Bairro have just scratched the surface, since they have concentrated on physical rehabilitation and ignored the more essential area of social rehabilitation (Zaluar and Alvito 1998; Riley *et al* 2001; Cardoso 2002).

Partly as a consequence of macro economic conditions and the failings of the housing markets, from the 1980s to the 1990s poverty in the cities worsened and inequity was accentuated (Rocha 1992, 2003; Lavinas *et al* 1997; Henriques 2000; Schwartzman 2003). One means of defining Brazilian cities today would be to describe them as forming a dichotomous environment. There is one landscape laid out by private entrepreneurs, and which operates within the framework of detailed urban legislation, and another three times larger, which is produced by the poor people themselves, and situated in an intermediate zone between the legal and the illegal. In addition to reflecting economic and social disparities, this contrast has profound implications on the form and functioning of the cities. The sprawl of the precarious peripheral settlements has resulted in a hiatus between the poor urbanised

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[59] At the federal level, the mutirão was stimulated by SEAC that was linked to the Presidency of the Republic and set up by President Sarney. Its object was to build 600,000 housing units under the mutirão system, with the participation of the community. In fact, it has been estimated that only 20,000 units were completed.

spaces and the city centre where jobs and cultural or economic opportunities are concentrated.

> 'Inequality is thus a quality of every large Brazilian city - and for that matter the smaller cities and towns - be they in the 'richer' South or in the 'poorer' North.'(Fernandes and Valença 2001:v)

A process of social segregation has resulted from this inequality, which is manifested both inside the cities and between the cities, and regions (Rolnik *et al* 1999).

4.2.2 Cities in the Brazilian Constitution

The state policies that are of interest to this thesis are those that deal with the right to a place in the city. The legal system has always been unfavourable to the poor people as the city has been regarded as the preserve of the real estate market. With the aim of inverting this logic of the market, organised civil society, in the form of the FNRU [National Forum for Urban Reform], strove to obtain approval for a Statute of Cities. Having gained recognition in principle in the 1988 Constitution as a social responsibility of property and with a number of smaller reforms to land rights being implemented, such as the *zones of special interest*, the Statute promised to act as a catalyst for wider changes in urban relationships (Fernandes 2001, 2007).[60] When it was finally passed in 2001, the Statute of Cities (National Law # 10257, of 10/07/2001) stipulated that it is a fundamental human right of people to live in a town or city that supports their human needs. It sanctions human rights in the city and guarantees: 'the right to urban land, housing, environmental sanitation, an urban infrastructure, transport and leisure to present and future generations' (Article 2, I; author's translation).

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[60] In response to the Constitution, which made provision for the introduction of amendments into the text as a result of steps taken by the people, there was a national campaign to collect signatures for the first Popular Initiative Bill which advocated setting up a National System and Fund for Social Housing. Over a million signatures were collected and it was forwarded to the National Congress in 1991. But it took an incredible 13 years before the Bill was finally approved and led to the Sistema and Fundo Nacional de Habitação de Interesse Social [SNHIS and FNHIS, National Social Housing Scheme and Fund].

The new general guidelines for urban policy are designed to guarantee that property (and the city generally) has a social function to ensure territorial democracy, space for authority, goods production, and culture (FNRU 2002). The Statute stresses that, when formulating and implementing urban policies, common interests must prevail over the individual right to property. Henceforth, use of urban space should be socially just and environmentally sustainable, public regulations should reflect a right to urban property thereby guaranteeing the right of an excluded and marginalised population to urbanised land. The Statute also deals with the responsibilities of the Federal Government, States, and Municipalities in urban management, by giving the Municipality greater powers. The combination of traditional planning mechanisms (zoning; land division; building regulations) are added to new instruments such as compulsory subdivision, utilisation orders, an extra-fiscal use of local property tax progressively over a period of time, permission for payment to be made in the form of titles of public debt, and preference rights for the municipality. The Statute of Cities pays close attention to legally insecure settlements and offers residents a chance to exercise ownership rights, the concession of a special right of ownership (a form of leasehold) and a special concession to encourage a system for fixing land tenure (Saule Jr and Rolnik 2001; Alfonsin and Fernandes 2004). The aim is to bring about a new urban order that will be, at once, economically more efficient, politically fairer and more sensitive to social and environmental questions (Fernandes 2001).

The fact that this Statute was only approved recently does not allow a rigorous analysis of how far its contents and measures have been successfully put into effect. Nonetheless, it has provoked a discussion of city life, especially in all the municipalities with over 20,000 inhabitants.[61] One serious drawback is that the issues of social-spatial segregation and the quality of the urban environment are not included among the Statute's priorities. The discussions in these areas have been superficial and have yet to be converted into housing policies or a single urban policy. Indeed, in one regard little has changed. Evictions and threats of evictions continue to be part of the daily round of many poor urban citizens although their

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[61] These municipalities have to draw up a Master Plan for urban development in a participative manner, before it could qualify for federal financing. The Ministry of Cities launched in 2005 the National Participatory Master Plan Campaign.

right to housing has been recognised by the Brazilian Constitution as a human right.[62]

In the next section I look at the specific urban conditions of Maceió, one of the poorest State capitals in the Brazilian North-East and the largest city in the State of Alagoas, and the site where fieldwork for this thesis was undertaken.

4.2.3   Urban Conditions in Maceió

Maceió is a medium-sized city with a population of 795,804 inhabitants which corresponds to 28.26% of the population of the State of Alagoas (IBGE 2000). The city evolved without an urban plan and in structural terms, reflects several phases of local development. The socio-economic factors that have moulded the type of occupation of the land and its rhythm, have also conditioned the urban configuration of the city. The social exclusion of the urban poor is referred to by Espíndola (2001 [1871]:147) in one of the earliest accounts of the housing situation in the city:

> 'The dwellings of our poor citizens are thatched hovels set up around the city. These are unsuitable as they are exposed to the risk of fire and also offer little light. The air is damp and in the opinion of some doctors, may be the cause of intermittent fevers when the thatch decomposes. The close proximity of these dwellings to the lagoon incurs a further risk, that of being subject to the influence of emanations of noxious gases from the swamps.' (author's translation)

The poor people who lived in this location included ex-slaves, fishermen and servants. Although the background of the favela populations today are different and the location of settlements further from the lagoon and city centre, in many other respects conditions have not substantially altered.

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[62] In 2004, the UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing made a series of suggestions to the Brazilian Government based on the evidence that the repeated practice of forced evictions continues to exist in Brazil. In its report presented on the 61st session of Comission on Human Rights of UN Economic and Social Council, the rapporteur investigated cases of evictions and displacements caused by economic development projects. The report referred to the urgent need for the Brazilian Government to introduce national legislation that would protect the residents from compulsory eviction (Kothari 2005).

From 1991 to 2000, the population of Maceió increased by 26.8%, the highest percentage of any North-East capital in the same period. As it is the economic and administrative centre of the State, poor families have always viewed the city as a place that can offer a better standard of living. One interviewee from the Agência Alagoana de Habitação e Urbanismo [AGAHU, Alagoas Agency of Housing and Urban Development] said that migrants believe that the state will provide them with housing:

> 'The people say: ´I am in the countryside in very bad situation and I know that in the capital the state is giving away houses, so I'm going to move.´ It is always the same: 83% of everything built so far has been produced in the capital and 17% in the countryside.' (Policy Maker 1, AGAHU)

Indeed, as the interviewee suggests, most public provision of housing has taken place in Maceió. Yet, even as late as 1994 when the Social Housing Department was set up, there was no approved housing policy for Maceió. There was no municipal budget and the few public-housing projects depended on the availability of federal funds or else houses were built to shelter civil servants as a means of co-opting them. The poor were thus compelled to occupy land and construct housing, with the result that more than 50% of the urban area could be categorised as *illegally occupied* (Maricato 2002). According to the Mapeamento dos Assentamentos Subnormais do Município de Maceió [Mapping of Precarious Settlements in the City of Maceió] undertaken as part of the Programa Habitar Brasil/BID (settlement programme) and based on a study conducted by the Federal University of Alagoas, Maceió has 135 precarious settlements made up of 100,704 socially excluded people.[63] Map 4.4 shows the location of these settlements in 2000.

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[63] The research was carried out by the Action and Research Group for Social Assistance in Alagoas (NUTAS). To date this study represents the only source for data on social exclusion in Alagoas. The study estimated the social excluded population as 364,470 inhabitants representing 53% of the total population of Maceió (IBGE 1996).

Map 4.4: Precarious Settlements Area in Urban Maceió in 2000
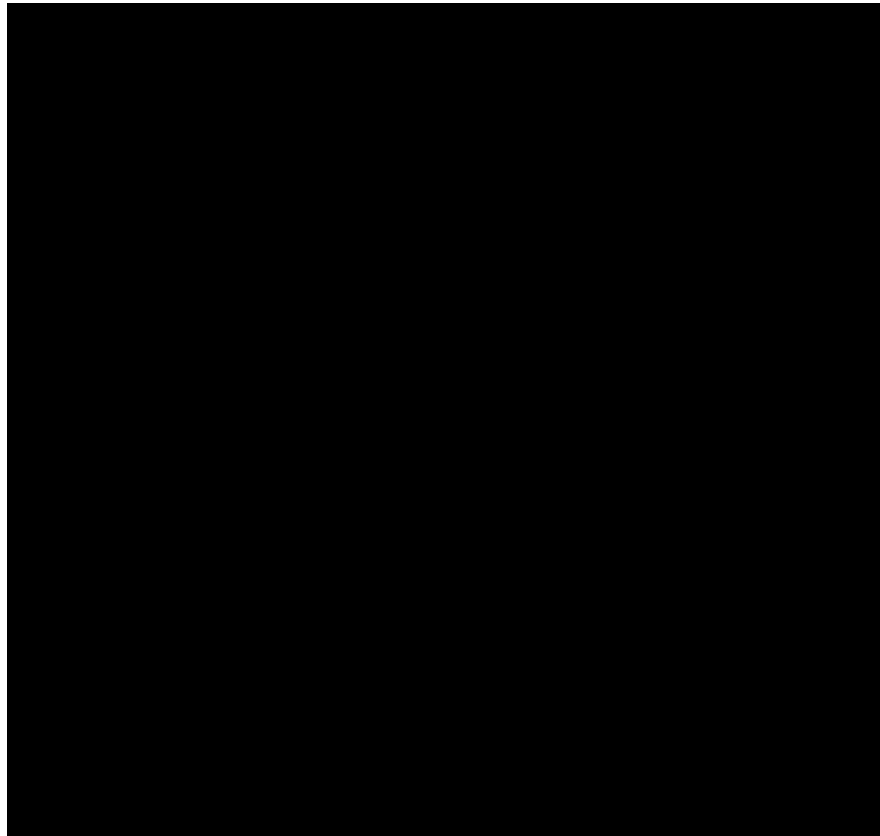
Source: Maceió, Prefeitura de (2000) *The Official Basis of Cartography*. Maceió: Maplan.

4.3   The Rationale of the state in Maceió

This section seeks to show the way the state regards the precarious settlements in an everyday context. The discourse of the planners and policy makers reveals the objectives of their policies and their impact upon the thousands of people living in the precarious settlements. With regard to these settlements, the urban activities undertaken by the state are based on the principles of *emergency* and *invisibility*. First, they only operate in the case of emergencies, above all natural disasters. Second, there is a politics of invisibility whereby the state maintains a distance from the settlements. The degree of state involvement varies in accordance with the residents' capacity to bear political pressure. The presence of the state may be apparent, absent, or even have an adverse effect on the daily round of the residents.

With regard to housing, the Government of Alagoas has only carried out some housing projects because it has been able to obtain finance from the BNH. For example, in the 1980s the State Government undertook the Benedito Bentes Housing Scheme in an area on the outskirts of the Tabuleiro.[64] Its objective was to reduce the housing deficit for low-income groups. The scheme was designed to meet the needs of 27,640 inhabitants in 5,528 housing units. In 2000, 67,964 inhabitants were registered (IBGE 2000). The scheme caused a series of problems for the urban structure of Maceió as other irregular settlements nearby were incorporated into it. This overloaded the use of poor local services and facilities and there was a problem of pollution because of the lack of adequate basic sanitation. In addition, the vegetation on the surrounding slopes was denuded, which led to the risk of landslides, and the silting up of the watercourses. The erosion caused craters and gullies to appear. The excrement produced in that area was discharged directly into the ditches and gullies surrounding the settlements and then entered the water courses which in turn discharged untreated sewage onto the beaches. However, the decision to build was political. No studies were carried out to determine whether or not this was the best location, and now it is recognised that it was a mistake.

> 'We built a large number of houses on the outskirts of Maceió, although we think that the Conjunto Benedito Bentes should not have been carried out. It was a very big settlement and the city was not prepared to absorb such a large number of people. We would not have done this today. There is legislation to prevent it because there is no more urban land available. The city has grown considerably in the last 20 years and property acquired such a high value that it is no longer feasible to construct houses for poor people. The politicians are eager to acquire the most valuable land and use public resources in this way. How many free plots of land were available between Benedito Bentes and Maceió? How much of this land went up in value during this period? This made me aware that there were political interests involved. The power of the politicians overruled the power of the officials involved in the urban planning. We have already fought very hard against all this.'(Architect 1, AGAHU and ex-COHAB)

> 'The housing settlements are depressing places, without a structure or anything. They soon become a *favelão* [big favela], and this means it has the

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[64] Tabuleiro is a neighbourhood located on a plain that has been reached by the expansion of the city.

official status of a favela and there is nothing that can be done, because it was the state that officially created this favela.'(Policy Maker 1, AGAHU)

The poor standard of housing and the fact that it is outside the law are even regarded by the policy makers as an intrinsic characteristic of social housing production in Maceió.

At the same time, the Federal Government has attempted to provide social benefits for the poorest people, such as: *Bolsa Alimentação* [Food Allowance], *Bolsa Escola* [School Allowance], and *Auxílio Gás* [Cooking Gas Allowance), which are aimed at offsetting the effects of chronic unemployment.[65] However, there are many complaints about these allowances: they are relatively small; they are often given to people who do not need assistance; the programmes are operated separately which means that a significant number of families are enrolled on one programme but not another; some families receive more than one payment while neighbours in similar circumstances do not receive any assistance at all. In short, the money that each family receives does not correspond to their real entitlement. As a way of overcoming this problem and rationalising the expenditure of public resources to ensure that more money was paid to the poorest families, the first Lula Government (2003-2006) set up the *Bolsa Família* [Family Allowance Scheme], an income transfer programme designed for families, with a *per capita* income of less than R$100 (US$33) a month. The entitlement of this financial benefit depends on the school attendance of the recipient's children and whether they have been vaccinated. During the time of my fieldwork, the Bolsa Família had not been fully implemented and the other programmes were still running.

In spite of changes in its policies, the Lula government's social programmes have had little impact on the life of the inhabitants and have not proved to be popular. Only seven out 75 interviewees praise Lula's social policies. It can be observed in the narratives of the residents that there is a lack of criteria regarding how the

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[65] The Bolsa Alimentação is a monthly amount related to the number of poorly fed children, the Bolsa Escola is a monthly amount related to the number of children permanently in school, and the Auxílio Gás is an amount every two months to compensate for increases to the price of cooking gas.

benefits should be claimed. The problem of irregularities in the payment of the benefits which are often deferred or staggered over a period of up to five months is a great barrier to their being effective as *compensatory* policies.

> 'I receive a Food Allowance for my daughter, but its validity has expired. She also benefited from the School Allowance although they only paid one month. If we really depended on this, we just could not live.' (Nadeje Ferreira, Cidade de Lona, 35 years old)

Although some families receive a Food Allowance, this benefit requires the child to be permanently attending a certain school. Should he or she move to a new place, the benefit is forfeited. Mobility therefore impairs the receipt of benefits. Payments will also cease if a child is taken out of school as a result of alleged ill-treatment or neglect.

> 'I don't receive anything. In the Carimbão School, we were given a grant but I stopped my daughter going there because they threatened to throw her into the swimming pool. I went there to complain but they said they couldn't do anything because they were all just children and that is why I stopped my daughter going there. They said that the people there were keeping the grants for themselves and the girls came back here vomiting. They were eating contaminated food.' (Lucineide Ferreira, CL, 36)

In the case of Vila Emater II, there was national pressure, projects and finance designed to help the children who had been involved in waste picking. One of its main instruments is the Child Citizen Allowance, a financial benefit that is granted on a monthly basis to those families that agree to remove their children from work and keep them at school. The real value of the allowances is extremely low: R$40 per month (US$13) when compared to what the children make per week (R$25 to R$30) by helping their families in the waste dump. Not surprisingly some parents regard the help as insufficient:

> 'I only receive an allowance for one child and that is when it is paid because sometimes it takes two or three months to be released. They pay R$40 a month which is not even enough to buy school materials.' (Ana Lúcia Paulo, Vila Emater II, 32)

> 'I get the allowance for these two boys. It helps to buy some clothing and other small things so that they can go to school.' (José Pedro, VE, 35)

An evaluation of the effects of PETI concluded that what actually happens is an interruption and not the end of child labour (Save the Children 1998). When the child is 15 years old, the allowance is suspended and inevitably, they return to waste picking. This return to work in the waste dump is welcomed by the family, for there is no other way for them to get an income, and being young the boys and girls are the most productive workers.

> 'I think that with the Lula government everything has got worse, even the allowance that my son got was suspended. Now he is working, and they are saying that they are going to take away the minors. My boy is going to be at home doing what? If he doesn't work in the waste dump we will die of hunger.' (Maria Betania, VE, 39)

> 'Before they forbade children from working in the waste dump, the children helped their father.' (Maria José dos Santos, VE, 35)

Despite these decisive actions, the presence of the state was unwelcome to the residents. All the interviewees without exception complained that the state fails to take action and does not care about their situation.

The police raids are the only *public service* that is welcomed by the inhabitants of the settlements. These are valued as a means of *calming down* the community. Even so the presence of the police is quite rare despite the high level of violence.[66] The police tend to delay when a crime occurs and only act with urgency when there is a case of sickness.

> 'We mean nothing to the police, for the rich it is OK, but for us here, we are treated like garbage, the police just come here to fetch the corpse.' (Bianca Maria, CL, 32)

> 'The police do nothing. They came here yesterday [the house had been burgled], my husband paid them some money to see if they could find something, but they didn't find anything'. (Ana Rosa, CL, 30)

> 'A health problem? Just call up the police and a car will come and take you to the Emergency Ward.' (Rosita Neves, VE, 56)

The residents would appreciate a regular police presence.

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[66] Maceió is the capital with the fourth highest homicide rate - 56.9 per 100 thousand inhabitants, only surpassed by Vitória with 78.2; Recife 76.7 and Rio de Janeiro 62.6.

4.3.2 State Presence - Urban Policies and Practices

Urban planning in Maceió is anachronistic. There is no planning tradition, there is a lack of data and laws have the effect of maintaining the current state of social segregation. Apart from the fact that there is a lack of effective policies and planning, some of the existing policies overlap because of a shortage of skills in technical planning and design within the municipalities.

> 'Formerly the housing policies were formulated by everyone, IPASEAL[67], COHAB, Secretaria de Infraestrutura [Infrastructure Department], former Secretaria do Interior [Internal Business Department], Secretaria do Planejamento [Planning Department], do Trabalho e da Assistência Social [Work and Social Assistance Department]. There was a strong resistance to realising that we cannot have overlapping activities, because nobody will be capable of doing anything right.' (Policy Maker 1, AGAHU)

> 'In my view, there is no planning, even planning about the problem of social exclusion in Alagoas State and less so in Maceió, where 53 % of the people are socially excluded.' (Academic 1, UFAL)

> 'I just wish we had the right structure for planning, because we know that the municipalities are having a lot of difficulties because we are their consultants. The municipalities do not pay a good salary and at the same time overburden their staff - sometimes with three or four projects at the same time. Of course, these projects are very badly prepared and of a poor standard.' (Policy Maker 2, CEF)

In the urban planning system there is a promiscuous relationship between the policy makers, the legal advisors, the politicians and the estate agents. The relationship is characterised by corruption, illegal kickbacks, and a lack of public commitment.

> 'The property owner carries out his project without seeking advice from the municipality. After the building is finished, he then seeks to win the approval of the municipality. Eighty percent of the new allotments are illegal, after a few days this figure will rise to 100%. The municipality does not carry out any inspection, especially in an electoral year. (Public Prosecutor)

There is little respect for laws and institutions; a relationship with a politician can make it easier to win approval for a project than compliance with the law, especially at election time.

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[67] Instituto de Previdência e Assistência aos Servidores do Estado de Alagoas [Institute of Social Security and Assistance for the Civil Servants of Alagoas State].

There have been several cases of land irregularity operated by the state for the profit of politicians, especially as a bargaining device during elections. The politicians help to regularise the legal documentation of the allotments so that they can benefit the property owner and the people that buy this kind of irregular and cheap land.

> 'The policy makers and politicians bought the land, which was usually far from the centre. They built the housing schemes, but they did not give their approval of the settlement. The politicians did nothing illegal; they gave houses to the people, and drew up the contracts but the ownership of the land was irregular. Now we are regularising two housing schemes that are 18 years old.' (Policy Maker 1, AGAHU)

> 'Even the settlements built by the municipality are illegal. If I am not wrong, the Selma Bandeira and the Benedito Bentes schemes were built outside of the law. The settlements conceived and built by the municipality do not comply with the rules that the municipality is supposed to administer.' (Public Prosecutor)

> 'The municipality does not approve of its own settlement because it is outside of the law. The municipality is the first culprit with regard to irregularity.'(Planner 1, SMCCU)

Apart from the relationship between politicians and property owners, the low salary paid to the municipal inspectors is used as an excuse to justify the high level of corruption between the officials and the building firms and property owners.

> 'We disclosed that the municipal inspector was given a plot of land or money as a bribe in return for agreeing not to carry out inspections. It is worth probing this matter to find out who benefits from these concealed allotments. If it is an emergency, for instance, an allotment outside of the law for the Cidade de Lona people may put them in a better situation, although this is not an ideal situation.' (Public Prosecutor)

But:
> 'In reality, there should be more inspectors because the city has grown but there is the same number. The outskirts have increased without control and, without having to comply with any administrative regulations. The system of control has many defects in technical terms. Inspection is only carried out in the rich areas.' (Planner 1, SMCCU)

The municipal public official thus recognises that there is inadequate staff to cope with the growth in size of the city.

Some of the public officials are aware that there is a wide gulf between planning and control. The officials that draw up the plans are not the same as those that monitor them and there is no contact between these two tasks and the urban planners. Each group of officials works independently without any interaction with their colleagues.

> 'There was a certain passivity; the political aim was to make sure the officers did exactly what the politicians wanted, without any argument. They are not bad officials, in fact they have a huge potential. However, they are old officials who have occupied the same post for a long time. They are used to working with the old laws and they refuse to accept that any wrongdoing in Maceió can be attributed to the law. The law sets up a certain model for land occupation that doesn't suit everybody and leads to complaints. Despite this, they insist that they cannot do anything about the law. They don't even want to question it'. (Planner 2, SMPD)

This lack of control opens the doors to the free operation of the real estate market and also to unconstrained construction on the outskirts of the city. Both activities are outside the law, - the real estate market tries to 'buy the control' and the outskirts of the city usually lie beyond the jurisdiction of the law. The influence of the real estate market on urban planning can be observed when a decision to legalise property rights is reversed.

> 'What decides the way, where and how the city works is clearly the real estate market and the building firms and even more the real estate agents who have a lot of power and political influence.' (Planner 2, SMPD)

This situation of abandonment and lack of control is also reflected in the legal system, where urban problems have to take second place because of the many cases involving crime and imprisonment.

> 'I'm beginning to see that the legal system is unaware of urban issues, because it has such a huge backlog of trials. There is no specific department for urban problems.' (Public Prosecutor)

The absence of punitive measures because of the weakeness of the legal system allows the agents to take advantage of the confused situation to their own benefit.

> 'The executives who theoretically should be the most badly affected, took advantage of the situation and perhaps won out. They keep complaining, but

at the end of the day, they think that disorder is no bad thing. I tried to take legal action against the municipal inspectors, but these officials also take advantage of the confused situation. They claim that they lack the working conditions to carry out their responsibilities properly, not even a car or office furniture. Everybody shifts responsibility to their superior or boss and this process leads up to the Mayor; so nobody is responsible. At the end of the day everyone is guilty and we are in a state of deadlock.' (Public Prosecutor)

One aspect of urban planning that has received little attention, concerns its influence on the integration/segregation of the urban poor. There is an evident inability (or rather a lack of will) on the part of the public authorities to plan an economic and social development programme that can benefit the poor. The unsuitable location of the new settlements is controversial; the planners argue that the state has adopted the wrong policy in locating the people far away from the centre. The policy makers claim that the state is concerned about the location of the poor people and wishes to take account of their needs. The members of the social movements condemn the location of the poor people in isolated areas on the outskirts of the city.

'The fishermen cannot live in the housing settlements [which are far from the sea] because they actually live off their fishing.' (Planner 3, SMHPS)

'We cannot say that there aren't any housing policies for the poor, but I really don't agree with the way they are being carried out. There have been many mistakes in this story. The notion of forcing poor people to move away from more populous areas should be a thing of the past but here it is still the practice. I am in the public service and I can see clearly that it is the will and intention of the public authorities who wield power, to hide the poor people from sight. They shift the problem far away, on the outskirts of the city. They are still a long way from changing their attitudes and finding another way of overcoming the problem.' (Planner 2, SMPD)

'I think that a great mutirão, or mutual self-help is needed to tackle the housing problem of Maceió, because there is a wide gulf between the wall of poverty and the wall of misery. The people are no longer concerned with poverty. The people who have money build huge mansions in closed condominiums. It does not matter if they are close to favelas, near the beach or in the Tabuleiro area, so long as they are protected. They are not worried about the social life outside the condominiums. The people who come from outside are those who are working in their houses.' (Social Movement 1, UMM)

The State and Municipality have different attitudes to the question of where to locate the poor.

> 'Now the objective of our programmes is not to locate a lot of people in the same place, because experience shows that this causes a serious problem of marginality. So we want to work more with small communal groups and in this way, we can obtain lands that are close to the centre and not too far from their work-place.' (Policy Maker 4, SMHPS)

> 'The concern about ensuring that the people live close to their place of work is unnecessary. Nobody has to live close to their work. What you need is to have an effective housing policy, good transport and accessibility.' (Policy Maker 1, AGAHU)

The policy of displacement encouraged by the state causes harm to the life of the poor people. Many of the families that live in the precarious settlements today came here as the result of eviction and forced removal carried out by the state. In most cases, the families that were evicted lived in areas that were unsuitable for housing, such as slopes and river, lagoon banks, when there was no other place available. The evictions occur when the property speculators are interested in the area, which is the case in the entire region around Mundaú lagoon, in the town centre of Maceió.

> 'I was evicted from the shores of the lagoon and before that I had lost everything in a flood.' (Fabiana Amara, VE, 23)

The presence of the state is ambivalent and generally inappropriate and even harmful to the people.

4.3.3   State Actions as seen by the Inhabitants

In the view of the residents, the activities of the state clearly achieve little and, in most cases, are not intended to improve health, education, employment or lead to enhanced income-earning oportunities. In general, the state is absent. For example, when the inhabitants of the precarious settlements go in search of a job, it leads to the following reactions:

> 'We can't read and suffer acutely. They invite me to study, but my head is just too full so I can't do this. When the work begins in the mill, I go there to cut sugar cane, and I spend the whole day there, and then go back in the hotel, where I help the girls. Later on, they give us tickets so we can come back home.' (Maria Cícera da Silva, CL, 55)

The state can be regarded as absent since it fails to supply quality education to the children of Cidade de Lona and they have to attend a school financed by an MP because there is no alternative. In the view of the parents, the school does not take care of the children and its activities are governed by electoral considerations. The absence of the state means that there are constant violations of human rights and the inhabitants of the precarious settlements virtually live in a lawless state. The social policies hardly cater for their needs and decisions are made very slowly; some residents have already died before something is done. During my first visit to the Cidade de Lona, in 1997, I witnessed the pain of a mother in front of a newly born baby who had just died because of the intense heat in the canvas shacks. Since that first visit, not much has changed.

'... Things here really are just for those who have patience, lots of patience.' (Fernanda Torres, CL, 17)

'... It's a mess here; every now and then someone gets killed. Once in a while the police enter the place, but anyone who needs a house has to wait... many leave, because they do not have the patience to wait...' (Jobete Maria, CL, 51)

Although the Constitution sets out specific provisions for mothers in the period of maternity and children under seven, these groups do not receive preferential treatment in any of the programmes or policies. The mothers have no access to crèches where they can leave their children under seven while they are working. Many leave the children on their own or do not work and thus fail to provide resources to support the home and this intensifies their degree of poverty.

All the inhabitants of the three settlements were highly critical of the actions of the State of Alagoas and the City Hall of Maceió. With regard to the Lula Government, the majority condemn its performance, especially when it concerns social benefits, which they believe are distributed unfairly and in an irregular way.

They are aware that the social programmes set out by the central government aim to give some sort of income on the basis of the number of children at school, and think that this is not favourable to the people. They state that this extra income only entrenches the families in their poverty-stricken condition since it encourages a

growth in the number of children in poor families. When I asked what changes had occurred in social policies since the beginning of the Lula government, the Cidade de Lona Focus Group answered as follows:

> 'He changed it 100%, now everybody is asking for charity and giving birth to new babies every year.'

> 'The best thing he could have done was to give everyone a job. Now, all the women want to have a baby every year so they can get the school allowance. If they have more children, it will be better for them and they will receive more money.'

> 'What we need is jobs for the young and the elderly. At my age, 55 years old, if I ask for a job, the employer says: You are too old, if I ask for charity, the people say: Go and find a job! What am I supposed to do? I cannot retire yet. The government should help those who never worked before to take up their first chance of employment. At the same time, they should provide jobs for elderly people until they retire. This is not happening. The Bolsa Esmola [Charitable Allowance] as distinct from the Bolsa Escola [School Allowance] does not really help. Some men receive the money for four or five children, spend all the money on alcohol, and leave their wife and children without anything. Why not give him a job? If these men had a job they would have to work and would not be waiting for that money, without making any effort.'

The residents think that the state is offering the wrong remedies, while at the same time, failing to provide what is really needed - an opportunity to work.

4.3.4   The Driving-Force behind the Planners and Policy Makers and their Social Representations

The interviews with planners and policy makers enable us to understand what motivates them and how the planners perceive and react to the social practices of poor people in the precarious settlements. There is a generally unfavourable view of the urban poor: they are ignorant, unprincipled, lazy, dishonest, and should go back to the countryside.

> 'In the Conjunto Carminha, there is a huge grotto that should be used for a vegetable garden. It would be a suitable place for a street market, as there are the right conditions to attract people there. But what happens? The poor people survive from the food left over from the central market. In their settlement, they suffer from hunger, and have to sell their houses, and return to the shores of the lagoon.' (Planner 3, SMHPS)

'The municipality received a piece of land as a donation from the Secretaria do Patrimônio da União [SPU, Federal Secretary for Property]. We made a suggestion: let's go and relocate part of the homeless people in this land. The comments are: Are you crazy? You will spoil the land if you put poor people there? It seems to me that these people [politicians and officials] are living in the past and not now when the rights are assured by law, the Constitution and the Statute of Cities.' (Planner 2, SMPD)

Many academics, members of protest movements and even some state officials believe that the state is ineffective because there is no public control over urban growth. In particular, there is no ability on the part of state officials to deal with poverty. The reasons for this inefficiency are that there is no political interest in emancipating the people. The state officials fail to take account of the social movements and their aspirations.

'The planning officials are incapable of running the city and suggesting alternative courses of actions that take into account the wishes of the social movement.' (Social Movement Leader 1, UMM-AL)

'The public sector is not prepared for housing projects. There is no infrastructure, equipment or qualified personnel. The state usually contracts private firms to carry out its work, including the social workers. I think this is completely wrong.' (Planner 4, UEM-HBB)

The housing policies were evaluated by all the interviewees in a highly critical way. In Maceió the strategy is to hinder poor people. The real estate market plays a role in formulating these definitions:

'I appreciate that the social housing schemes is a way for the state to face problems without bothering more important people, especially the bourgeoisie. The policy makers are not committed to the people involved, and for this reason there is no housing policy. For instance, why do they want to move the garbage dump? Because the garbage is bothering the houses bought by the bourgeoisie. If we keep the poor far away, it is better. It means that they are not going to disturb the tourists on the beach or threaten the bourgeoisie in their houses and flats. Everything has a rationale.' (Academic 1, UFAL)

Apart from the question of political interference, the planners have an insufficient knowledge of reality, including the data obtained by the state policies.

'We have 400 subnormal settlements [in the SMHPS's data there are 135].' (Policy Maker 4, SMHPS)

'We adopted a top-down approach. We think that if we have studied and have a formal education, we know everything about the poor. The poor do not even have to talk to us. I can be in Brasília and plan how to the help the poor of Coité do Nóia, without being there. It is arrogance on our part.' (Academic 1, UFAL)

'I've never worked in a fovea.' (Policy Maker 3, UEM-HBB)

'I think that there is a lack of ideas, and it is important to involve people, because it is very hard to deal with problems that we don't know about. The Housing Department theoretically knows about them and looks at the city map and sees where there are critical situations. It is guided by the map, but when it reaches a particular place it finds that everything is completely different. The Department has data that does not fit in with reality.' (Social Movement Leader 2, MDF)

As discussed earlier, the lack of technical capacity, allied to political manipulation brings about an inefficient form of urban planning.

'I think that there are some very good officials, but they are badly used, and there are many talented people who are wasted. There are a lot of people scattered in different areas and a lack of clear objectives.' (Planner 5, UEM-HBB)

'The real culprit is the extremely weak institutional structure that we have. The Department and officials are poorly prepared to argue with the politicians.' (Planner 2, SMPD)

The interviewees also commented on how the public officials were not socially commited. This included academics, who seemed to be unaware of how bad the situation of the poor people in the precarious settlements of Maceió really was.

'In my case, what remains is hope. My disappointment began when I saw the people's needs and the people each day. Where are the Masters and PhDs that are doing nothing? We just hear criticism. Nobody wants to feel guilt, although I do. It is time for the new professionals to take action. At the University, there are several people that can collaborate and change the situation without fear. Once, during the dictatorship, my colleagues were in prison as communists, the pressure on them was strong, but today it no longer exists.' (Architect 2, ex-COHAB)

A sign of the widening gap between the professionals and the people is the fact that the students of Architecture and Medicine of UFAL, for instance, have been forbidden by their parents from going to the favelas to carry out fieldwork because of their fear of violence.

4.4   Social Movements and NGOs in Maceió

The social movements in Maceió are isolated and lack the power to put pressure on the state to introduce a coherent housing policy which will benefit the poor. There has never been a discussion among social movements (or between them and the state) about housing problems. Some of the leaders argue that they became involved in the social movements because there were so few of them. They saw participation as one of the only ways to improve *their* living standards:

> 'I was working voluntarily in the church on Saturday, Sunday or during holidays and on the days where I did not have classes. I do not know if I entered [the social movements] out of belief or necessity; I think that it was from necessity. (Social Movement Leader 1, UMM)

The relationship between the social movement and the state is ambiguous. The social movements are blamed for showing political bias but at the same time they would really like to receive financial support from the state:

> 'Today it is harder to work in the organisation, because there is no support from the city and the State. The movements are manipulated by the politicians on a massive scale. I was invited to support the interests of politicians, but I did not agree with this. I think that the reason we [the movement MDF] do not have an income today is that we want to work in an independent way, without associating the movement with politics.' (Social Movement Leader 2, MDF)

In fact, in the view of the leadership of the social movements, there are only two courses of action when dealing with the state, being co-opted or working independently. This means there is no place for negotiation; the only language is to exert pressure - particularly by occupying land or buildings, until a solution is found.

'The people resist being turned out, when the eviction notice comes. So they occupy a state building and the expulsion order is suspended.' (Social Movement Leader 1, UMM-AL)

'The associative movement in Alagoas is dominated by the political representatives. The political parties control each association.' (Social Movement Leader 1, UMM-AL)

'There are hardly any social movements. They are all co-opted and each movement affiliated with a particular party or politician, who forms a bridge with the people. We did not do any social work with this association because each member of the association board is linked to a politician.' (Academic 1, UFAL)

As each movement is affiliated with a political party, there is no cooperation; each movement has its own struggle and methodology.

'I committed myself to the people to defend them from corrupt politicians, bad government and anybody who try to manipulate the people as a mass, and control their lives. Unfortunately, people are confused by the government, and are confused by their colleagues [other social movements] which are responsible for health, education, and housing policies. The staff are beginning to join the parties and attempt to use the movement to canvass votes for their party.' (Social Movement Leader 2, MDF)

In the opinion of the members of the social movements, those who implement the state strategies have a lax and permissive relationship with politicians. They do not respect the municipal laws, and overrule the decisions of the social organisation by means of a direct and clientelist relation with the politicians and their associations.

'There are three associations in the neighbourhood. It is a political game; the politician donates lands without the knowledge of the Housing Department. By the time the Department arrives on the scene, the politicians and associations have already given away all the land to the people. The Department has parcelled out the land into lots, but does not have any control over it.' (Social Movement Leader 2, MDF)

This results in *unequal reciprocity* structures and *clientelistic* relations between the poor and elites, even though the poor must rely on the elite for *patronage* in good times and protection in bad times (Neves 1998). *Clientelism* is a feature of rural North-Eastern society and stems from the relationship between landowners and

residents. In the city, the same type of relationship is maintained by the politician who exercises the power of attracting the people.

> 'Nowadays agricultural coronelismo [oligarchical despotism] has disappeared and has been replaced by urban coronelismo. In the rural areas, the landowners are the *colonels* or despots, and here, in the urban areas the politicians are.' (Academic 1, UFAL)

Dependence and reciprocity still form the foundation of the relationship between civil society and the state/political actors. There is no tradition of NGOs working in Alagoas, although there are a large number in the North-East region, due to the restricted space for political participation in Alagoas society. There is a dominant group with others attempting to be near the centre of power, which has led to some social benefits. Those who do not have these ties have no chance of improving their living standards. The planners and the social movements look to the NGOs as a way of getting money from the state and a means of obtaining votes for the politicians. The NGOs think that they are weak and not in a position to change the political and social situation of Alagoas. They are very dependent on national or international resources and generally work on issues of national interest, such as helping the children of the garbage pickers.

> 'There are several NGOs, but I am not close to them. The NGOs work more in the area of charity, and are financed by public money. As the power of the state is shrinking, it wants to be relieved of its social responsibilities and in this transitional period, it is transferring resources to the NGOs. However, they only work in a superficial way and thus follow the logic of paternalism. Alagoas is the worst place in the world.' (Academic 1, UFAL)

Some politicians have their own NGOs which they use as a way of getting votes and resources. The people that work for these NGOs usually consist of the same public officials that are already paid a salary for doing the same work.

> 'Some guy [a planner and politician] asked me to establish a NGO, to carry out housing projects. He really made me this proposal, but it is unwise to generalise that all the NGOs are fake. I think the NGOs can be very useful in resolving conflicts.' (Academic 2, UFAL)

> 'The state does not know how to tackle the problem of children giving up school, but the NGOs are doing this, even though it is the responsibility of the

state. There is no commitment by the state which prefers to work with NGOs which are mainly organised by the policy makers. Everybody knows the politicians are the 'owners' of the NGOs. I cannot understand why the officials fail to carry out their work for the state, when they are paid for this. They don't do anything but leave everything to the NGOs. I think that they are just in the state to earn more money and nothing else; that's why I'm so concerned about this problem, this *invasion* of NGOs. The employees of the NGOs are all public officials that should do this work through the state, not through the NGOs.' (Planner 6, OC)

Despite these reservations, the social movements regard the NGOs as an important ally in other parts of the country. In their view, the NGOs could help them to achieve their projects and make a record of its history, especially in this time of extreme social fragility.

'Once we were organized; today we feel that the people's housing movement is very fragile. There are no dedicated people. Since at present it is easier to carry out state projects, the people are more attracted to the NGOs which are able to obtain resources with less difficulty. The people in the social movement are unprotected. Even with all the difficulties that we are undergoing in the housing movements, we have been offered large housing schemes. Selma Bandeira, Moacir Andrade, Santa Helena, Denisson Menezes, Gama Lins, Lucilia Toledo, Sonia Sampaio, Rosane Collor, a part of Benedito Bentes, Frei Damião, that was the Bathroom Street - everything through a constant struggle. Altogether we have constructed 10,000 houses. We don't have any auditing, technical support, research, or reports, to assist with this process. We don't have any evaluation. We know what we have done but no records have been kept.' (Social Movement Leader 1, UMM-AL)

Conclusions

Poverty in Alagoas is the outcome of regional disparities, the lack of industrial development and the high level of unemployment. The decline of small-scale agriculture has led to a huge wave of migration to Maceió where the rural poor have become the urban poor. At the same time, the constant problem of inflation, the state cuts in social expenditure, and the trend towards privatisation, have resulted in an abandonment of pro-poor policies. Paradoxically, the 1988 Constitution provided the basis for greater social benefits, and a wider distribution of financial resources. However, the availability of small pensions was not enough to check the increase of poverty. Left to their own devices, poor people in Brazil tend to build their own

houses in different parts of the city. The numbers of these dwellings is underestimated by the official statistics; moreover, they all lack basic facilities. The state of poverty only worsens and the city increasingly becomes a dichotomous environment with the poor separated from a rich landscape of well-planned urban design and an intermediate zone dividing the legal from the illegal: in this way, social and spatial segregation is formed. Not everyone has a right to the city. The law generally acts against the interests of the poor, and priority is given to preserving real estate. There was an inversion of this logic when the Statute of Cities was enacted, since this governed the judicial powers regarding how property could be used by society. The Statute offered a legal way to assure the rights to the land (under certain conditions) but it took no account of social-spatial segregation and the quality of the urban environment and so the evictions and relocations continue.

Maceió in particular has experienced an unplanned urban evolution and the poor have always resided in precarious locations. The absence of a consistent urban planning and housing policy has resulted in 50% of the land being illegally occupied. However, the rationale of the state as regards the poor and their housing is to act only in emergencies and to keep a low profile in the settlements, by remaining almost *invisible*. The standpoint of the planners of Maceió mirrors that of the state, and they clearly communicate its objectives. Illegality is regarded by the state as a *normal* characteristic of pro-poor housing. The state has attempted to improve its social policies but the poor people have a low opinion of them, since there is a serious shortage of schools, jobs and crèches. The people do not like the principle of receiving welfare from the state and would prefer to have a job. However, job opportunities are linked to location and controlled by the state, which believes that the poor should be hidden and out of sight. The policy of displacement is harmful to the poor because it usually moves them far away from their workplace. Although the segregation of the poor forms a part of the social hegemony, within the state, there is no agreement among the planners and policymakers about the best way to locate them. In short, state actions are not suited to the interests of most of the residents and urban laws only tend to encourage further segregation. In general, the construction industry and the real estate market shows little respect for urban laws and, these often give way to corruption, especially in election times when the politicians act as if they

are above them. Indeed, the state housing schemes are outside the law too and urban problems are not given priority by the judiciary. The only outcome of this situation is that *nobody* takes responsibility. The planners and policy makers are driven by an unfavourable view of the urban poor - and form a social representation (or stereotype) of them as being essentially lazy. Some planners are conscious of this injustice but it does not change the level of development and political awareness of the poor people. In general terms, there is no dialogue between the officials and the leaders of the social movements. The planners have an inadequate understanding of the reality of the situation and rely on a *top-down* approach. They have never worked in a favela and their data do not correspond to the real facts of the situation. The planners assume that there is a shortage of skills but in their view the problems can be blamed on a weak institutional structure. These officials are ill-equipped to argue with politicians and seem to lack social commitment.

The social movements and NGOs in Maceió are isolated and do not have enough power to strive for social change. Participation in them is driven by personal need and they are closely linked to the political parties because this is the only way they can run their activities. Their way of dealing with the state follows a kind of *script*: land occupation, receipt of an eviction notice, resistance against evictions, political occupation of public buildings and finally the suspension of the eviction order by the Justice Department. There are few surprises in this *urban game*. The social movements tend to divide the poor communities into different *factions* and there is no collaboration between them. There is only a political *game* involving the people, politicians and associations, which operate on the basis of clientelist relations and patronage, quite outside the influence of the state. The absence of NGOs is a sign that civil society is disorganised. The planners, for their part, regard the NGOs as a way of getting money from the state and obtaining votes. It is in the state interests if the public policies fail because this provides them with a way to transfer the resources to the NGOs, which are strategically controlled by the politicians. On the other hand, the social movements would like to have the NGOs to support them, especially to help them draw up their projects and make an evaluation of their work.

Chapter 5 - 'Everybody suffers here…'

The Daily Struggle in Vila Emater II and Cidade de Lona

Vila Emater II and Cidade de Lona are two of the three precarious settlements that have been studied for this research. The settlements were formed spontaneously in response to the poor people's housing requirements. In spite of their different origins and location, the two settlements display similar characteristics such as inadequate living conditions, uncertainty regarding land possession and a constant threat of eviction (see Map 5.1 for locations). The economic and work situation of the people living in these settlements is dire. Most of the residents make a living through *picking* - an arduous activity that involves searching for aluminium, plastic, cardboard and other recyclable materials that are then sold. Alternatively, they look for items for their own consumption from among the rubbish that is deposited either in the Municipal Waste Dump in the case of Vila Emater II or in the nearby neighbourhoods in the case of Cidade de Lona. Even though they do not constitute a new category of workers, the prevalence of waste pickers in these sites is testimony that the city is not a place of social and economic opportunities for everyone.

As has already been mentioned, this thesis aims at understanding the effects of state involvement on the daily routine of the urban poor, especially in their fight for spatial, social and economic inclusion in the urban fabric. Attention will be paid to the manner in which the residents seek survival and housing space, including the way they react to state actions. In both this and the following Chapter, I explore the daily round of the Vila Emater II and Cidade de Lona residents. The present Chapter studies each settlement separately, and provides an outline of their historical background, space, social organisation and internal and external power relations. In Chapter 6, the investigation discusses the similarities between the settlements and pays particular attention to the deterioration of urban work, the increase in violence and the social practices that are employed to mitigate poverty.

Map 5.1: Location of Vila Emater II and Cidade de Lona in the Maceió Urban Area
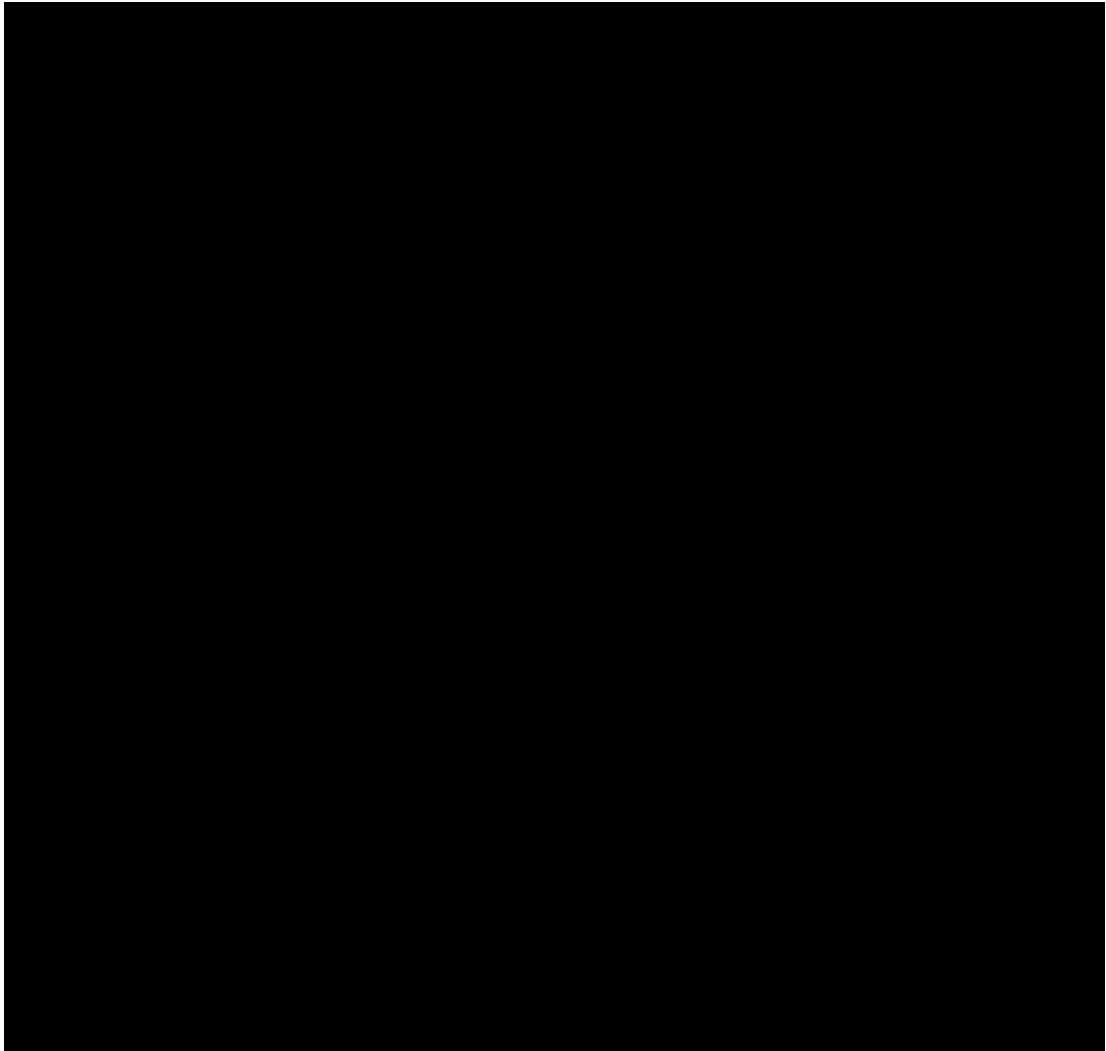
Source: Maceió, Prefeitura de (2000) *The Official Cartography Data Base*. Maceió: Maplan.

5.1 Vila Emater II: History, Spatial and Social Characteristics

Vila Emater II is an unofficial and precarious settlement that occupies a site inside the Maceió Municipal Waste Dump.[68] The waste dump itself has reached its

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[68] The location of the Municipal Waste Dump in 1967 did not originally represent a major problem for urban expansion since it was in area beyond the northern boundary of the city. However, the dump's proximity to the sea and other watercourses has been a problem, especially as all of the city's refuse, including medical/hospital waste have accumulated in the dump.

maximum capacity, which has led to a debate regarding its future location.[69] The Maceió municipal authority has decided to relocate the Lixão (name by which the area of the dump is known, meaning *big rubbish dump*) to a so far unspecified location. According to the reports of the Fórum Lixo e Cidadania de Alagoas [The Alagoas Refuse and Citizenship Forum][70] the reasons put forward by the state to justify the relocation have ranged from environmental degradation to the unsanitary working conditions in which the catadores [pickers] have to work. Yet in spite of its concern about the living conditions of the catadores, the state is virtually absent from the settlement. There is an evident lack of interest on the part of the state, which is illustrated, for instance, by the drawing up of the new Waste Management Plan where the recycling or the inclusion of the waste pickers' work are not taken into account in the new process of municipal waste collection.

Apart from the direct impact on the daily lives of more than 2,000 individuals that depend on the dump, the relocation and replacement with a park benefits local real estate interests. The Lixão and its precarious settlements are situated in an isolated but advantageous position near upper-class districts of Maceió with nice views of the sea and of the city.[71] As well as the Lixão settlements, there are three residential schemes in the area, which were built in the 1980s and designed to accommodate middle-income families, including state civil servants.[72] In the past 15 years, other middle and upper class condominiums have occupied several plots surrounding the site. The construction of these middle and upper-class housing complexes and condominiums reveals a tendency to mark out the northern coast of Maceió as an area for the expansion of the city. Today the residential ring around the Lixão area has increased and the waste dump and precarious settlements have become an

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[69] At the same time, there has been a discussion about the new Master Plan of Maceió, which includes the present location of the waste dump.

[70] Set up in 1999, the Forum brings together 80 institutions, among them, government bodies, social organisations, a State Public Prosecutor, and the Prosecutor of the Regional Labour Courts. The Forum encourages the defence of the rights of the children of waste pickers and the social inclusion of the pickers, and tries to construct (in a democratic way) an organised scheme for Maceió's waste that includes the work of pickers.

[71] Upper-class districts: Jatiúca, Ponta Verde and Farol.

[72] Conjunto Alfredo Gaspar de Mendonça, Conjunto Jacarecica I and II, and Condomínio Jacarecica.

obstacle to the expansion of the real estate market. (Photograph 5.1 shows the upper-class houses surrounding Lixão; Photographs 5.2 and 5.3 show the sea views from Vila Emater II).

Photograph 5.1: Surroundings of Lixão

Photograph 5.2 and 5.3: Sea Views from Vila Emater II

Since the 1960s, there have been people picking through waste in the Maceió dump.[73] People have built shacks within the waste dump and then returned to their place of origin, often the countryside, every weekend, every fortnight or once a month. According to the testimony of José Pedro dos Santos, a community leader, the land occupation began in 1980 when a woman, with two children ended up finding herself a place at the waste dump. She considered it 'a very good spot, where all kinds of good things [useful things both for her own and her family's consumption] would turn up in the rubbish'. Thus, she invited a part of her family to join her in building their shacks with scraps of canvas and pieces of wood that were collected around them.

A short time after the first shacks had been built, the Companhia de Beneficiamento do Lixo [COBEL, Urban Waste Treatment Company] decided to prevent the establishment of a favela, which already had 15 shacks (CEASB 2001). COBEL increased its surveillance and the 15 families had to leave the site and move to an area close by but out of sight, beside a cliff and on land belonging to the Companhia de Habitação Popular do Estado de Alagoas [COHAB-AL, Alagoas State Social Housing Company]. Thus Vila Emater I was founded. Two factors led to the favela being extended from the initial 15 or so shacks to a larger and more permanent presence. First, the increasing number of people seeking to work at the dump meant that there was more competition and this required the pickers to spend longer periods of time there to ensure their survival. Second, the pickers lacked the resources to pay for transport and rent elsewhere, and many of them were forced to reside within the waste dump.[74] Hence, the Favela do Lixão, as it was then called, accommodated more residents as each day passed.

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[73] The Municipal Waste Dump of Maceió is known as Lixão de Jacarecica [Jacarecica waste dump] or COBEL waste dump. Companhia de Beneficiamento do Lixo [COBEL, Urban Waste Treatment Company] was the institution responsible for the collection and transport of the refuse of the city of Maceió. The Superintendência de Limpeza Urbana de Maceió [SLUM, Department for Urban Hygiene in Maceió] replaced COBEL and currently has the task of collecting, treating and processing the city's waste.

[74] As in the case of Nanjido [Seoul] as described by Kim (1995), the advantage of living in the waste dump is to reduce expenditure on housing and minimise travelling expenses by living near to one's workplace.

However, as the process of organising the community progressed, the residents felt a need for a name that would have less negative connotations than were implied in the combination of favela and Lixão, and expressed a wish to be integrated in the urban fabric as an *ordinary* neighbourhood. They thus opted for the term *Vila*, which corresponds to a small collection of houses, and EMATER, which is the acronym of the Empresa de Assistência Técnica e Extensão Rural do Estado de Alagoas [Corporation of Technical Assistance for Rural Areas in Alagoas State]. EMATER was responsible for agricultural technical assistance to small farmers in Alagoas and its main office was located at the base of the cliff.[75] However, people in general, as well as the municipal technical staff and official documents and maps, continue to identify the area as Favela do Lixão (see Map 5.2 for the location of Lixão, Vilas Emater I and II, in the Jacarecica district).

In 1996, owing to some internal disputes some residents set fire to the favela. The event caused some families to move to the upper part of the cliff in the Jacarecica neighbourhood, in front of the entrance-gates of the Lixão, where they built their shacks. Today this comprises the area known as Vila Emater II. This new larger space attracted increasing numbers of the urban poor and COBEL lost control of the occupation principally because of uncertainties about who was the owner of the plot.

Vila Emater II is located in an area of approximately 20,000 square metres, beside a football field for the use of the community (CEASB 2004:1). The land belongs to COHAB-AL, but is currently in the hands of its receiver, CARPH.[76] Ever since these families first settled in this area, they have been threatened with eviction. After COHAB-AL went into liquidation, the land was put up for auction to pay off COHAB's debts to its employees. However, the lack of certainty regarding the ownership of the site has allowed these people to remain, although a rotational pattern of residence means there is a constant flow of people arriving and leaving in

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[75] EMATER was closed down during the Alagoas State reform in the 1990s.
[76] The site belonged to the State of Alagoas and was handed over to the COHAB (Law # 3646 of 29/11/1976) for the construction of social housing units, although this project was never carried out. After the closing down of COHAB, the State appointed a receiver to handle its assets and debts: the Companhia Alagoana de Recursos Humanos e Patrimoniais [CARHP, Patrimonial and Human Resources Corporation in Alagoas].

search of better prospects. According to José Pedro, in 1997 there were already 165 families living in Vila Emater II and working at the waste dump. A recent poll reveals that there are 246 families or 935 inhabitants.[77]

Map 5.2: Location of Lixão, Vilas Emater I and II
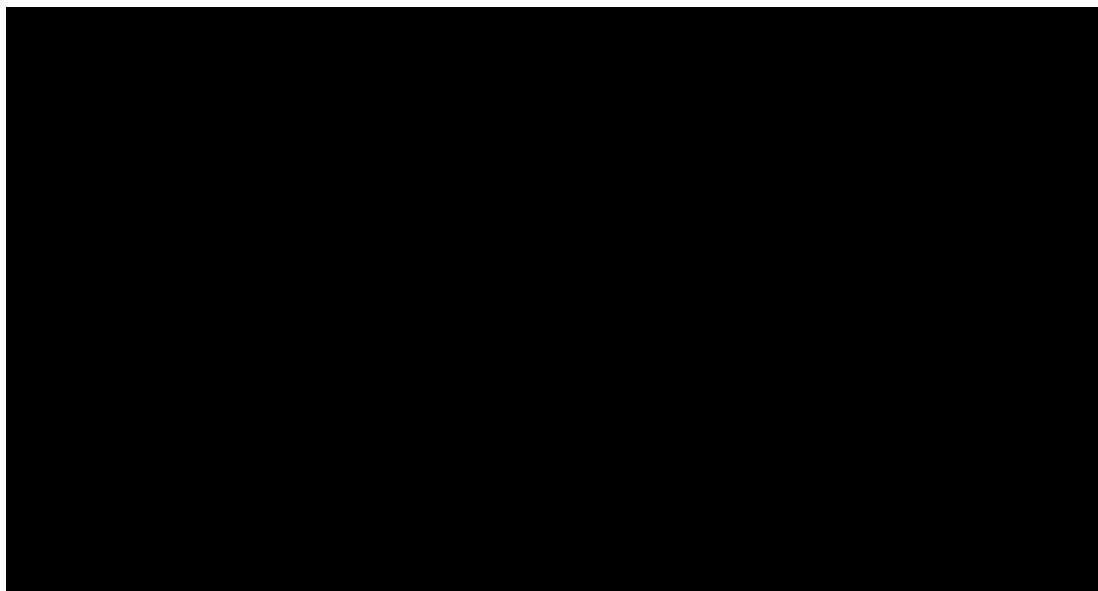
Source: Maceió, Prefeitura de (2000) *The Official Cartography Data Base*. Maceió: Maplan.

The houses, in most cases shacks, were built alongside each other, as new families arrived. This was the first sign of an embryonic system of organisation, which was adopted by the families with the aim of making the best use of the space available. Vila Emater II is a maze with makeshift passages (eight in all) and shacks huddled very close to each other. There are alleys where only one person at a time can pass by and if there is a fire the passages are too narrow for fire engines. According to one inhabitant, Vila Emater II is like a game; in other words, only those that know its rules can adapt to it:

> 'The slum [Vila Emater II] is like a figure of eight: anyone may enter it but they will always have to go out through the same place they entered…The slum is like a game or jigsaw puzzle. If you lived here you would know what it is like…what it is like to leave something in a corner, then later on come to check it and discover that it is not there anymore…Inside it [in the slum],

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[77] Poll carried out in September 2004 by AGAHU with the support of CEF, CEASB and SLUM.

everything moves backwards, you want to go to a corner but you can't, you have to go around.' (João, 21 years old, cited in Castro 2003:109)

Photograph 5.4 and 5.5: Narrow alleyways in the Vila Emater II

The Vila Emater II has a high population density, with an average of 3.8 people per shack. The houses with their backyards facing the sea have some open space behind them, but most of the houses take up all the available space in each plot. There is little space outside, sometimes a square metre in front of or behind the house. The shacks are made out of material found in the waste dump - materials such as wood, cardboard, tin, cement or asbestos and leftover canvas. Many have straw roofing. The ground inside the homes consists of a dirt floor, which in most cases is covered with a carpet or piece of cloth found in the Lixão. A minority of the houses are made of bricks and have tiled roofing. The streets are not paved; drainage is undertaken in an improvised fashion, through channels dug out manually, where sewage runs openly (see Photographs 5.6 and 5.7). Most of the houses lack bathroom facilities, and small spaces are used for washing instead; and some washrooms have septic tanks. During the rainy season, the lack of drainage makes the streets completely unsuitable for pedestrians to walk on. As one resident put it:

'When it rains we are like floating fish.' (José Pedro, 35 years old)

Photograph 5.6: House building materials

Photograph 5.7: Open sewers

Vila Emater II is served by an electricity system where the public lighting service is unsafe, due to the irregularity of the streets. Access to clean drinking water is one of the problems raised by residents; a public tap only works from 3am to 5am and from 4pm to 6pm. The shortcomings of these facilities are just some of the many obstacles that Vila Emater II residents have to overcome everyday when carrying out even basic activities. The vulnerability of the physical space (its liability to flooding, the risk of fire and its proximity to a waste dump) together with the difficulties in obtaining basic services such as sanitation were contributory factors to the intense degree of suffering expressed by all the residents who were interviewed.

In the case study of Vila Emater II, I drew on two sources of data, the Social Profile[78] prepared by the Zerbini Agency for Social Development in July 2004, and the 25 interviews I conducted in February 2004.

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[78] UNICEF requested this Social Profile from an NGO, Zerbini Agency, within the context of the National Programme for the Eradication of the Waste Dump and Social Inclusion of the Pickers.

Figure 5.1: Layout of Streets and Houses in Vila Emater II
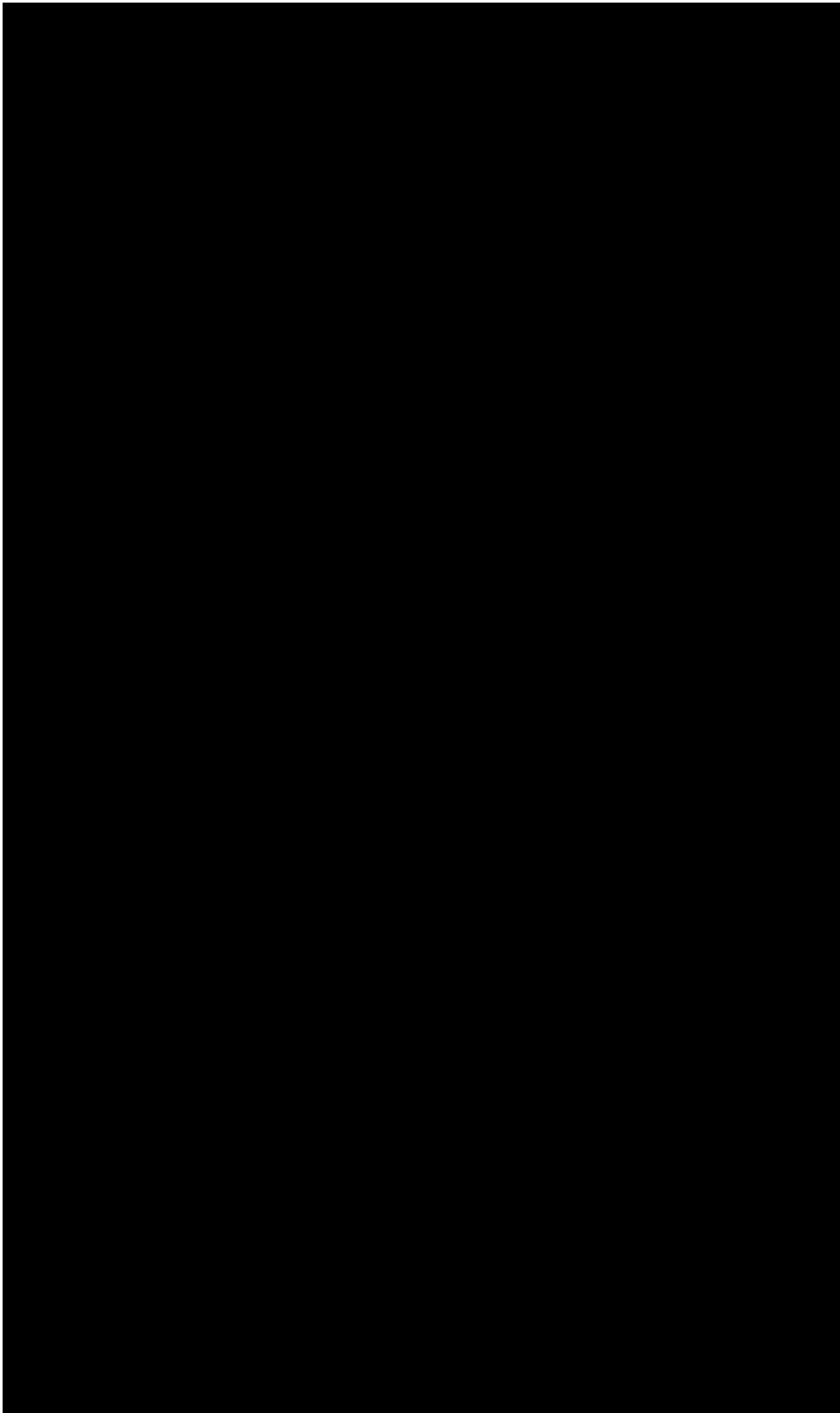
Source: CEASB (2004) *Planta da Vila Emater II*. Maceió: CEASB.

In the Social Profile, 471 families were counted, with 2,002 people involved and 600 pickers. The results of a poll carried out in September 2004, where the number of houses was 246, showed that a significant number of the pickers lived outside Vila Emater II. Hence, the Social Profile does not only refer to the inhabitants of Vila Emater II but also encompasses all those that work on the waste dump.

In my sample, over one half of the interviewees (13 out of 25), were from the countryside of Alagoas state, four were from Maceió and eight from the state of Pernambuco. In the Social Profile, one third of the participants were from Maceió. Hence, the majority of the pickers are a product of the pattern of migration from the countryside to the city.

> 'There are people from Roteiro, there are people from São Miguel [both small municipalities of Alagoas], and people from all over the place come here to work.' (Marina Francisca, 52 years old)

I interviewed only one man, since most of the men work at the waste dump during the day. According to the Social Profile, there are 16% more men than women among both the waste pickers and residents. With regard to age groups, seven out of 25 interviewees were under 30, ten were between 30-45, two between 45-55, and five over 56 years old. The Social Profile yielded similar results with 60% of the interviewees being under 40. Hence, there is clearly still a predominance of young families at a productive age.

All the interviewees had started living with partners or had had their first child before the age of 20, eleven out of 25 before the age of 15. Eighteen out of 25 interviewees had fewer than five children, which confirmed there was a trend towards a lower birth rate. Despite this trend, the average number of children born to mothers younger than 22 years old varies between 3 and 4. The Social Profile reveals that there are 121 children under the age of 1, from 1 to 6 years of age, 492 children, and from 7 to 14 years of age, 477 children. Thus, of the 2,000 people that depend on the waste dump for survival, more than half are young individuals under the age of 14. Another significant factor is that, according to the Social Profile, 40% of the families are headed by single women, a figure higher than observed in my sample: amongst

25 interviewees, seven women did not have a partner and had to take care of their families by themselves.

> 'There are more single than married women here, and many of them are not brave enough to go to the dump and prefer to go hungry and wait for God's help or for someone to hand out food supplies.' (Adelania Herculano, 22 years old)

Fifty-six percent of the participants of the Social Profile had birth certificates and an even larger number had voter registration cards.[79] Surprisingly, 60% of those surveyed had a labour card without ever having had a work contract.[80] Only 7% had a marriage certificate. With regard to home ownership, 20 out of 25 had their own shack, which had either been obtained by squatting or purchased. Some lived in shacks lent by either the intermediaries [the buyers of the waste collected by the pickers] or other people [friends or relatives]. Others paid rent at the rate of one third of the money they earned per week. The interviewees reported the existence of a sort of village whose *owner* rented shacks for R$10. The Social Profile confirms the figures of 19% living in rented homes, 8% in borrowed homes, and 70% in their own homes.

With regard to education, the picture is rather dismal. Although 15 out of 25 interviewees had received some education, most of them declared that they were illiterate, despite the fact that in some cases they had attended school for 5 years. This Social Profile has a general chart which shows that 37% were illiterate, 38% attended school for at least four years of elementary education and only 5% had completed their education at elementary school. Birkbeck (1978) in his studies of waste pickers in Cali found a similarly low educational level, which he explained as another sign of the lack of funds for education within the household, and the need to send children out to work at an early age.

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[79] Official document that grants bearers aged 16 and over, the right to vote even if they are illiterate.

[80] Official document where all labour contracts are registered and that guarantees the bearer full labour rights.

The pickers are subject to a large number of health hazards[81] and the Vila Emater II residents repeatedly mentioned some of these dangers:

> 'At night it is better [to work] because of the temperature. In addition, there are fewer people, but it is very dangerous. Every now and again, someone is killed. One day a tractor dumped a load of waste on top of me. I ended up with a swollen leg and almost died, I thought I was going to be buried alive.' (Maria José da Silva, 41)

The health problems most frequently mentioned are due to the proximity of the waste dump, where flies, mosquitoes, insects in general, snakes, and rats act as carriers of diseases, in particular of diarrhoea, dengue fever and cholera (50%, 12%, 4%, respectively, according to the Social Profile). Diarrhoea and other digestive tract diseases can be attributed to the consumption of foods found while picking up waste.

> 'The health problems here are quite serious; at home everyone has had health problems as a result of eating things picked up at the dump.' (Marina Francisca, 52)

Health care is mainly provided by the Health Care Centre at the foot of the hillside (86% of the residents attend the Centre according to the Social Profile). According to my sample, the Centre keeps anyone seeking medical treatment waiting at the end of the queue and it faces problems similar to those of the National Health System as a whole, with delays in treatment and a lack of medicine. Under these circumstances, many resort to self-medicating at the pharmacy (20%), and to churches, healers and mystics (16%), as reported in the Social Profile.

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[81] According to Hunt (1996:111-112), working with waste causes many serious health risks: 1) waste which may be contaminated with faecal material; 2) biological and chemical contamination due to hospital waste; 3) toxic materials of industrial waste; 4) food poisoning and gastro-enteritis caused by eating edible materials; 5) tetanus or other infections resulting from being cut by sharp objects; 6) the consequence of carrying heavy loads of material; 7) direct competition with dogs and sometimes dog bites and rabies; 8) burns and inhalation of smoke from fires; 9) respiratory diseases in the rainy season; and 10) the consequences of physical or sexual harassment.

5.1.1 Social Links and Power Relations in Vila Emater II

After the fire mentioned previously, the 165 original families began to organise themselves. José Pedro stated that 'they felt that if they were united, they would be able to make it in life and later on, own a real house'. Thus, in 1997 the inhabitants of Vila Emater II formed the Associação dos Moradores da Vila Emater II [ASMOVE, Vila Emater II Residents' Association]. This Association was set up to fight for and assist the survival of the pickers. Following the emergence of the community organisation, there were changes in the daily round of Vila Emater II residents, especially regarding the provision of facilities: public tap water, electricity supply, having a health centre in the vicinity, and an earth track linking Vila Emater II to the main road.

Moreover, three significant initiatives in the history of the Association's struggle should be pointed out. The first was the participation of the Residents' Association in the Citizen's Budget Programme, which enabled them to begin the struggle for a housing project.[82] The Association managed to obtain approval for its request to build houses in Vila Emater II and for the project to be carried out in 1998. However, the project was never begun. At present, the Association's main activity involves regularising land ownership to comply with the Statute of Cities and the concession granted by the state that entitles people to use the land as *shelter*. The second initiative, which was undertaken with the support of the NGO CEASB[83], was to carry out a campaign among businesspeople for the establishment of a community day-

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[82] The Citizens' Budget adopted a similar system to that employed in the Participatory Budgeting of the municipalities controlled by the PT [Workers' Party]. The experience in Maceió was deemed by everyone involved as not having been successful on account of weak and sporadic participation and the failure of the municipality to put into effect the measures agreed on in the assemblies (Interview held with Planner 3, Maceió Citizen Budget, February 2004).

[83] The CEASB is a non-profit making organisation, which supports social assets and rights regarding the environment and cultural heritage. Founded in 1996, its activities were originally restricted to the city of Salvador. It began to operate in Maceió in 1997 in partnership with the Maceió Municipal Education Department, as advisor to and coordinator of the Lagoas [lagoons] Programme, which was aimed at participative environmental management of the Mundaú-Manguaba Lagoons-Estuaries Complex. Its work in schools led CEASB to integrate the Forum Lixo e Cidadania. The CEASB then became aware of the plight of the waste pickers, and included their concerns in its field of action. Today the CEASB is an important advocate of reform in questions concerning the waste pickers.

care centre, the construction of which was currently nearing completion at the time of the fieldwork. The day-care centre is designed to cater for the children who would otherwise be compelled to accompany their parents' waste picking. The third significant initiative was the establishment on April 1st 2002 of the Cooperativa de Recicladores de Lixo de Maceió Ltda. [COOPLUM, Waste Recyclers Co-operative of Maceió Ltd.] as a result of discussions held within the Fórum Lixo e Cidadania de Alagoas. The main objectives of COOPLUM are the generation of jobs and income, the quest for more dignified means of survival and the strengthening of the community organisation to ensure a more effective struggle for pickers' rights.

The political and organisational work of the residents' Association is characterised by a constant struggle against the intensive, fragmented and alienated features of the catador's work and by the self-centred attitude of the catadores themselves. Both are barriers to building social links. The daily round is based on an individual search for survival; there is no place for communal action based on claims for rights. The weakness of the social ties can be attributed to the time-consuming nature of the work and energy required by the individual in the fight for survival, the absence of political organisation, the geographical dispersal of the workplaces, and the difficulty the catador has in achieving a positive social identification. The waste picker prefers not to be associated with any entity that clearly identifies the kind of work he or she is carrying out.

Attempts at organising associations have for the most part been unsuccessful. For instance, the newly created COOPLUM whose aim is to break the vicious circle of exploitation, which the task of waste picking entails, faces strong opposition from the present *buyers*. The process of consolidating the Co-operative has been very unstable and counterproductive. After finally obtaining the minimum number of people required for a Co-operative by law, (22 participants), people started to abandon it because in the first few months they got very little return, as the amount of recycled material was very small. Some gave up the Co-operative and went back to working in the waste dump. From an organisational perspective, it was a great loss when one of the most influential members of the Co-operative's board of directors resigned

because of internal disputes and the bullying tactics employed by SLUM.[84] The Co-operative was reduced to 11 members, which made it impossible for it to function. However, today some of the former members have returned and the Co-operative has been seeking new members and new projects to broaden its scope. The Co-operative has guaranteed the income of 20 families whose work involves screening and packing the selected material that comes from industries or condominiums. At present, about 25 tons reach the Co-operative each month and the money that is made from selling these recycled products is divided among the associated waste pickers.

Outside the co-operative, waste picking work is organised in a productive chain. It is made up of three basic elements: pickers, sorters or classifiers, and buyers (intermediaries). The objects found by the pickers are handed to a classifier who sorts out the material for the buyer. The buyer is a specialist in each of the various products; each buyer has his own classifiers, and the classifiers supervise the groups of waste pickers. In the Maceió waste dump, there are 8 buyers, 24 sorters, and about 600 pickers. This structure has an internal self-regulation with high levels of control and coercion. There is a considerable difference between the amount received by the waste picker and the price paid to the buyer by the recycling companies. A kilo of plastic bottles, for example, is bought from the waste pickers for R$ 0,10 (US$ 0,03) and sold to the industry for R$ 0,42 (US$ 0,14).

> 'The people that buy things from us get more money because they buy to resell, they have a storage depot and they sell things to people outside.' (José Pedro, 34)

This situation supports the view of Quijano (1974) regarding the exploitation of poor people that the marginal sector is not exploited directly by the bourgeoisie but by the middle and low sectors with which the marginal sector maintains close relations (cited in Peattie and Aldrete-Haas 1981:165). The buyers seek to offset the

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[84] The leader was José Pedro who in discussions with the SLUM stubbornly defended the rights of the waste pickers. SLUM put pressure on the other Co-operative members, demanded that José Pedro should be removed from the board and that CEASB should be prevented from entering the Co-operative premises and not be allowed to go inside the shed (CEASB 2005). José Pedro, in turn, has become a prosperous classifier and moved to Vila Emater I.

exploitative relationship with the pickers by suggesting their role is to be protective and cooperative. In the same way as local politicians or drug dealers in favelas, they adopt a paternalistic attitude and imply that they are the only ones who can help and protect the poor people in emergencies. The buyers have never been waste pickers which means that there is no *vertical mobility*. They are generally people that formerly earned an average low salary but saw the waste dump as an opportunity to earn more money.

The classifiers, on the other hand, had already been waste pickers and because of their experience and speed were chosen by the buyers to help control production and supervise the groups of waste pickers.

> '… he buys material from the people who work on the waste. To start with, he used to pick out waste but afterwards he began to buy it.' (Flávia de Souza, 27)

Júlio (a current buyer) adopts a paternalistic approach that exemplifies the relationship between the buyer and the waste picker. He projects an image to the waste pickers of someone that will help them, by giving them shelter in the storage room or even by trying to help them in other areas. This was the case of one of the women interviewed who almost gave one of her children to the buyer to bring up.

> '**When someone works for him, and they do not have a place to live, he lets them live in the storage room. He helps people. He saw my suffering and wanted to take me in, but with a bunch of kids, it is hard. He even offered to bring up one of my kids.' (Maria José dos Santos, 35)

The fragmented and alienated activity of the waste picker, together with the hierarchy they belong to, explains why both they and the community association are weak. For example, there is no way they can take collective action with a view to raising the price paid for the collected material. The buyers oppress the pickers in a hierarchical power structure that is sometimes regarded by the pickers as natural and acceptable because it brings them benefits. As with relations between the catador and buyer, the boss is considered to be good when he helps those who work for him, by buying medicine, lending money, or handing out food - small favours that are enough

to secure the loyalty of the catador because of his desperate situation.[85] However, far from leading to any kind of reconciliation, the hierarchical relations that exist between the catadores, bosses (buyers), families and organisations, actually reproduce power relations that are based on oppression or dependence.

The residents of Vila Emater II are organised at two levels; as well as, the Association of Inhabitants, some of them are also members of the Pickers Movement, which has a representative on the Movement's National Committee. Owing to the amount of associated work, they organised a group of craftswomen that now no longer exists. Among the difficulties encountered are the following: partners who do not allow women to participate; the difficulty in fitting the timetable of waste picking in with the group meetings and the difficulty in selling the products (CEASB 2005). With regard to the Pickers' movement, analysis conducted by CEASB (2004), found that the pickers from the Vila Emater II were in the 'process of developing their potential'. They took part in meetings held by the *Waste Pickers Movement* (Brasília, June/2001; Caxias do Sul, January/2003; Juvenópolis, May/2003) and had recently given support, to the *First Meeting of Waste Pickers of the State of Alagoas*. Two members of the Alagoas delegation of the Waste Pickers' Movement were chosen to form a part of the committee set up to represent the workers and negotiate on behalf of the movement in the North-East of Brazil. They were also encouraged to involve the rest of the community in the organisation of the movement.

Despite their apparent strength the community organisations remained fragile even though they were supported by political activities and driven to resist the constant threat that the waste dump would be closed down. The Social Profile reports that only 9% of the interviewees took part in the residents' association and 8% had links to religious groups. In my sample, 12 out of 25 interviewees stated that they took part in Association meetings whenever they were held. I was present at some of these and noticed the limited participation of the residents. During a meeting aimed at planning

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[85] Freyre (2000 [1933]) regarded hierarchy as the central feature of the Brazilian social system. However, he saw it as providing an opportunity for reconciling people involved in conflicts, or antagonistic situations. Birkbeck (1979:178-179) also deals with the question of establishing hierarchies but as a form of domination and control (over the catadores).

an architectural project for houses that would be built through the Programa Crédito Solidário [Federal Solidarity Credit Programme][86], the few people that were present were summoned to take part in a public hearing about the relocation of Lixão with transport provided. However, only five individuals showed up to represent the community. The stigma that attaches to the waste-pickers means they are not in a position to form an association easily. They do not want to reveal their occupation as waste pickers and the fact that they do not assemble together means that they are not identified as a *class*, since they do not wish to let others know what conditions they live in.

The residents of Vila Emater II do not have much trust in the local leaders who view the activities in the waste dump as menial and of no value. The pickers believe that the leaders have very few qualities, and regard it as undignified to be receiving orders from others whom they consider to be in a worse (economic) situation than themselves. This hostile relationship is generally caused by the leadership style, which in some cases reproduces a system of power relations.

> '...it's hard for me to go to the meetings, but I've already gone to so many meetings that I've lost count. They have a lot of meetings in this place, but nothing gets solved; most of the people don't even go anymore…' (Benedita Digna, 27)

> 'It is very important to have an Association, because the leaders see so many things. But here the leaders are in a worse situation than ours.' (Damiana Maria, 36)

> 'I had an argument with the people from the association, after that I left it. When I need something, I beg, but I won't go to the association again, because they humiliated me and treated me like a dog, so I walked out…' (Bertolina Renilda, 56)

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[86] The Programme of Solidarity Credit consists of a Federal Government housing financing subsidy programme. 'The Programme is aimed at meeting the housing needs of low-income groups (organised by co-operatives or associations), and at the production of new housing and the completion or renovation of already existing housing with the funds that are designed to benefit people.' (Ministério das Cidades 2004, author's translation). The CEASB drew up a plan to allow Vila Emater II to benefit from this housing subsidy scheme.

These reactions lend support to the view that there was an overall feeling of political and social isolation resulting from the following: weak social organisation, an acute lack of political activity, and a half-hearted attempt to obtain their basic rights.[87] The work at the Lixão is based on individual relationships and this labour structure does not leave room for collective organisation. Organised political participation is weak making it difficult to negotiate with public agencies. Most of the existing progress that has been made in negotiating for new policies was the result of initiatives undertaken by external agents such as CEASB, UNICEF, the Brazilian Red Cross, and other social organisations. These institutions should be acting merely as mediators, but as a result of their actions, they have become important protagonists. They are responsible for the existence of the Waste and Citizenship Forum, which has brought many benefits to the residents and waste pickers. CEASB, with UNICEF financial support, has also raised the profile of children in waste picking and forced the state to take action. The Programme for the Eradication of Child Labour [PETI][88], a joint action with the Municipal Departments of Education, Health, Housing and the State Department of Social Assistance, with the support of NGOs resulted (see Chapter 6). CEASB is the driving-force behind the struggles of the waste pickers in the absence of any other social organisation.

The different organisations that have been working in the area for about eight years have found it difficult to bring about substantial changes in the lives of the residents. For the most part, they have been working in a disjointed way in spite of the

[87] Wacquant (2000) points out, in the new urban poor settlements there is little sense of community, making almost impossible to organise collective action without adopting either a messianic approach or repressive measures.

[88] With the publication of the study Diagnóstico Preliminar dos Focos de Trabalho da Criança e do Adolescente –1996 [Preliminary Diagnosis of Key Areas of Child and Teenage Labour] and Mapa Indicativo das Crianças e dos Adolescentes (1997-1999) [Illustrative Map of Children and Teenagers], by the Ministério do Trabalho (1996, 2000), 75 sectors were found to have economic activities which could be identified with child labour. Some of these activities are profoundly ingrained in the culture and economy of Alagoas: cane cutting, tobacco growing, street vending, and waste picking, were regarded as the most dangerous and violent of the activities. In the light of the national debate surrounding data on child labour, the Brazilian Child Citizenship Programme was implemented in Alagoas by the National Social Assistance Department. In April 2000, the Programa de Erradicação do Trabalho Infantil [PETI, Programme for the Eradication of Child Labour] replaced this programme.

existence of the Waste and Citizenship Forum where projects and actions come up for discussion.[89] A technical and political perspective that is influenced by real estate interests in the area clashes head-on with the perceptions of the NGO that is working towards creating stability for the residents and includes the building of houses. The educational work undertaken with the children can only have an effect if the living conditions of their parents improve. However, unless alternatives for survival are provided to the catadores, the imminent relocation of the waste dump will run counter to these improvements and may impair attempts to improve the lives of the waste pickers' children.

5.2 Cidade de Lona

5.2.1 Background History of Cidade de Lona

Cidade de Lona is the best known favela in Maceió because it is situated alongside the main road from other towns and the airport to the centre of the city. Cidade de Lona is also known by the name Favela do Eustáquio [Eustáquio Slum] because it is situated beside the Conjunto Eustáquio Gomes, at the former northern boundary of the city of Maceió. The plot of Cidade de Lona originally belonged to COHAB-AL, and was earmarked to build residential blocks for low or medium income civil servants. However, COHAB-AL was closed down and is currently in liquidation. As in the case of Vila Emater II, the land is now being administered by CARHP.[90] After the closure, the former employees of COHAB-AL tried to take legal action to secure their workers' welfare benefits. Following judicial proceedings, it was decided that the land of the closed COHAB-AL, whether occupied or unoccupied, should be put up for auction, to pay off the debts of the company, including the workers' welfare benefits. An unused publicly-owned plot is attractive to the Homeless Movement as it means that relocation is less likely. The Cidade de Lona has been one of the largest

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[89] The Forum is a space where the difficult living conditions of the waste pickers can be discussed. This is where the projects and actions of all the instituitions involved are debated.

[90] Companhia Alagoana de Recursos Humanos e Patrimoniais [CARHP, Patrimonial and Human Resources Corporation in Alagoas], an institution created to handle issues related to the Personnel and Equity of nine defunct public companies.

occupations of the UMM-AL and served to signal to the state the strength of the organisation (see Map 5.4 for the location of Cidade de Lona).

There is in fact not one Cidade de Lona but at least three. The first occupation occurred in 1994, when 1,000 families organised by the Homeless Movement decided to occupy the plot.[91] When this happened, the police reacted promptly to prevent the land occupation; however, the people's resistance was strong, and they refused to leave the land.[92] The Alagoas State Government and the Maceió Municipality was mainly concerned with the value of the plot and the city's image. After several negotiations, the authorities decided to give the occupiers a small plot of land without any facilities and behind the Prison Complex. It was called the Conjunto Santa Helena (named after one of the PT MPs, Heloísa Helena, who had vigorously supported their cause). The living conditions in the Conjunto Santa Helena were worse than had been the case in the Cidade de Lona. There was no water, electricity supply, or transport. The quality of the shacks was the same. The inevitable happened. People started to sell their shacks and search for another place to live.

In 1999, 300 families evicted from a nearby public area belonging to CEF [Federal Savings Bank], reoccupied the same plot as the first Cidade de Lona. The land had been unoccupied for over four years before this new occupation occurred. On this occasion, the police were more violent than before and tried to expel the residents by force. COHAB-AL took out an *Action of Restoration of Land Possession* against the occupants, which was suspended for negotiation. This period coincided with the liquidation of COHAB-AL. New occupants arrived and some of them were Conjunto Santa Helena residents that having sold their small plots went back to the, now, second version of Cidade de Lona. The occupants resisted and started to protest about the policies with the Alagoas State. However, during this second occupation,

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[91] At that time, the Homeless Movement acted through the Movimento Nacional de Luta pela Moradia [MNLM-AL, National Struggle for Housing in Alagoas], which had been replaced by UMM-AL.

[92] Owing to the absence of documents or studies about Cidade de Lona, the information is based on interviews with the residents and planners, and the report compiled by the 'National Spokesperson of the Rights for Adequate Housing'.

the State remained silent and stated that the plot was not public property anymore; the COHAB-AL workers owned it.

Map 5.3: Location of Cidade de Lona
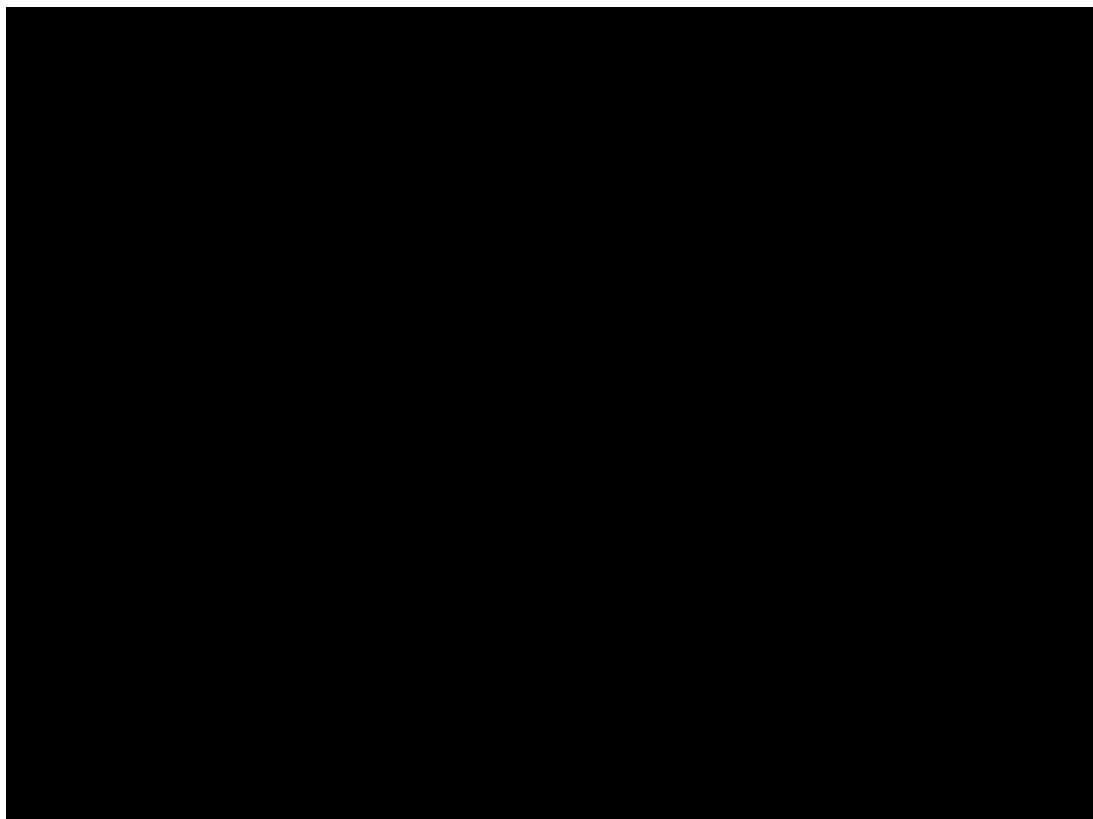
Source: Maceió, Prefeitura de (2000) *The Official Cartography Data Base*. Maceió: Maplan.

In February 2003, a portion of the same plot, which was still empty, became the object of occupation: Nova Cidade de Lona - The New Canvas City, with about 1,000 families. In addition, some families, which had benefited from the housing project in the Conjunto Denisson Menezes (see Chapter 7) sold their plot or house and went back to living in the canvas shacks of Cidade de Lona. During my fieldwork (2003-2004), the UMM-AL estimated that there were about 2,000 families living in the area, although it currently adopts a figure of 800 families when negotiating with the authorities. These negotiations, ongoing since the second occupation more than eight years ago, have been unsuccessful. The residents and leaders of Cidade de Lona associated with UMM-AL have held several public demonstrations including marches of over 20 km to the town centre, as well as

erecting blockades on the highway as a way of drawing attention to their living conditions. The residents hope that there will be good news from the state about a housing project, as happened with Conjunto Denisson Menezes. The aspiration of all the residents is to be moved to a house with good facilities. Despite being *invisible* to the actions of the state, they still feel threatened by the prospect of being evicted. The residents of the neighbouring Conjunto Eustáquio Gomes[93] blame Cidade de Lona for the increased rate of violence and problems with the electricity supply. The inhabitants of Conjunto Eustáquio Gomes have already submitted several petitions with the aim of forcing the authorities to evict the families settled on Cidade de Lona. Thus, apart from having to endure precarious living standards, the Cidade de Lona residents suffer from social rejection that hampers them in their efforts to tackle the problems of their poverty and segregation.

Most of the families in Cidade de Lona live under canvas roofs; there are only 25 brick houses. There is a lack of basic facilities and environmental sanitation although the plot is flat and could easily be provided with water, electricity, drainage and rubbish collection. There are some public taps scattered around, but they only offer water at specific times of the day.

> 'Every day I go to the tap, I carry water five or six times a day. On the next day my legs are hurting, my head too. This happens every day - a little bucket on my head and two in my hands' (Marlene Paixão, 53)

> '… the water isn't running any more, it comes out one day and on the next it doesn't. The other day I had to make a journey for water - it was raining, I got there wet through, and I even became ill.' (Rosineide Ferreira, 27)

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[93] This housing complex for low to middle-income groups was built by COHAB-AL in 1986 and according to one of the planners interviewed the high number of residents who defaulted on their loans was one of the key factors responsible for the closure of this organisation.

A power plant, was promised by the Companhia de Eletricidade de Alagoas [CEAL, Alagoas Electricity Company] but was never installed, despite the negotiations between UMM-AL and the Company.

> '… we went to speak to the President of CEAL; we had a meeting, they were to come and put in the posts. We sorted it all out - they've been here, they measured… they asked us to help when the posts arrived but up to now they haven't arrived.' (Maria Selma, 44)

The engineers came to measure up the area but never returned to complete the installation.

Unlike the previous land occupation, which was organised by UMM-AL, the most recent Cidade de Lona received more attention in terms of spatial organisation. The leaders of UMM-AL decided to divide up the plot into small strips of 8 metres by 14 metres, which they regarded as being the minimum size of land necessary for a family to live in. Each of the residents occupied one lot and built their house with the material they had at hand (see Map 5.5). The houses were mostly made of canvas or metal sheets covered with straw or tiles. The residents had built gutters to drain away the water and rain from their lot. After the new organisation of the shacks, there were cases in which the original gutters were covered and this caused drainage problems.

> 'On that side it is always good, but this side here, is terrible, when it rains. It's depressing; the water comes up to here. Before they measured everything,

everyone made a gutter; afterwards, everyone covered the gutter and the water is blocked, and there is nowhere for it to drain away. With any shower of rain, this part turns into a river, and it starts flowing inside the house.' (Maria Selma, 44)

The shacks were arranged in a relatively organised manner with a network of streets but with no alignment of the shacks, which has given rise to a jagged outline, with various alleys-ways and entrances and this makes it easier for crime to occur.

'…I used to live there [in the centre of the settlement] but it didn't work out because everything was stolen there. Then I bought this shack on the corner; I paid R$80 [US$26] for it in two instalments - only for the shack, not for the piece of land…' (Marlene Paixão, 53)

The zones in Cidade de Lona that are in the centre of the land are at greater risk of violence against the person and theft of the belongings of the residents. The shacks located by the main roads and at the corners are less vulnerable to burglaries and other kinds of violence.

Photograph 5.10 and 5.11: Outside and Inside Cidade de Lona

Apart from the precariousness of the spaces outside, the Cidade de Lona shacks are cramped and confined to being no more than a place to sleep in. Activities such as cooking and washing dishes and clothes occur outside of the shack.

'My house is very small; I sleep on the same bed with my four children, plus my sister and her daughter - seven in this bed. The house only has two rooms; it rains in the other room, that's why everyone sleeps here.' (Rosineide Ferreira, 27)

Despite the low-density of houses on the plot, the small shacks shelter a large number of people with different characteristics. Obtaining an accurate demographic and social picture is difficult because of the great mobility of those that participate or have participated in the land occupation. Even during the period when I was collecting data in Cidade de Lona, I was surprised to find that two residents among my selection of interviewees were moving. One sold the shack for R$100 [US$33] because her husband had abandoned her and her children and she had decided to move back to her hometown, in the countryside of Pernambuco, to be closer to her family. The other interviewee had bought the shack in the hope of getting a place for one of his daughters, while living in his own house. The UMM-AL rules stipulate that a person had to be living on the land before they could benefit from any future public project to build houses, thus the new *owner* would have to move in to the shack immediately. Two days later he had moved out and sold the shack to another family for R$100 [US$33].

This change of shacks and residents is a part of the daily routine of Cidade de Lona; nobody knows exactly who lives there or how many residents there are. Together with the Alagoas State, UMM-AL has requested houses for 800 families, without knowing precisely how many they might need. The reference files compiled by UMM-AL at the beginning of the land occupation are now out of date. In 2003, they conducted a questionnaire but the data were not collated or analysed. As a result, there are no data available to make a comparison with my sample. Nevertheless, I noticed that the social and economic conditions are similar to those observed in other analogous settlements, although this settlement might be in a worse situation since the area seems to be more vulnerable and marginal than the others, despite its good location.

Out of the 25 people interviewed, 20 come from the countryside of the State of Alagoas, three from Maceió itself, one from the countryside of the State of Pernambuco and another from the State of Bahia, although he had lived many years in São Paulo. This high number of residents originating from the countryside confirms that there is a continuous flow of immigrants to the city in search of opportunities. Normally, these residents came directly from the countryside to the

Cidade de Lona attracted by both the potential work opportunities and the possibility of obtaining a house from the state. All of them own shacks in the Cidade de Lona, having built or bought them from a resident that had left on the promise of being given a house.

> '… I came from my mother's home because I've heard that they were giving away this piece of land and so I built this shack...' (Maria Cícera da Silva, 55)

I interviewed 20 women and five men. Out of the 25 people interviewed, five people are under 30 years of age, 14 in the 31-45 age range, five, 46-55 and one over 56 years old. Thus, the people living in Cidade de Lona are for the most part in early middle age and form a part of an unskilled and unemployed labour force.

In the precarious settlements, people usually form partnerships early, after living with someone or having their first child, generally between the ages of 15 and 20. Nineteen out of the 25 people interviewed found themselves in this situation. Two out of 25 had formed a partnership before the age of 14, between the age of 10 and 13. Four, who were over the age of 20, had formed their own families.

> 'I got married at 10 because I could not stand my home. My parents were very protective and never let me go anywhere. I had to go from my house to work and from work to my house. I could not handle it. I was dating, my father didn't allow it, and so I ran off, because I felt stifled, I was always just working on the field.' (Maria Selma, 44)

With regard to education, 14 out of 25 said they had been to school. Of the 14, six had been in school for more than four years, and one of them graduated as a primary education teacher. Currently, almost all the children of Cidade de Lona study in the Fundação Coração de Jesus School that is run by the MP Givaldo *Carimbão*. Although the school offers full-time courses, the parents often complain about the treatment of the children and education that it offers.

> '… they spend the whole day at school. Sometimes they come home with stomach-aches. They don't eat at the right time, they eat several hours late. They are very upset about this and they don't want to go to school anymore. Inside the Carimbão, they are beaten and robbed, and when they complain, the Principal gets annoyed with them, tells them that they're lying and that

nothing of this kind is happening. No children will stand this and they only study for an hour; they go in at 1o'clock and leave at 2o'clock. This isn't a school; they just spend the whole day playing games.' (Rosineide Ferreira, 27)

The interviewees stated that most of the teenagers do not study or work and this gives them the time and energy to turn to crime.

'... I've heard the thieves took everything with a wheelbarrow and there was not just one, there were several of them, three or four young boys.' (Ana Rosa, 30)

'... there are a lot of young people addicted to drugs here and being a mother of very young kids. I think the problem is a lack of communication with the family. If there is not a person to say what's wrong and what's right, then it is much the same...' (Fernanda Torres, 17)

5.2.2 Social Links and Power Relations in Cidade de Lona

In terms of social organisation and power relations, the studied settlements are similar. Power relations are characterised by a strong and oppressive hierarchical system that operates a sequence of stages for acquiring control over those in the weakest position in the authoritarian structure. This is first apparent in the power exercised by parents over children, the male partner over the female, the boss over the worker, and the association leader and politician over the citizen. As regards individuals, the weakest elements in this power structure were the children and women. The communities of both settlements are characterized by fragile social links and social organisation, and a weak relationship with the urban social movement.[94]

In the case of Cidade de Lona, the great mobility, and the small number of relatives and friends who live nearby have weakened other social ties. Only nine of the 25

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[94] In Maceió there are two active urban social movements linked to housing issues: Movimento dos Sem-Teto [The Homeless Movement] called at present União dos Movimentos de Moradia de Alagoas [UMM-AL, United Housing Movement in Alagoas] and Movimento em Defesa dos Favelados [MDF, Movement in Support of the Dwellers of Shanty Towns], both of which are linked to political parties. The Partido dos Trabalhadores [PT, Workers' Party] supports the UMM-AL and the MDF is linked to the Partido Socialista Brasileiro [PSB, Brazilian Socialist Party] that at the time when the fieldwork was carried, controlled the municipality, and had been in power for 12 years.

people interviewed have friends or relatives living near the Cidade de Lona. This fact further intensifies the feeling of isolation, as it means they cannot count on family members or friends in an emergency. It is likely that in their previous place of residence they had been able to count on social ties since the majority of those interviewed declared that they had come from the rural areas of Alagoas. In many cases, the decision to come to Maceió was made alone with other family members remaining in the countryside. Their principal goal was to obtain a house by participating in a land occupation, as was the case with the other land invasions.

> '... in the country we lived on a farm, but the life there came to an end because they went on planting more and more sugar cane and knocking down the houses on the farm until the factory plantations didn't have houses any more, only the house of the administrator was left, and that was it! That's why there are so many people in the capital.' (Claudemir José, 31)

> '... I lived in her [his wife] parents' house in Joaquim Gomes [municipality in the countryside] and afterwards this business here came up, and so we came here to get a plot of land too.' (Manoel Messias, 37)

Thirteen out of the 25 people interviewed declared that they did not have any relationships with their neighbours. This echoes the sentiment made in Vila Emater II, where 12 out of 25 interviewees stated that the relationships were good, though there was not much collaboration between them. This is understandable in the light of the individualistic work structure of the waste pickers.

The lack of relationships with neighbours can be attributed to the high turnover of inhabitants that reside in the settlement. Those who had taken part in the initial occupation and still lived in the Cidade de Lona maintained friendships and acted as a reference-point for the new residents since they were able to give them useful information. However, the original atmosphere of co-operation and social bonding, especially among those who have lived longest in the Cidade de Lona, was not sufficient to bring them together in an association or even as a group. What was found in reality was an almost instinctive response on the part of the inhabitants when they found themselves facing constant threats of eviction.

This history of the Cidade de Lona social organisation illustrates the usual pattern of community organisation during a process of land occupation and negotiation with the authorities. During the first months of occupation, there was intense political and community activity to ensure the residents could stay on the occupied plot, in this case, Cidade de Lona. UMM-AL was present there every day through its coordinators who alternated with the local coordinators.[95] Meetings and other activities served to maintain tight links and cohesion between UMM-AL and the residents of Cidade de Lona. UMM-AL attempted to organise some activities to help bring about improvements in education and the prevention of illnesses among the residents.[96] Despite this, gradual disillusion over a period of time and a lack of perspectives regarding the best way to tackle the housing problem has made the UMM-AL focus on other Maceió settlements, in particular, on projects that can ensure the economic survival of the organisation leaders – for example, introducing courses and activities where the leaders are the trainers. Several of the resident's statements reveal a sense of gradually being abandoned by UMM-AL:

> '... some time ago, the staff of the movement did a lot of things here, but now they have forgotten everything. They are not even coming down here any more. We have been left in the lurch, there are no meetings, or anything else… at times they say it is going to work out, then it won't work out any longer. It is absolute chaos and nobody knows how it is going to end. ' (Maria de Lourdes, 26)

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[95] UMM-AL defines local coordinators as residents who can act as a bridge between the families on the plots and the general coordinators of UMM-AL. These local coordinators are replaced every two years.

[96] In a partnership between UMM-AL and the Federal University of Alagoas, a Centre for Nutrition Support was set up, where children were weighed and then supplied with a multi-mixture meal. The multi-mixture consists of bran, dry seeds, leaves and eggshells. These ingredients are toasted, ground, and offered to the children whose weight and height is below average for their age and who live in the poorest regions of Brazil. It continues to be used in the poor communities of Alagoas, despite the statement issued by the Federal Council of Nutrition that the multi-mixture should not be prescribed or recommended by any nutritionist. Several government health agencies and research and college institutions have published the results of basic and experimental research showing the flimsiness of the arguments extolling the benefits of the multi-mixture to human health. However, this Centre has been closed for more than three years due to a lack of professional and financial resources.

> 'Formerly, there was always somebody asking what we wanted, there was always assistance for anything, food or whatever. For the last two years, we have really been forgotten; even the meetings are not taking place any longer. Nobody comes down here anymore, not even people from the [homeless] movement.' (Maria Selma, 44)

Nowadays when they do get together, it is to hear the latest news, or to hold a demonstration, but they never get together to discuss their problems and seek a solution. When meetings occur, most of the residents only participate so that they can find out the news with regard to the situation of the land and what their prospects are. Eighteen out of 25 interviewees said that they took part in the association; although there is no formal residents' association of Cidade de Lona. UMM-AL can be regarded as the organisation responsible for the occupation and as responsible for entering into a dialogue with the state.

Paradoxically, social ties were forged. One of those interviewed highlighted the spirit of solidarity that dominated the Cidade de Lona in the first months of the occupation:

> 'It was wonderful here in the slum. Although humble, the people were very good. They always helped one another, always gave a hand to those in greatest need and there was no selfishness.' (Fernanda Torres, 17)

However, in the absence of a solution to the precarious situation in which the people live, the incipient social links do not last for long. The constant fear of being evicted and being transferred to a more remote area has been aggravated by the political performance of UMM-AL. The only link with the outside world is UMM-AL, which has segregated the community further by keeping a distance from it and giving priority to other struggles in the city. Furthermore, there have been complaints about the local supervisors' actions. The community sees the present supervisors as *weak*, inactive and unprepared to co-ordinate a land occupation which has so many problems. Some of the interviewees stated that the previous local supervisor was much more active and that the current ones treat the residents with indifference.

> 'It is each one for himself. Some guy, the leader, does not live here any longer. I asked to have a meeting because people were forgetting it, then they came down and we agreed to make a meeting each 15 days... Here we have Lú and Jorge, but they don't do anything for us. I preferred that guy who has

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just left us. He was a leader and fought for the people here, now Jorge and Lú don't do anything. I don't know why they took the guy out of here since he was the only one that did anything for us… now they have abandoned everybody here; in the past things were more organised.' (Rosineide Ferreira, 27).

The residents claim that the former coordinators were replaced because they disagreed with the general management of UMM-AL.

Due to the lack of any response from the State regarding the regularisation of land ownership, UMM-AL has decided to adopt a strategy of encouraging residents to build brick houses, so that if they are evicted they can still fight for compensation. This strategy hides the fact that the leaders of UMM-AL do not believe that the State will give this valuable land for the construction of urban poor houses. Thus, there is a deep and widespread feeling of abandonment and low self-esteem that makes the residents even more isolated and is weakening social ties.

'... we have really been abandoned... nobody ever comes here to see our suffering... ' (Maria Selma, 44)

Apart from the weak political action of the urban social movement, the destitute situation prevents the community from taking action such as demonstrations and other effective activities. How can the people pay their bus fares to go to the meetings/demonstrations if there are no resources even to eat?

'When there is a meeting some walking distance away, people always ask if there is food because nobody can walk when they are hungry. As a result, only ten or twelve people go to address the problem that affects the whole settlement. The people are really disunited here; there are only a few people fighting for so many; they only go if they will get something to eat. When we come back, they ask what has been discussed at the meeting. For God's sake, they must go there to know because it is in our interests; everybody should be united but they're not.' (Maria Selma, 44)

Before they can participate in the marches, it is necessary to be fed and often the residents of Cidade de Lona have to face hunger.

One of the ways employed by UMM-AL to draw the attention to the living conditions was to contact the *National Spokesperson for Economic, Social and Cultural Human Rights* programme.[97] From 28th - 30th of August 2003, the spokesperson for the *Right to Suitable Housing* organised a trip to Maceió, to find out about the housing conditions of 2,000 families that at that time lived in Cidade de Lona. During this trip, the spokesperson and his assistant visited Cidade de Lona, Conjunto Denisson Menezes and Conjunto Santa Helena.[98] The residents of these settlements gave an account of the living conditions in these areas. At the end of the trip, the spokesperson organised a public hearing to allow discussion of the situation and suggest ways of tackling the problem of the legal rights to land and housing in Cidade de Lona.[99] Many representatives were present at the hearing, including Maceió City Hall and the State of Alagoas Government. About 100 residents and community leaders were also there. They had arrived at the public hearing organised in a *Walk in Defence of Housing* after leaving Cidade de Lona and heading towards the centre of Maceió. During the hearing, the *National Spokesperson to the Right to Housing and Urban Land* gave a series of recommendations, which were later compiled in a report that was sent to the state agencies. No official answer was ever sent or received.

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[97] The spokesperson was part of the *National Spokesperson for Economic, Social and Cultural Human Rights* project. This comprises a group of specialists concerned with specific rights (education, health, food, suitable housing, work and environment) whose objective is to ensure that Brazil adopts a higher standard of respect for economic, social and cultural human rights, in compliance with the Federal Constitution, the National Programme of Human Rights and the international treaties of the Protection of Human Rights ratified by the country. This National Spokesperson is responsible for visiting places where there is an accusation of a violation of human rights and draws up reports for the State government to address the problems.

[98] Information about the trip is contained in the Mission Report for Maceió, November 2003, drawn up by Nelson Saule Jr and Letícia Marques Osório.

[99] The *mission* had the support of Central dos Movimentos Populares [CMP, Central Committee of the People's Movements], Grupo de Estudos sobre Problemas Urbanos do Departamento de Arquitetura e Urbanismo da Universidade Federal de Alagoas [GEPUR, Study Group concerned with Urban Problems of Architecture and Urban Planning Department of Federal University of Alagoas], Movimento Nacional de Luta pela Moradia [National Struggle for Housing], União Nacional por Moradia Popular [National Union for People´s Housing], Sindicato dos Bancários de Alagoas [Alagoas Bank Clerks Trade Union], Instituto Polis [National NGO], COHRE [Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions] and OXFAM/Brazil.

Conclusions

Vila Emater II and Cidade de Lona are both land occupations, which originated in different ways. They are located at opposite ends of Maceió but share similar characteristics: unsuitable living conditions, insecurity of land tenure and a constant threat of eviction. The chance of obtaining work in this period of *new poverty* is very restricted, since the city is no longer a place which can provide opportunities for everyone. Waste picking is one of the few alternative occupations where one can make a living. In this study, I have drawn on the concepts of the *daily round* and *territories of poverty* as a means of understanding the ways in which the residents ensure their survival and try to be integrated with society. I have examined particular features of the new poverty: the issue of housing space and the way the residents react to state actions (on a micro and macro scale). Thus, the question of segregation is regarded in both its temporal and spatial aspects, together with other factors such as the historical background, the space produced, social organisation and the internal and external power relations of both of the settlements.

Since Vila Emater II is a place inside the Maceió Municipal Waste Dump, it is an example of how the experience of urban space can undergo a process of intense social and spatial segregation. Over a period of time, a number of people have migrated to urban zones by living and working in Vila Emater II. The settlement and the Lixão are situated in a commercially desirable area in so far as they are surrounded by a residential belt near the upper-class districts, with views of the sea and the city, and have thus attracted the attention of real estate agencies. The state is in the process of removing the Lixão; for reasons ranging from environmental degradation to the unsanitary working conditions of the waste pickers. Yet in reality, the state does not show concern for the waste pickers. The long history of people living in the dump since the 1960s, confirms that the state prefers to turn a blind eye to this human catastrophe. The state has left the people to live inside the dump, because they were out of sight. However, as each day passed and Vila Emater II was been forced to accommodate more people, it became impossible for the settlement to remain invisible. Added to this, the uncertainty about the ownership of the land reveals that the state has no control over the situation. The people want to stay in the settlement and give it a name - *Vila* - to distinguish it from a temporary favela, but

both the state and society insist on calling it *Favela do Lixão* (perhaps because they know that the people will not be able to stay there).

The aim of the land occupation of Cidade de Lona is to obtain a house for homeless people in a settlement formed by the UMM-AL. The strategy of the social movement was to occupy a publicly owned plot where the residents were less likely to be relocated. There is no community; the people come from different places. The number of residents fluctuates but the social movement calculates the figure to be 800 when it negotiates with the authorities. The UMM-AL estimated that there were about 2,000 families but in their unofficial report they said that there were no more than 500. There have been more than three successive occupations - it is part of an *urban game* (see Chapter 4), with the movement taking advantage of the delay of the courts to reach a decision (in the case of the rights of COHAB-AL workers). On the last occasion when the residents had to move out of Cidade de Lona, they were relocated to a remote place which had no basic facilities and where they had to live in the same kind of shacks as before. Then the people sold these shacks and built another Cidade de Lona again.

These territories are made up of waste and almost everything comes from the dump. The poor quality of the space or surroundings and the lack of facilities cause an acute degree of suffering that is an intrinsic feature of the daily round and induces a state of apathy among the people. Every single activity in their daily round (fetching water, for instance), is difficult to carry out. Most of the residents are young people of a productive age. Compared with other people, their childhood is limited; their adolescence too, since they have less school and often more responsibility (the girls have babies very early). More than half of the population is under the age of 14 and the head of the family is more than likely to be a single woman. The residents are virtually illiterate despite the fact they attended school for many years. There are also health problems, in the case of Vila Emater II aggravated by the proximity of the waste dump and the consumption of rotten food, but the residents are not given any priority when they seek medical treatment. Their rights are upheld by laws which stipulate that they should be integrated in society but in fact, this is not the case. As has been pointed out, 'there is a permanent separation between the structural

objectives of the social order and the living reality of the individuals' (Ribeiro and Santos Junior 2003:88, author's translation). Voter registration cards are one of the most important documents for the residents and surprisingly, many had labour cards although nobody has a work contract. Paradoxically, when it comes to social responsibilities, they submit to the requirements of the market law. They usually own their shacks although there is a market for rented shacks. The productive chain of waste picking work entails an internal form of self-regulation with high levels of control and coercion being exerted over the poor.

The community association of Vila Emater II has helped to change the daily round in a number of ways; these include the provision of facilities, fighting for a housing project (that gives the residents the right to stay on the land as stipulated by the Statute of Cities), introducing a community day-care centre, and encouraging economic expansion by setting up a Co-operative. However, the social organisation raises serious problems since it involves a constant struggle against the intensive, fragmented and alienating features of the catador's work. In fact, the association is very weak and has few representatives. The catadores refuse to recognise their identity as waste pickers, and want to believe their situation is temporary, even though some began work around 30 years ago.

There is no community association in Cidade de Lona. The UMM-AL conducted the whole process of organisation. The atmosphere of instability and hostility is an obstacle to community organisation. The concept of social networks is less relevant to this situation. Unlike the case of Vila Emater II, the insecurity does not encourage the families or friends of the residents to join them and this intensifies the feeling of isolation. The residents cannot count on relatives to help them in an emergency and they do not have good relationships with their neighbours. The middle class neighbours do not want the homeless to be near them (because of their *cultural fear* - something which stigmatises the poor and is an added grievance). The land occupation is blamed for the rise of violence and the burden put on the basic facilities and as a result they suffer from social rejection. They are alone and their strategies of struggle consist largely of resistance.

The people do not believe in the association because they think the leaders have very few qualities and are sometimes in a worse economic plight than themselves. Unfortunately, in the case of Vila Emater II, their ties with the national movement of pickers have had no effect on improving the life of the local territory. The overall feeling of political and social isolation does not help the negotiations they conduct with the public agencies. In the case of Vila Emater II, agents from outside (such as the NGOs and international organisations) become important protagonists but, after working for eight years have not been able to bring about any substantial and permanent changes in the lives of the residents. Although several strategies are needed to put pressure on the state to solve the problem of Cidade de Lona (including the National Spokesperson for Economic, Social and Cultural Human Rights Programme) eventually the residents will be tired of waiting for government action and will be forced to take matters into their own hands. When this happens, the state will no longer be in a position to make excuses for its failure to take appropriate measures. There is a clash of objectives, and although the state does not expressly admit it, it would like the Vila Emater II and Cidade de Lona to disappear altogether and the agents from outside to change direction - that is to attempt to create stability by building new houses. The fact is that no other alternative plans have been put into effect by the state, NGOs or social movements.

Chapter 6 - 'Occupy, resist, build and don't give up'

Urban Struggle in Vila Emater II and Cidade de Lona

This Chapter investigates how the daily round of the residents of Vila Emater II and Cidade de Lona is stigmatised by the legacy of poverty, land insecurity and political neglect, as well as the decline of urban work available to the poor (and the phenomenon of waste pickers and their working and economic environment). It will also pay particular attention to the problem of increasing violence, the psychological aspects of living in poverty, and the social practices involved in combating poverty (mobility, inertia and the means of achieving social mobility and survival). These issues reveal the way that people fight to be included in the urban social fabric.

The characteristics of work (or the lack of work) impose rhythms, attitudes, and collective and individual representations and these serve to worsen a state of poverty that is becoming increasingly chronic with each new generation. The feelings of vulnerability that are experienced, together with the deliberate absence of the state, the fragility of their social links, their constant uncertainty and various forms of violence, all stem from their insecurity with regard to land tenure. The absence of the state means the poor are compelled to employ social practices to alleviate poverty by themselves, occasionally using tactics that lie on the fringes of so-called *legality*. In the light of this, the next sections will explore the structural and environmental aspects of both settlements, as well as the residents' struggle against their condition of poverty and spatial segregation.

6.1   The Structure and Circumstances of the Daily Round

This section combines structural and circumstantial factors with the concept of chronic poverty, increased vulnerability and the violation of human rights. The concepts of vulnerability and chronic poverty are intended to show the effects of economic and social hardship and that poverty in the daily round of the residents is

permanent and handed down to future generations. The life stories of the residents are characterised by extremely deprived childhoods, which entail hunger, hard work, complications in obtaining access to school, the threat of an early death[100] and an absence of parental care, especially in rural areas. These conditions lead to premature sexual relationships and partnerships. The inter-generational legacy of poverty that the residents inherit from their parents will probably be passed on to their offspring and most are children or grandchildren of poor people. Despite recent social changes, there remains a high infant mortality rate and lack of birth control with many pregnancies resulting from a perceived need to produce large families to ensure that, at least, some children survive. There is also a lack of education, information, and access to contraception. Premature engagements increase the likelihood of separations, leading to new partners and new births, in a recurrent cycle of new needs, few gains and some losses. The heritage of poverty represents the first signs of inequality in the urban struggle and the lack of a level playing field.

The fragility of working relationships is a further aspect of poverty. The vulnerability caused by a lack of financial resources can be clearly observed in the daily round where scarcity is a constant factor of every day life. The interviewees also referred to the insecurity and instability caused by family and personal crises, numerous burglaries, sickness, family loss, the end of marital relationships and even weather conditions, (for instance continuous rain which prevents residents from waste picking).

> 'I have nothing. Nothing I have bought in a store - everything is from the waste. I work from Monday to sell on Saturday and eat on the same day and so on and so forth... day and night.' (Laura, 31, Vila Emater II [VE], cited in Castro, 2003:90)

The act of begging is common and hunger had been known before the residents moved to Maceió.

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[100] As shown in Chapter 4, the shortage of food and the precarious sanitary conditions are reflected in the high mortality rate for the first year of life in the Brazilian North-East. Whereas in the State of Rio Grande do Sul, the rate of infantile mortality in 2005 was 14.3 per 1000 live births, in Alagoas the rate was 53.75 (Ministério da Saúde 2005).

> 'We often spent a night and a day without even having a cup of coffee, so then we decided to come to Maceió.' (Maria Selma, Cidade de Lona [CL], 44)

> 'I lived on the streets, walked along the pavements and ate those stale loaves of bread.' (Maria de Lourdes, CL, 26)

The housing conditions further aggravate the pattern of destitution since the families' limited resources have to be spent on food, although at times it is needed for maintaining the canvas that covers their shacks.

> '... here we buy canvas and they just rip it up. We have very little money and we have to buy canvas, only canvas.' (Marlene Paixão, CL, 53)

> 'What I earn here is only enough for us to eat if we make a great effort. Today I haven't even made any food because there is no firewood and the gas has run out. That's why my father told me to go away to the country because here it's very dangerous, by myself with four children.' (Maria José Marques, CL, 34)

Most of the residents have only lived in houses made of adobe or shacks made of canvas, pieces of wood and leftover building materials.

> 'I've always lived in a shack.' (Fabiana Amara, VE, 23)

Vulnerability and segregation are also caused by the location of the housing.

> 'When I used to go and search for work they would ask me where I lived and when I told the truth they didn't want to give me work any more because I lived in Eustáquio in a canvas shack.' (Lucineide Ferreira, CL, 36)

This illustrates how the stigma attached to where they live leads to difficulties in obtaining employment.

There is also the constant fear of being evicted which means that it is pointless for the residents to invest in their housing and participate in community life. It should be pointed out that the Brazilian Constitution (Article 23) refers to the responsibilities of the state with regard to housing and segregation and the Statute of Cities recognizes and defines the right to sustainable cities as a fundamental human right. Yet, the right

to housing at Vila Emater II and Cidade de Lona is violated in several ways: lack of legal security with regard to the occupied land, unsuitable housing conditions and sanitation; and an acute shortage of basic facilities and services. Moreover, the Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil of 1988 guarantees every citizen a series of social rights as well as civil and political rights. Chapter II of the Constitution is devoted to the issue of *Social Rights*. Article 6 states the following:

> 'Education, health, employment, shelter, leisure, security, social welfare, protection for maternity and childhood, and assistance for the needy are all social rights in the provisions of this present Constitution.' (author's translation)

The right to health, enshrined in the Brazilian Constitution includes suitable nutrition and a healthy environment but this is not granted to the residents of Vila Emater II and Cidade de Lona. They suffer from poor transport, a primitive health care system, an inability to afford medication and a lack of healthy nutrients. I found several sick people, with motor, visual, oral and hearing disorders, sometimes caused by childhood malnutrition and many illnesses related to the nervous system.

> '… I have no luck in my life, nothing works for me, and I've been physically disabled since I was a child.' (Valdirene Correia, VE, 34)

> 'I only sleep when I take pills because I have a nervous problem.' (Maria Teresa, VE, 48)

The Constitution also guarantees a series of benefits for workers, but these are only applicable to those who have a job in the formal labour market.

> 'I've worked for more than 40 years and I have only been registered for social security for 9 months; I don't have the means to prove the time I've worked and even if I had I wouldn't have any right to retirement as I have only contributed to social security for 9 months.' (Rosita Neves, VE, 56)

Moreover, the prospect of the residents negotiating improvements in their living standards is extremely remote since their influence in political decision-making is waning. For example, in the discussions about the waste dump location or the management of the new waste dump, everything was discussed and decided in

advance by the politicians and policymakers with some input from the real estate sector, but with no participation of the people directly involved. The refusal of the state officials to take account of the opinions of the urban poor is a sign of prejudice and victimisation, as witnessed by CEASB (2002:11), in the case of Vila Emater II.

The following is a typical life story of vulnerability and chronic poverty, as well as an example of the denial of human rights that characterises the day-to-day life of the residents of the precarious settlements.

Box 6.1: 'The strongest kills the weakest'

Maria Lúcia is 40 and was born in the countryside of Alagoas, in Mata Grande. Her father worked in the field growing beans and corn and she helped with small jobs around the house and in the field. She worked in the morning and afterwards went to school, where she studied for four years and learned to read and write. Maria got married when she was 18 and lived in a farmhouse for three years and had her four children. She separated from her first husband, because he beat her frequently. She left the countryside with her four children and came to Maceió in search of better living conditions. She came to live on the edge of the lagoon Mundaú. Afterwards, they moved to a house in Jacintinho[101] that belonged to the mother of her new partner. The mother-in-law died and the house had to be sold in order for the money to be divided between several beneficiaries. Not having anywhere to go, they went to live on the streets. Her words give us a picture of what it is like to live on the streets of Maceió:

> 'We lived on the streets; under a tree in the Palácio do Governo square. The police warned us it was dangerous, because of the children, but we had nowhere to go. From there we moved to Farol, we also lived under a tree, on the pavements and under a balcony. They took soup to the girls; we lived this way for two years. We also went to the bus station where we stayed under a mango tree, and there were many people in the same situation, having to beg to survive. Life on the streets was bad; we took showers with our clothes on, on the street. We drank water straight from the faucet. We'd put a blanket on to change out of the wet clothes, right there on the street. People helped us; my husband would visit relatives in Jacintinho and would bring back a bag full of stuff for us to eat, and nobody stole anything from anyone. Here people steal, I wouldn't do this sort of thing, God forbid, my God I'd rather beg, but they say *get a job*, and I say 'If I could I wouldn't have to beg.'

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[101] The most populated low-income neighbourhood in central Maceió.

Not having anywhere to go and knowing about the occupation that was occurring in Cidade de Lona, Maria Lucia's family decided to participate in the *invasion* with the aim of getting a house. Currently, five people live in the canvas shack, two adults, and three children. One of them is a daughter and the other two are grandchildren that their children gave them to bring up. No one at home works because of their health conditions, as she says.

> 'Nobody works here; everyone is sick; my husband has stones in his kidneys and gastritis. He claimed his retirement fund, but has not received any benefit yet. He said he was not going to do it again; we will live as God intends us to. When his family can, they give us ten reais, another one gives five. When they can't, we go to the street to beg for money, because we are not going to starve to death, right? Steal, God forbid, I would rather beg than steal. His health problem was caused by his work, cutting sugar cane and making coal. I only worked when I was younger. Today I'm not in any condition to work, I went to work in a house, but the woman paid very little. She only paid me my salary in 3 instalments, so I said: you know what? I am going to leave, and live the way God wants me to. I'm also very sick; I have high cholesterol and a problem with my nervous system.'

Keeping the children and grandchildren in school is a big problem, because they do not have the necessary resources to buy school material. When the children needed material, she had to ask for it on the streets or in the Department of Education.

The only hope of having a better life is get a home, for they believe that because of the husband's illness there is no hope for a better life.

> '... my wish is to get my own house, and to live like this, there's no other way. I have a chance of getting a house here.'

Because of their financial situation, even if the state releases the plot she will not be able to build a house; she is going to need help.

> '… the association people said that whoever was able to build a house could build one and whoever couldn't … would have to remain in the shack. I can't do it. When the Government is able to make my house, I will be very grateful. I'll stay here in the shack as long as God wills because here, things hardly ever get sorted out.'

Violence is something that scares her but is also regarded as a part of their daily routine.

> 'It is very violent here; they have tried to kill me. There are many robberies and many crooks. Plenty of people have died here, once there were five deaths, all because of an old feud, drugs, one person taking someone else's place, the strong killing the weak.'

She believes that the government should give better assistance to the poor people, because their life is at great risk, if they keep living in this manner.

> 'I think the Government should give better assistance. Everyone here needs help, a job, doctor, school, medicine, everything. There's a lot of poverty here, their assistance is virtually non-existent, if we need medicine, there's no money to buy it. We have to use natural medicine; my husband has had pneumonia for four months.'

This account shows some of the ways the Vila Emater II and Cidade de Lona residents experience poverty in their daily round, and the extent to which this involved a constant struggle against their persistent heritage of poverty. Segregation and the absence of relationships with the established social order combine to deny the residents access to the information necessary for survival and to guarantee their rights as citizens. Only nine of the 50 interviewees stated that they had some knowledge of their rights as citizens. One of them underlined the relationship between rights and poverty by expressing his despair and stating that being poor is a condition that denies one everything, including one's rights.

> 'I don't know my rights, I'm poor, and I don't have anything.' (Ana Lúcia, VE, 32)

In the next sections, some of these experiences of poverty and the way they are linked to urban issues, will be analysed in detail - especially changes in working relations, violence, the psychological effects of deprivation and the reactions of the urban poor as expressed by social practices against poverty (for example, mobility, survival strategies and the struggle for land).

6.2   Changes in Working Relations

6.2.1   Decline of the Urban Job Market

As was expected, none of the 50 interviewees had a formal job, which means that everybody fell outside the protection of labour legislation. They formed a part of the growing mass of unemployed brought about by the new realities of the labour

market. In Brazil the higher rates of unemployment found among the lowest income groups has been caused by an incomplete and selective form of national, economic modernisation, as well as the global macro-structural transformations of the last 25 years. Moreover, the high levels of migration to cities have caused a rise in competition for unskilled jobs. The informal economy no longer offers so many job opportunities. These alterations in the labour market radically changed social practices and state actions, and brought about a new social experience within a new framework of relations, where a job is no longer the reference point. According to Telles (2006:63) there are today 'powerful socio-economic forces which are reshaping the urban spaces, redefining local activities and repositioning the hurdles that must be overcome and the potential for change. These forces have opened up social divisions that affect the household economy by resulting in important changes in family activities and bringing about new forms of socialising in social networks, as well as in urban practices and their domain.' (author's translation)

However the gulf that separates the advanced urban economy from the areas of social exclusion and the territories of poverty in Maceió (and elsewhere) can be bridged by forging links between different urban areas. The precarious settlements of Maceió bear all the hallmarks of the negative results of the fluctuations of the labour market: impoverishment, hyper-unemployment, and underemployment. Allied to an acute shortage of state funding for social policies, the lack of job opportunities in society means there is a need to adapt and find new ways of earning a living. One of the only means of work available for those among the urban poor with the lowest levels of education, and the least skills is waste picking (an activity that has expanded in the last ten years).[102] This is carried out either at the Lixão, or as a search for objects like cans, bottles, and bits of cardboard throughout Maceió, including the wealthiest districts in the dry season. In fact, the waste pickers of Vila Emater II complain about

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[102] Although the activity of the waste pickers goes back several decades, there are some people whose only job in life has been to pick waste; it took on a new social significance in the 1990s. Several converging factors brought the activity of the *informal salvager or recycler* into prominence: economic stagnation in developing countries leading to high level of unemployment, inadequate management of solid waste, and the ever-increasing use of plastic, glass, paper containers and packaging.

the *poverty* of the waste, because the most valuable rubbish has already been picked and never reaches the dump. The competition is getting fiercer everyday.

The local economic activities at Vila Emater II revolved around the waste dump.[103] Fifteen out of 25 of my interviewees admitted that they were waste pickers and four were building constructors who also occasionally worked at the waste dump. Some residents were away sick or taking care of sick people. Two interviewees ran businesses in the area - a snack bar, and a small grocery store. Only two interviewees regarded themselves as unemployed; a house cleaner and a teacher. One interviewee reported being a *voodoo priestess* [mãe de santo].[104] None of the participants had formal jobs and only one received redundancy pay. The people in the settlements represented the *leftovers* of the labour market that according to Auyero (1999:48) 'was a permanent structural feature that was never absorbed by the hegemonic, capitalist sector of the economy, not even during its expansionary cyclical phases.' The earnings of the urban poor are too low to enable them to purchase what they need for long-term survival and subsistence. The higher cost of living in urban areas aggravates the poverty and vulnerability of the urban poor because they have not managed to accumulate any assets (Mitlin 2005:5-6).

Four of the interviewees stated that they had worked as pickers of recycled material.[105] Unlike the residents of Vila Emater II, who have a source of financial income, even though their work may be degrading, there are not many occupational prospects for the inhabitants of Cidade de Lona: they cannot acquire a proper job

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[103] The Social Profile of the Vila Emater I and II residents showed that 88% were waste pickers, 6% building constructors, and 3% rural workers. Other occupations that registered less than 1% included the following: housekeeper, clerk, baker, security guard, messenger, car washer, manicurist, driver, office boy, and door attendant (Agência Zerbini 2004).

[104] A priestess of the Afro-Brazilian religions, she is able to interpret the message of the gods by reading *búzios* [conch shells]. She also prepares offerings for the gods to achieve certain objectives (of a material, sentimental, economic, family or health nature).

[105] A report drawn up by the National Spokesperson for Human Rights for Suitable Housing and Urban Land states that 'almost all of the inhabitants live from picking up and selling cardboard' and carry out their work by means of improvised small pushcarts in the streets near Cidade de Lona (Saule Jr and Osório 2003:4; author's translation).

because they lack an address. Nobody wishes to employ someone that lives in a shack on an illegally occupied piece of land. In addition, they cannot leave the shacks to look for work without taking precautions because their shacks might be broken into. Nine were housewives, who begged on the streets or worked as *diaristas* [domestic workers] cleaning, ironing or washing, when they could. Five received state welfare benefits or had retired with a meagre state pension. Seven claimed that their monthly income was US$25. Six stated that they earned US$55. The resident with the highest income among the 25 earned US$70, which was well below the National Minimum Wage at that time (US$120), while three residents stated that they lived on US$15 per month. Many of the young people and children that lived in Cidade de Lona were forced to work to help their parents.

> 'We live as God intends it, I wash some clothes now and then, but I haven't got anything, so the boys work as bicycle watchers and get 2 or 3 *reais*, and that's how we live'. (Rosineide Ferreira, 27)

The following life story is an example of a young man's experience of constant unemployment despite his skills. He showed considerable initiative when he turned to waste picking to support his huge family without any help.

Box 6.2: 'I would like to have a job, but where can I find one?'

José Cristovam is 37 years old and was born in Maceió. When a child he lived in a straw *Taipa* mud hut in the Jacintinho district. He remained in school until the fourth year. After a lot of conflict, his parents were divorced when he was 12 years old. Despite having decided to live with his father, at 17 he felt his father had abandoned him because he married another woman. So José Cristovam decided to leave his father's home and carry on a life of his own. He went to live with a younger brother in a shack at the favela Grota do Cigano [Gypsy's Cave] whilst working as a gardener and painter. At 29, he met his current partner and they set off to live in Alagoas's North Shore region. After the birth of their second child they returned to Maceió, to his father's house. After a fortnight, his father asked them to move out. He was able to rent a house, but since he was unemployed, he was unable to pay for the rent. They moved out once more, this time to his mother's house in Northern Alagoas. After the birth of two more children, he heard about the Cidade de Lona.

> '... this was when we heard about this favela, through the word of folks in the streets, who said there was a favela of canvas, and that we should go there.'

Photograph 6.1: Cross-section 1 of Interviewees of Cidade de Lona
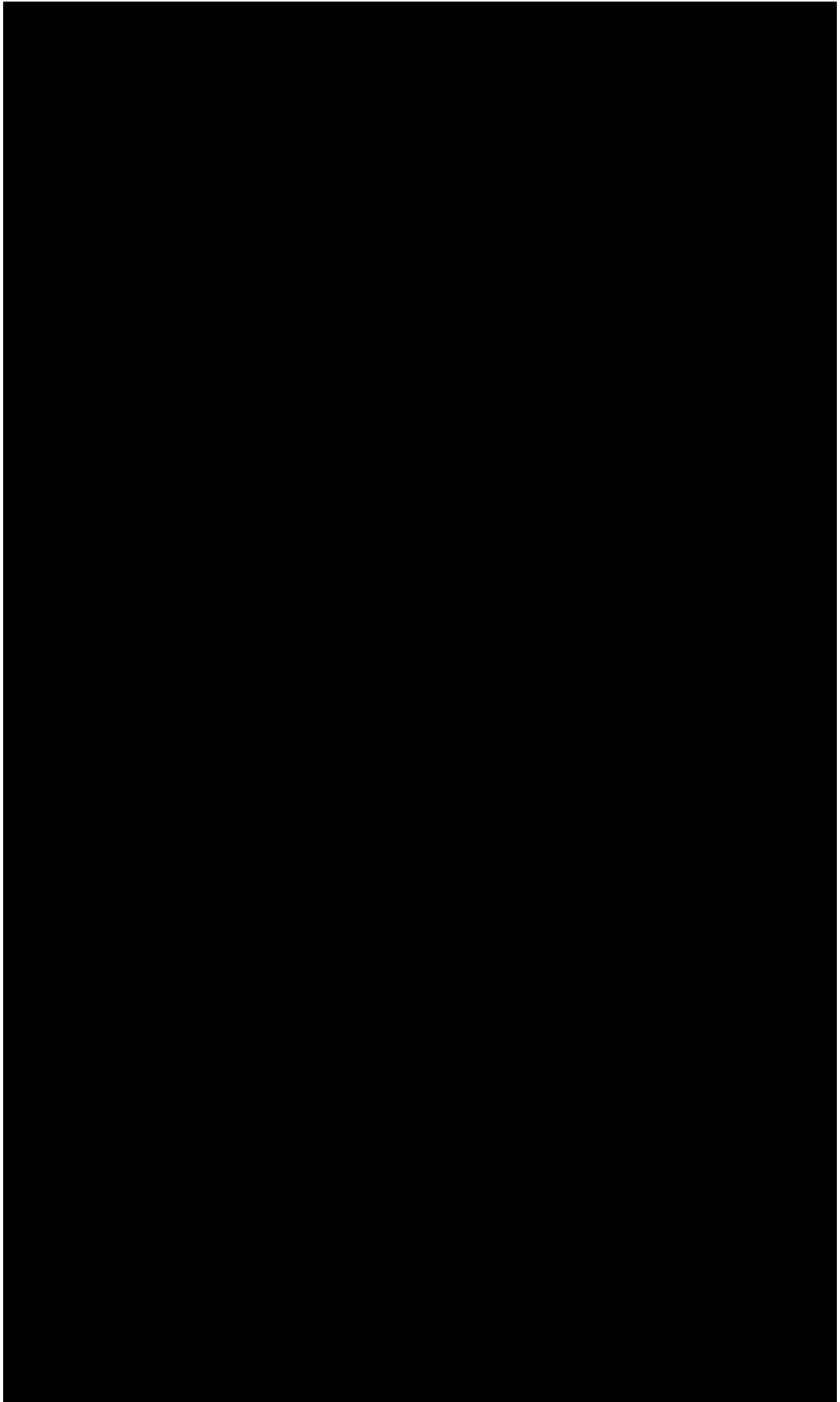
Currently he has five children and his wife is pregnant with a sixth child. They arrived during the early days of the Cidade de Lona when there were almost no shacks, and he built his own by himself.

> '... I was the one that built this and occupied it; this (piece of land) was only bush. It used to be very sad as this used to be a criminal's hideout. Nowadays it is a more civilised place and everyone can now walk on the streets. When I planned the shack I had to buy four sticks and make a canvas shack. However when it rained, everything was unprotected and we suffered from the rain and the hunger. There weren't even any pushcarts available so that we could pick up the garbage.'

Today he works by picking through recyclable materials around the Cidade de Lona. He has to feed nine people with his work: himself, wife, six children, a brother, who has cerebral palsy, and his mother, who is temporarily staying with him. His dream was to be employed or have a business of his own. However he finds it hard to achieve this since he only has one record of work experience on his work permit (as an unarmed guard) and given the fact that he only has a few years of schooling.

Despite not having professional experience registered on his work permit, he feels proud of his many skills and having the initiative to tackle any sort of problem.

> '... I learned to make bread, I can work as a gardener, I can do anything, I can work as a construction worker, I can paint, and I can do many things. I know all sorts of recyclable materials, even the owner of the storage room asks me for advice, I don't mean to sound conceited, I have a developed mind. I can carry out electrical work; I can make a crossover cable and can do many things. I just don't have the proper training. I only need a chance, an opportunity. I can also fix blenders and other household appliances…when my neighbours need me I help them out; I call for ambulances because I am the most efficient person around and the most intelligent. Since the neighbours themselves are a bit slow, I have to show them how to do some work.'

He has worked and lived in the waste dump; it was there that he first became acquainted with recyclable materials.

He always wished to have his own house, this has been his greatest desire, and he knows what an emotional effect it would have on him, if he were able to fulfil this dream.

> 'Oh! My God! If I only had at least a piece of ground, I think I would cry for three days, maybe longer. Oh! My God! Will I never get out of this slum and have a place to live?'

Although he values education, none of his children is currently studying. He stated that he was unable to find them a suitable school, since he refused to enrol them at the Coração de Jesus Foundation, which, in his view, is a delinquent's hangout.

> '... if it is a question of them having to learn bad things, I'd rather have them study at home. I would like to have my children studying in a decent school, a school of civilised people, and not a school of failures. They will never be beaten by other people, by strangers, never! Do they feel hungry? We don't have any kind of snacks to provide them with …'

He takes part in all the demos, protests, and meetings but he considers the leaders play a weak role.

> 'I believe the leaders are quite weak, they only come here to speak blah, blah, blah, foolishness ...'

He feels rather bad about being the victim of social prejudice and regards himself as a citizen who is entitled to the same rights as anyone else, but this is not how society sees him.

> 'I think there is a lot of prejudice; they see us here with different eyes. They see everybody here as criminals or beggars. I have even been called a criminal when I was picking through the garbage. They say: 'There goes that disgusting individual! There goes the beggar!' What am I supposed to do? I've never taken any drugs, never got drunk, never hurt anyone, never called anyone names and no one hates me. I've never been convicted of anything, thank God - I have a clean name. You can search my records; there's nothing against me, and this I can swear with my body and soul.'

José Cristovam would like to remain in the Cidade de Lona plot and wait for the government to grant his family a plot of land and help them build their house. However, he would not mind being granted a house on the other side, since for him what matters is to have a place of his own and not have to pay any more rent. But what concerns him most is the level of public safety:

> '... we don't have anywhere to go to; we remain here hoping to be granted a plot of land and have to undergo all sorts of hardships inside the shacks, with a lot of heat, without water, and praying to God to prevent people from burning down the shacks, since we are constantly being threatened. We also have to deal with criminals. I never sleep at night, - I am smart enough not to allow myself to fall asleep at night. When I do get a little sleep it is during the dawn. This is because I'm worried about the safety of my children and my wife, since they are so dear to me. We don't quarrel, and are a very close-knit family, thank God.'

José Cristovam regards himself as a failure although he wants to be a successful man, which means having a house, a job and eventually a pension. This concern about retirement makes sense because the social insurance does not include workers in informal activities as only those who have contributed financially have the right to benefits. As making a contribution is financially onerous and impossible for the residents of the precarious settlements, the residents over 60 years are forced to keep

on working until they die. Alternatively, they may attempt to claim a social welfare benefit, which may be granted if the elderly person can prove that he or she has no means of providing for himself or of being supported by the family.[106] Giving this proof involves producing a lot of documents and having to go through a complex administrative procedure.

6.2.2 The Working and Economic Environment of Waste Recycling

This section analyses the nature and economic circumstances of the waste pickers' work and the ways they are exploited. In the case of Vila Emater II, the term catador refers to someone who both lives and works in the municipal waste dump, although several of the pickers live far away. In contrast, the catadores of Cidade de Lona take wheelbarrows to pick up rubbish from the streets minutes before the dustcarts pass by. They do not usually have any contact with the work in the Lixão and are more independent from the buyers (see Chapter 5), earn less and have to work longer hours as the rubbish is widely dispersed. Most of the following analysis applies to the catador that works directly on the waste dump. From my sample, seven earned a monthly income of US$60: one-half of a minimum salary per month at that time.[107] Seven earned one minimum salary per month, and two earned between one and a half to two minimum salaries. According to the Social Profile, 63 percent of the interviewees earned less than one minimum salary and 34 percent earned between one and two minimum salaries. Although these figures may seem shocking, they are better than in any other slum or squatter area in Maceió, as for example, Cidade de Lona where most people recorded earnings of less than one-half of a minimum salary.[108]

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[106] Article 203 of the Brazilian Constitution (1988).

[107] The minimum salary at the time the fieldwork (Dec 2003-Feb 2004) was about US$120.

[108] According to Birkbeck (1979:168) and Kim (1995:186) the waste pickers may earn as much as a low paid industrial worker but they are in a very different situation because they are not covered by state labour legislation that assure them a fixed and regular income, social security payments and other benefits. 'In effect the waste picker is like the classic dockworker of nineteenth century London, waiting at the dock gates to see if there is work' (Birkbeck 1979:177).

A further factor is that waste picking is heavy and dangerous work. The people do not work in the waste dump with any protective equipment and are not entitled to the labour rights enshrined in the Constitution or the Brazilian labour laws enacted more than 60 years ago. Thus, in addition to being exposed to a series of risks to his/her life, the catador has no financial support to count on in the event of illness. Working in the waste dump can be regarded as a constant and private struggle. A large crowd of people has to watch out for the compact tractor, vultures, insects and rodents, as well as other pickers. The waste dump is sent about 1,100 tons of material every day, 24 hours a day, which ends up being scattered around with no cover. The waste pickers that live in Vila Emater II prefer to work at night because of the weather and because there are fewer other waste pickers; they usually work day and night shifts from 4am until 10am and from 10pm until 4am. Those that live outside the site of the waste dump and depend on public transport do not have the option to work in off-peak hours and thus work during the day. This means they can sell their findings immediately to the buyers.

The huge number of waste pickers currently in the Maceió waste dump induces a certain nostalgia among those that have been in the area for over 20 years. In their words, in former times it was easier to live off the waste dump because there was less competition. Currently, the *strongest* manage to find the things of greatest value. They work rapidly with a hook, leaving the slower people behind. Competition is fierce and the beginners go through a long period of learning until they get to a stage in where the picking activity becomes productive. The veterans give wrong information about the value of things to the beginners so that they usually pick material with little or no value. When they try to sell it to the buyers they find out that they have been fooled and have worked for nothing.

> 'I have been working in the waste dump - for about 30 years; I was practically brought up here. Before, it was great; we had a bit of everything. We worked one or two days and got a lot of money. Today, we work day and night and get no money, because there are many people and the waste has become scarce. Still, it is ok. If they take the waste away from here, what are we going to live off? Here we live off something.' (Maria Barbosa, VE, 57)

> 'When I went to work in the waste dump, I used to ask the other fellows: 'Can I sell these things?' People used to say: 'No, you can't sell this!' So I

threw it away and they would get it. They'd tell me to gather glass, so I gathered a lot of glass. At the end of the week when I went to sell everything, I didn't get one *real*.[109] So, I went back to the waste dump to see what people got, and I found out that they used to get what I used to throw away. When you are in the waste dump, it's every man for himself.' (Laura, VE, 31, cited in Castro, 2003: 87-88)

Photograph 6.2: Work of a Classifier - a Woman Garbage Picker
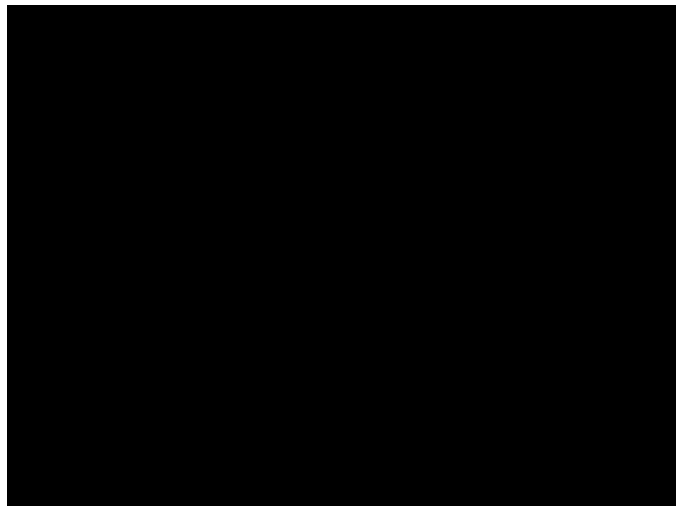
Photograph 6.3: View of Dump from Vila Emater II

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[109] Brazilian currency: R$1 = US$0,33.

Photograph 6.4: Truck Collecting Classified Waste inside the Vila Emater II

6.2.3 Advantages of Working as a Waste Picker

Despite the awful working conditions, most people did not want to move out of Vila Emater II. Economic reasons may play a larger role than other hazard-related factors.

> 'I wouldn't like to move out because if I leave I'll go hungry, because I'm not fit to work anymore. Nobody will hire me and I don't want to go begging.' (Rosita Neves, VE, 56)

One of the *magnetic* attractions of the Lixão is that there is always something found which can be sold or made use of directly. The families obtain enough money to buy food, and if not, they feed off the waste. Leftover raw food, such as meat and vegetables; grain, beans and sweet corn are often infested with insects but the dump also provides canned goods which have passed the expiry date and been delivered directly from the supermarkets. The pickers even know the exact time when the trucks will arrive with the supermarket leftovers; known as the *yoghurt time*. Although this food often causes poisoning, even leading to death, the residents think that it is better to have something to eat than nothing.

> '... I, myself, feel embarrassed to tell people that I live here, but I thank God that I can find some leftovers here.' (Marina Francisca da Silva, VE, 52)

The following life story of Ana Lúcia, one of the interviewees, shows that there is a certain esteem associated with working in the Lixão because it provides a constant

and reliable source of income. Living and working there means not dying of starvation.

Box 6.3: 'Nobody goes hungry in the waste dump.'

Ana Lúcia was born in São Miguel dos Campos, a sugar cane region in the State of Alagoas. She is 33 years old and formerly worked at cane cutting along with her family. Her father was murdered on his way home 20 years ago and then she went to live with an aunt because her mother was an alcoholic. At the age of 18, she moved in with her current partner.

> '... when I turned 18, I moved in with this man, because I'm really not married. I stopped suffering a bit more when I moved in with him, because our life always consisted of cutting sugar cane and weeding. It involved a lot of suffering and hardship. We never had a good life.'

Her dream was to have a house of her own, because before getting married and up to now she has always lived in the houses of employers or on land that does not belong to her. She has five sons that still live with her in the shack as well as one of her sisters. Her oldest son is 12 and the youngest 19 days olds. She gets a state allowance for one of her boys and claims that she only uses it to buy school materials. One of her biggest worries is her children's education and having enough resources to provide them with stationery, clothes and shoes.

> '... the biggest worry is education, eating is easy, educating a child nowadays isn't easy for anyone.'

Three of her sisters live in Vila Emater II. She is not very close to the neighbours and avoids any type of confrontation. She does not participate directly in the association, but when there are meetings, she is always present. She has been living in Vila Emater II for nine years. When it was still a clapboard shack and it rained, the mud rose to a level of 30cm inside the shack. Her husband became unemployed and with the money from his redundancy pay, they rebuilt the walls of the shack in adobe and covered them with tiles.

> '... since we've been living here, we still haven't had time to finish the shack. However, the person who wants things has to fight for them, isn't that right? We buy things little by little and exchange a few of them. We find things of value here, just a while ago a boy came by with a piece of crystal glass he found in the waste dump'.

The waste dump is, without question, an important provider of resources, especially foodwise.

> 'Whoever lives here can say that they live well; nobody goes hungry here. The most important thing is not to be in need, because in the waste dump, whenever you go, in little time you get five *reais*, and it's enough for you to eat ...'

Photograph 6.5: Cross-section 1 of Interviewees of Vila Emater II
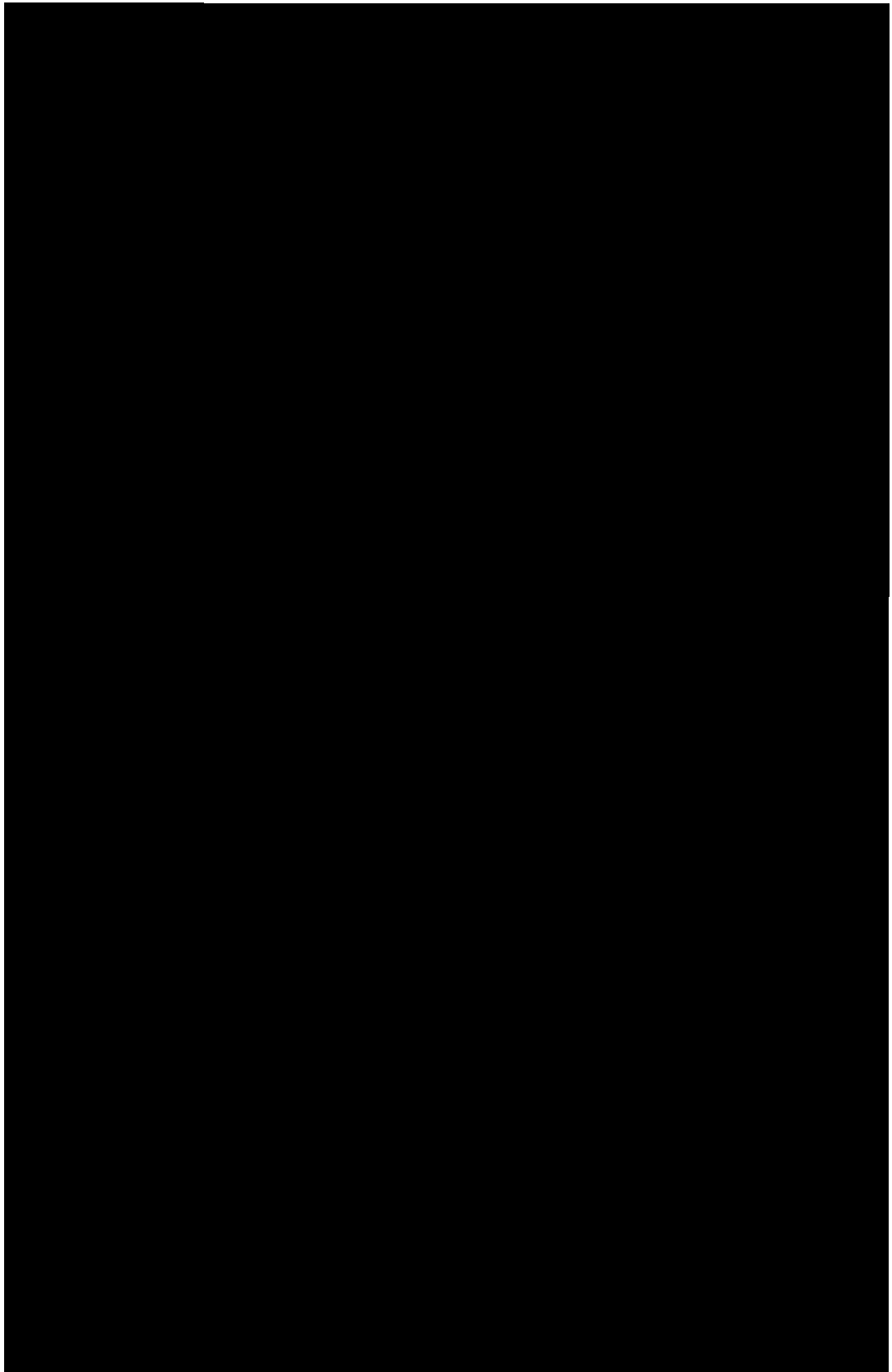
She does not believe there will be any evictions in Vila Emater II because of the large number of shacks and the inhabitants' resistance to the threat of being cut off from their source of survival. She is afraid of being robbed of her belongings. She does not leave the shack unattended; there is always someone to keep guard over the few goods that belong to her, especially her stereo and cooking cylinder. Yet despite the difficulties, she finds:

> 'My life is better now, because I'm not hungry and to me that is important. I have a bed to sleep in and a place to seat a child. When I came here the only thing I had was a child. We didn't even have a bed to sleep in but, little by little we got things, me and him.'

As can be seen from Ana Lúcia's account, the residents of Vila Emater II highlight the fact that as a result of working in the Lixão, they had access to simple possessions such as a bed, very important for people used to sleeping on the floor. Apart from the economic implications of obtaining possessions, the symbolic and strategic value of simple goods for the residents of the precarious settlements will be discussed later in the section on social practices.

6.3   Violence

The residents of the precarious settlements are also vulnerable to criminal activities. All of the interviewees spoke of violence as one of the community's main problems, in particular internal violence involving robberies and murders. The thefts included not just televisions or audio sets but gas cylinders and even pots and clothes. Research studies show the residents of the precarious settlements have become the most common victims of crime because of their economic and social vulnerability.[110] The extent of violence in the region is shown in Table 6.1.

The increased violence experienced in the daily round is confirmed by recent statistics showing that Maceió has witnessed an increase in violence, in particular murders, with a worrying rise of crimes against material possessions and related to

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[110] Paim *et al* 1999; Zaluar (1994, 2002, 2004); Goldstein (2003); Briceño-Leon (2005); Pandolfi and Grynszpan (2005).

drugs (both trafficking and addiction). Between 1998 and 2002, the growth in the murder rate (per 100,000 inhabitants) for Brazil was 5.6%, while in Alagoas it was 58.3% and in the metropolitan area of Maceió, it was 90.2%.[111] The residents' accounts concur with the number of murders recorded in the data of the Ministério da Justiça [Ministry of Justice] (2006) that shows that the murder rate in the precarious settlements in Maceió increased by 33% in 2005. The main reasons for the murders are disputes over control of space (linked to drug dealing), silencing potential informants, debts, armed robberies, and a desire to take justice into one's own hands.

Table 6.1: Criminal Incidents in Alagoas and Maceió – 2004 and 2005

Per 100,000 residents

	Alagoas 2004	Alagoas 2005	Maceió 2004	National Ranking	Maceió 2005	National Ranking
Murders	35.8	37.2	59.8	19th	71.2	9th
Crimes (no lethal)	16.4	19.4	36.1	120th	41.1	81st
Manslaughter	35.2	35.8	58.3	16th	68.5	8th
Robberies	173.2	241.1	538.8	95th	665.3	58th
Drug-related	4.1	10.3	9	207th	24.1	161st

Source: Ministério da Justiça, Secretaria Nacional de Segurança Pública and Secretaria de Defesa Social do Estado de Alagoas. 2006

Soares (1996) argues that the more the legitimate channels of *social ascension* are closed to young people (easy access to school and rewarding job positions) the greater is the attraction of the criminal *option*. The latest figures for the national murder rate among young males between 15 and 29 years old is evidence of the extent of their participation in criminal activities. Murders were the main cause of death, especially among males between 15 and 29 years of age. Two of the partners of my interviewees had been killed by drug-dealers. The absence of the state, the lack of opportunities, and the silence of society, in general, in the face of a visible

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[111] Mapa da Violência dos Municípios Brasileiros [Map of Violence in the Brazilian Municipalities], drawn up by the OEI - Organização dos Estados Íbero-Americanos para a Educação, a Ciência e a Cultura [Ibero-American State Organisation for Education, Science and Culture] published in February 2007.

precarious reality leads to aggressive behaviour against the poorest and most vulnerable members of the community.

As a result of violence and crime, Cidade de Lona operates a state of curfew. People cannot walk around during the night. Shootings are familiar to them. One of the leaders stated that in her area, there is at least one murder per week and robberies may happen at any time; feelings of fear and insecurity are what worry them most in their daily lives.

> 'I am scared if I have to go out or if my husband leaves me alone, especially during the night, around 9'o clock. I don't have anything but I am very afraid to die, as happened when a man destroyed the shack of a woman who lived here and shot her dead. We called the police and they showed up. They came here just to take away the dead body.' (Lucineide Ferreira, CL, 36)

> 'To me, the biggest problem here is violence. There are young people who enjoy taking things - which do not belong to them. When I leave my shack alone, I'm really scared. They are dangerous outlaws; they can kill to steal something. I don't sleep well; I have my small things, which have cost me a lot of hard work. They are not so good but they are mine. Suddenly someone enters my home and takes my stuff away.' (Maria Betania, VE, 39)

The insecurity that haunts these settlements and principally Cidade de Lona is reflected in all areas of human life, ranging from the most personal to the most collective, from subjective feelings to those objective concrete matters that impede the social, mental and cultural development of people who live under a tyranny of fear.[112] They are scared of being killed or hurt, of having nowhere to live and of seeing their children suffer. They are also afraid of what may happen in the climate of silence and segregation in which they live. Threats come from all sides and the canvas shacks cannot prevent violent acts against property or individuals.

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[112] Sexual violence is one of these dimensions. On the day, I carried out the Focus Group activity in the Cidade de Lona one of my interviewees asked to speak to me privately and told me that she had been brutally raped in Cidade de Lona and was going to move away. Her sad and heartfelt account revealed one of the facets of the violence, which the residents of the area are subjected to, in particular the women, because of their physical vulnerability.

'The violence here is very serious, there are many muggers and if we accuse them we may die. Every now and then, they are shooting just for fun. The other day a shot was fired right there because of a dog that was barking… You cannot leave the house here because there are so many thieves. The other day I took my little boy to school and when I got back, they had taken my gas cylinder, clothes, pots … I have already suffered so much here. Another time they came in while the children were sleeping and took the blender and the coffee machine. If the children had woken up, they might have killed them.' (Marlene Paixão, CL, 53)

'I don't feel safe here, not safe at all, because this land here is not ours, there are no documents. Even our skins are not safe because in a canvas shack like this any *street vagabond* can set fire to the shack whenever he likes.' (Margarida de Oliveira, CL, 40)

'… I don't want to stay here, I have already been robbed, and you cannot leave anything outside because they steal it. I go out, I go one day and come back the next. I close the door with a padlock because there is no security. They're always killing people here; nobody feels safe here.' (Maria Cícera da Silva, CL, 55)

The labyrinthine lay-out of the settlement, the absence of streets, and the lack of public lighting make the settlement dangerous. The fear of violence is particularly strong among the inhabitants who live alone. On my last visit to Cidade de Lona, I was stunned by the number of grilles around the shack of one of the local coordinators. He has a small grocery store and lives practically inside a cage (Photograph 6.6). Fear is present everywhere.

'... If I am living with somebody, it is all right, but being alone, is really dangerous. There are many thieves here, I'm afraid to sleep here alone.' (Fernanda Torres, CL, 17)

The locality of the shack is very important as a strategy for evading violence.

'Right here there is no violence but further up there, it is very violent. From time to time, they kill someone. Here, no! Everyone is like a family, all united, - whatever happens here we sort it out. Not like further along there where it is knifing and shooting. Not here ... when there is fighting we separate them, separate one from the other, we sort it out. We are able to live in peace here.' (Nadeje Ferreira, CL, 35)

'... so he bought a shack for 15 *reais* [US$ 5], over on the other side because here they were stealing everything, anything at all.' (Maria José Marques, CL, 34)

Photograph 6.6: Shack and Grocery of the Leader of Cidade de Lona
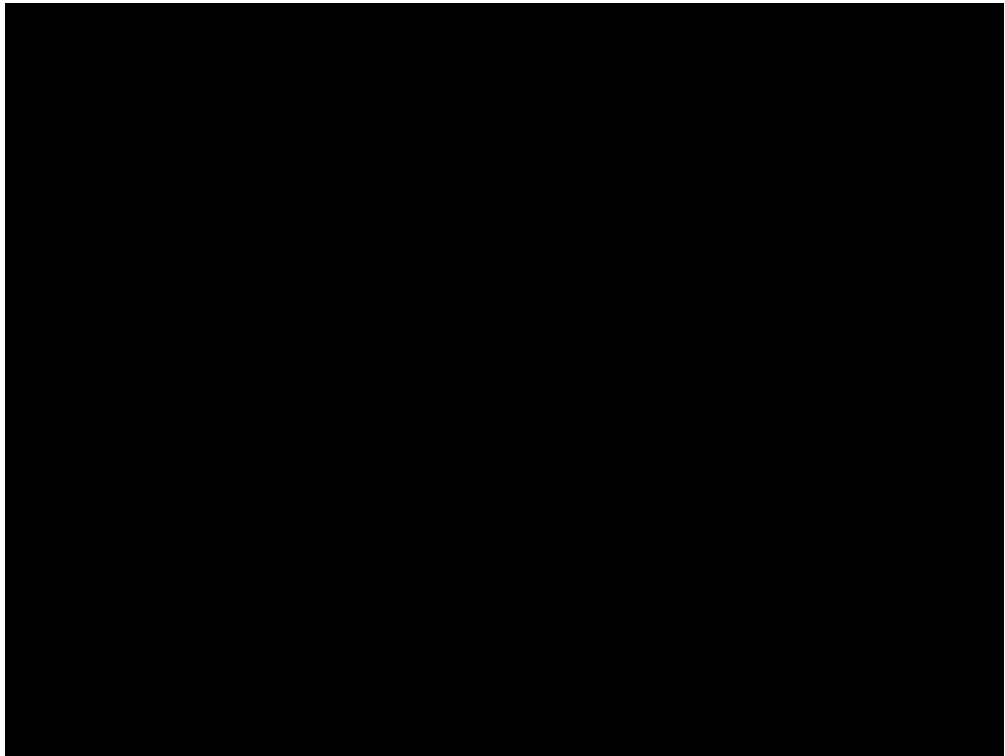
There is also a large amount of domestic violence. Four of the interviewees from Vila Emater II, and three in Cidade de Lona mentioned that they had been the victim of violence committed by partners. Domestic violence prompted many occupants to come to Cidade de Lona in the first place; many women had previously possessed a house in housing schemes such as Conjunto Denisson Menezes (examined in Chapter 7). In these schemes, the house has to be registered in the name of the woman so that in the event of separation shelter for the mother and children is guaranteed. However the delays in putting the settlements on a regular footing and the violence against women neutralise the positive value of registering the house in the woman's name. Women sell or abandon the house because of the violence.

> 'He used to beat me and so we separated ... he kicked me out of the house and I had to leave or else he would have killed me or my father would have killed him.' (Rosineide Ferreira, CL, 27)

The life story of another interviewee, Maria José, illustrates the trajectory and daily round of chronic poverty, and show how increasing vulnerability and violence can culminate in the wish to die.

Maria José is 41 years old and was born in União dos Palmares (83 km from Maceió). Her parents were separated and her mother died when she was 3. She had a health problem that meant that she did not talk or walk until she was 6. She was brought up by her grandmother who made her wooden trolleys so that she could get around. She helped her grandmother with her work in the field and selling products in Maceió. She said:

> '... I also carried bags of manioc on my head, heavy bags; I think that's why I didn't grow.'

Her dream was to have a better life and to leave that life because her grandmother was always beating her. She added that:

> '... I was beaten like a wild animal. The last beating she gave me, I fainted, and my head was full of cuts. The owner of the land broke down the door and got my grandmother off me because she was choking me. She even dug her nails into my neck, she squeezed me so much, - I was 7 at the time.'

After this episode, she went to live with her aunt, who put her to work as a nanny and she did not remember if they paid her, or her aunt. She remembered that the employer gave her clothes, shoes, and medicine because she was very weak.

> '... I was tiny and, skinny and I couldn't really take care of the child, I left him inside the cot. I was too thin, I still am, and they called me a cricket because I was so plain ...'

She worked in other houses until she went back to working in the fields. These many changes of residence and the lack of affection from those that surrounded her, made her depressed and led to a series of suicide attempts. She missed her mother very much.

> 'I didn't have anyone's love ... and nowhere to go to, so I used to say: 'My God, I will never escape from this life'. When I was around 10-11 years old, I tried to commit suicide, I tried twice, once I took some medicine, and fell down a flight of stairs, I almost died. Another time I took rat poison to die. I always asked my mother to come and get me, in my mind, I saw her, and I kept that in mind. I've tried to kill myself 3 times, because this is no way to live.'

At the age of 15, she met the father of her children and became pregnant with the first of her 11 children. She came to live in the outskirts of Maceió, in a rented shack, which was in a wretched condition.

> '... the shack was very small; there was no water or light and there was nothing inside the shack, not even a bed. We had to sleep on the floor.'

Photograph 6.7: Cross-section 2 of Interviewees of Vila Emater II
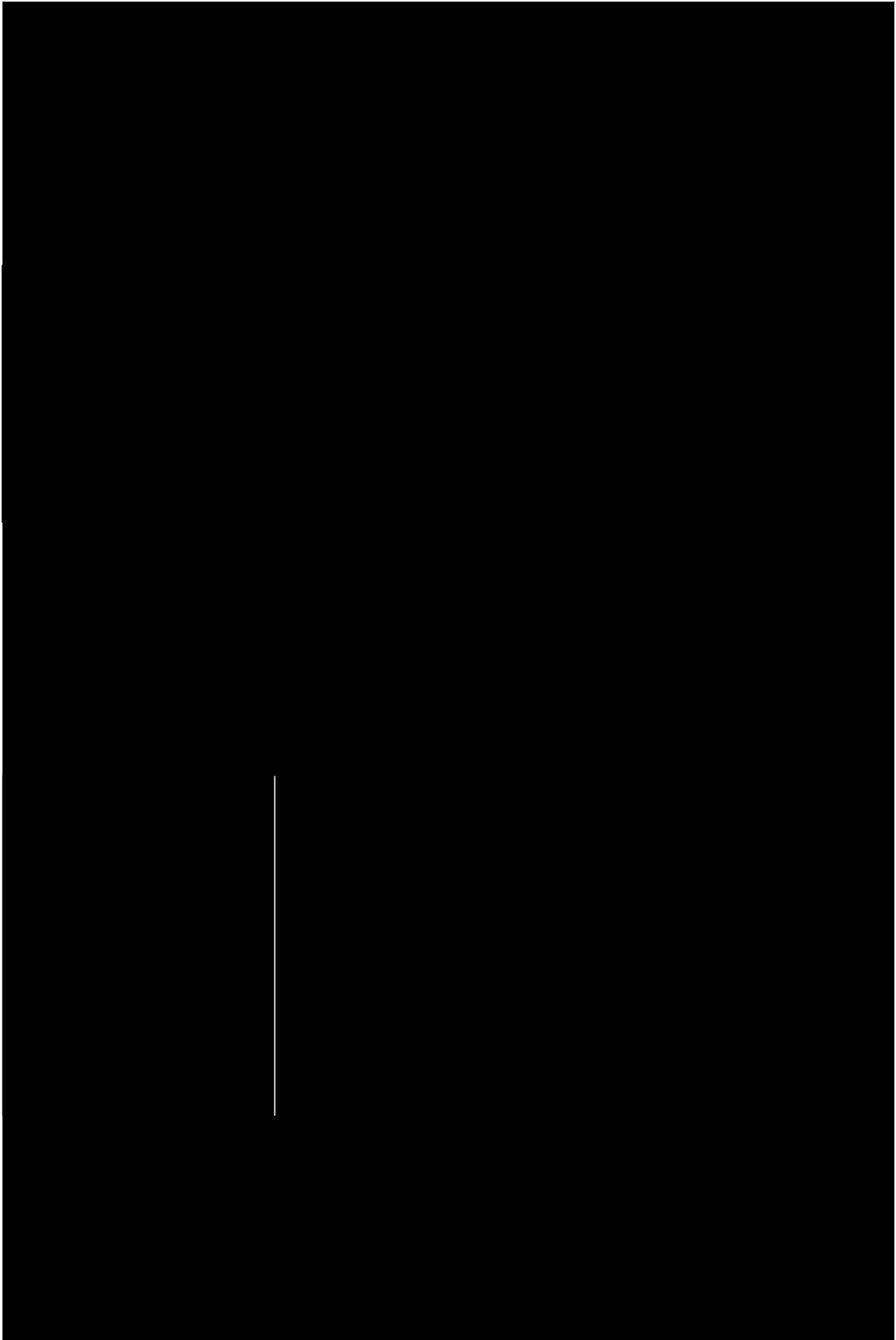
Afterwards life started getting better and they were able to buy an adobe wall house in a plot, but because of drugs, her husband sold everything that they had taken years to obtain.

> '... we had a television, refrigerator and a horse. To start with my life wasn't so bad; as poor people, we didn't have a bad life. But after he began beating me, I had to go to a hospital and started to have problems with my nervous system.'

She lived with him for 25 years, and he started drinking a lot and taking drugs. They lived in constant conflict, and she was often physically abused. After a serious fight, she decided to separate and went to live in a shack in Vila Emater II.

> '... he did this to me, I was almost paralysed, and he left me with a clot in my pelvis and spinal cord. My thighbone was badly bruised; today I can walk, thank God. I almost killed him too, and filled him with alcohol. When I got better, I said: 'I don't want ever again to have a life like this.' That's why I live in this small shack, I don't like it here, but I have nowhere else to go to.'

Today, three of her children live with her; the youngest is 12 years old and the only one that studies. The other two, 14, and 16, work illegally in the waste dump. They are the ones that provide for the house, because, due to her back problems, Maria José cannot work anymore. She would very much like to leave Vila Emater II, especially because of the drugs. One of her sons is addicted to *marijuana* and glue sniffing. This causes her a lot of sadness.

> 'I wish to God I could leave here and, that I had a house, even if it was only with adobe walls. I wish my children went to school and that we had a better place to live in. This is not a good environment for anyone, as you have to deal with all types of people. It is very sad to have an addicted son; it's hard, when I see him, I beat him a lot and I say: 'My God, what did I come to live here for?' One day he answered: 'Mom, there are times when there is no food at home, and I drug myself because it's the only way to make the hunger go away.' This hurt me a lot: what a life, my Lord!'

Despite all of the suffering she went through with her husband, she misses the fact that he no longer provides things for the house.

> 'He always beat the boys, and punched them when he was high. Once he landed such a huge punch in the boy's stomach that the boy spat out blood. I was scared of him; if I'd allowed it, he would have killed me. That's why I got fed up. We are separated but I don't live well, because I miss the food he brought home. I have *to rely on* [investir: litt. to invest] in the waste, I have to eat rubbish, I didn't want this, and it makes me very angry.'

She has already been the victim of prejudice, while searching for a job. When the person she was going to work for heard that she lived in Vila Emater II, he gave up the idea of hiring her. With the money she gets from the waste dump, she has been

expanding her shack and buying some objects to replace those that were stolen during the break-in through the kitchen door.

She considers the association to be very important, but does not participate in it. She only goes to mass and prayer meetings in an attempt to find a spiritual solution to her problems. She feels sad living in Vila Emater II because her son has started to take drugs there. Her biggest desire is to take her children away from drugs, so they can study and live in a better place.

The life story of Maria José illustrates the high levels of insecurity to which the people in Vila Emater II and Cidade de Lona are exposed to everyday, including domestic violence and drug-dealers and bandits.

> 'I am a victim of violence everyday. My husband constantly brutalises me in my own home. If I weren't a tough woman, I would get beaten everyday, I would always have bruises on my head.' (Damiana Maria, VE, 36)

In addition to physical aggression, the men abuse them psychologically and neglect their children's maintenance. When they do separate, the men usually sell the shack and divide the money with their ex-partner, which leaves the woman and the children in an even more vulnerable situation.

6.4   Social Practices against Poverty

This section draws attention to the social practices such as mobility, the search for objects of consumption and the struggle for land, which are used by the residents of Vila Emater II and Cidade de Lona as a means of reacting against poverty and include some of the state actions that affect their lives.

6.4.1   Mobility

The following life story of Bertolina Renilda, an inhabitant of Vila Emater II, illustrates the high degree of mobility she has experienced since childhood and the unlikelihood that she will be able to settle down since there is no reliable source of income to ensure her survival. The search for an income means there is a constant need to keep moving.

Bertolina is 56 years old and was born in Porto de Pedras, on the north coast of Alagoas. She was abandoned by her mother and brought up by the stepmother. When she was five, her mother found out that she was being mistreated by the stepmother and went to get her back. She then spent a little time with her until the age of eight when she was put to work in someone's house. She worked at that house until she turned 20, when she decided to go look for her mother, but her stepfather did not allow her to move in.

> 'My mother's husband said that if I wanted to live with her, she would have to live by herself and so as to not see my mother suffering, I went to live around the world, abandoned: 'til today I've been abandoned. I started to walk around the beach, begging, and when the tide was low I caught fish.'

Around this period, she met a man and moved in with him. She had a daughter with him and they had a very hard life.

> '... he didn't work and begged for food so that he could eat. He was a donkey without a tail who pulled a trailer to survive. When we could, we ate, when we couldn't, we waited for social assistance. Then he died. I didn't have a place to go, so I looked for the waste dump. I didn't know anyone, I came because I had heard about it, and I built a shack to live in. After a while they [some neighbours] set fire to all of the shacks.'

The shack she lived in was in Vila Emater I, where the fire occurred in 1996 which prompted her to move up the slope to construct Vila Emater II. The Town Hall evicted them from there but they resisted and stayed on. After looking for another place to live in for some time, she decided to join The Landless Workers' Movement (MST). Currently she has a shack on a farm that is being threatened with being legally dispossessed by the state because it is unproductive. Although she *owns* two houses, there is no guarantee of her being able to retain possession of either of them.

> 'If Jesus blesses me and I get a piece of land from the MST, I will live there. Everything is planted, but now we are all getting hungry. Everything has been planted, but we don't have any food itself. There has been some talk about the land, and a suggestion that if we get the land there, they will take our shack from here. I don't know if my place is there or here, I don't know if I'll be left out on the streets, because this isn't mine, and that isn't mine either. I don't have any documents for the place there or here.'

Two of her children from her second marriage lived with her. Bertolina's family supported itself through the money her husband got from the waste dump and with the R$40[113] from the allowance that her daughter received for going to school. She

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[113] Approximately US$13.

was very worried about the future of her youngest daughter; she wanted to give everything to her daughter, including her own food.

> '... I just want her to be a good and obedient girl. Education is all I have to give her, and I'm poor ... I'm this weak because I don't eat in order to give her food … what I want most is to see my daughter happy and living in her own house.'

She said that she did not know if there was prejudice against her or not, but she felt that people did not like to be near her when they found out that she was from Vila Emater II. She thought the living conditions in Vila Emater II were very degrading.

> '... Nobody likes to live here, because here we only get the leftovers of what rich people throw away … We even have to eat the rotten meat that they pour 'creolina' (disinfecting product) on. Why do we live like this, - if we steal we will be arrested, isn't that right? When clothes come, we get hold of them, wash them and wear them; God knows what's in those clothes.'

Although she had no insecurity of tenure, she stated that she would not exchange her shack for another one in a good spot, but far from the waste dump.

> '... If I found someone that said to me: let's exchange your shack for one in Paripueira.[114] I would not want to. It is a nice place, but I would go hungry there. Do you know where Paripueira is? From the road to Paripueira it's 13km, it's very far, and I couldn't stand walking there on foot.'

She did not feel very secure about her life because as she got older she was feeling less energetic, and felt as if she might have to go to the doctor for the first time in her life.

> 'My life is getting worse, - when we are young, everything is all right, but at this age, I feel sick. Today I was crying and saying: My God, if I get sick and stay in bed, my daughter will go hungry. I don't feel safe; if I at least had a pension, I'd be more secure.'

The mobility in Bertolina's life is a recurring pattern in the lives of the residents of Vila Emater II and Cidade de Lona. Thirteen of the 50 interviewees declared that they had moved home more than 15 times. The search for alternative employment takes them to rural regions and depends on the agricultural seasons. Temporary returns punctuate life in the settlements. During the sugar-cane season, which lasts from September to January, most of the waste pickers work illegally in the

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[114] Small village on the coast on the way to Recife, 36 km from Maceió.

plantations. Buses or trucks come from the factories very early in the day to pick up the workers in almost all the precarious areas of Maceió.

> 'Sometimes they sell the shacks, leave, and then come back. Sometimes they leave the shacks locked up, when the sugar cane grinding begins. When the grinding ends, they come back to the waste dump.' (Adelania Herculano, VE, 22)

> 'I work cutting sugar cane. They pick me up everyday by bus, but I didn't go today because it is raining. I earn eight to ten *reais* (US$3) per ton of cane cut. The folk don't have a work contract; we work clandestinely, six months a year.' (Manoel Messias, CL, 37)

But when there are no longer any alternatives in the fields, people look for shelter in the towns. There is a common pattern mentioned by 22 interviewees. When they decide to move because they are unable to pay their rent, they usually search for shelter in the houses of their relatives and in particular, their parents.

> 'We went to live in my brother-in-law's house, but it did not work out well, I wanted to help my sister-in-law but she did not want any help. She broke up with her husband and kicked everyone out. I went to my mother's house, even though she didn't have enough space, I spent some time there and afterwards we moved to Lixão.' (Flávia de Souza, VE, 27)

> 'As I couldn't pay the rent, I had to move.' (Ana Rosa, CL, 30)

> 'I lived at Jacintinho (popular neighbourhood of Maceió), at Moacir Santana, at Selma Bandeira (two settlements set up by the state), at Vila Emater I (on the foot of Jacarecica hill), in several places, because of the rent. I couldn't pay and had to leave. In the Benedito (another settlement set up by the state), I sold my clothes so I could eat. I have tried to find something better. I am usually away for 2 months but it doesn't work and I am back at the same place.' (José Pedro, VE, 35)

Several accounts describe the movement of people to different cities and States. First people go to places that are closer and richer and afterwards they go to the richest city of Brazil, São Paulo. Some of them regret having returned:

> 'I went to Pernambuco to see if it was better but it was worse. We went on to Trapiche (Maceió neighbourhood); I worked there for one year and three months. Then, I was ill with back and heart trouble and they fired me, - my heart was swollen. From there, I went to Jaraguá [Maceió neighbourhood], and I started to fish but I wasn't strong enough to drag the net. From there we came to Lixão'. (Rosita Neves [husband], VE, 56)

'We are from Pernambuco but we decided go to Alagoas because we didn't have enough to live there. My brother-in-law came first … We went to São Miguel [Municipality of Alagoas] but we moved because the work was bad. We weren't treated well, and we couldn't pay the rent. We came to Lixão because someone said that it was possible to get money here.' (Marina Francisca, VE, 52)

'I went alone to São Paulo… even though I can't read, they gave me a chance to work, but they asked to do a course first … I was back because my mother was ill, but I regret this because in Maceió it's very hard to survive; there is no job there is nothing. If I could I'd go back to São Paulo' (Marileide Cavalcante, CL, 42)

On arriving at these cities and without a place to live in, several of the interviewees made use of the streets or slept in parks and under marquees until they could find a shelter or some land.

'When we got here, we stayed at the park, sleeping under cardboard. Day and night, rain or shine, that's when we came away from the (sugar cane) mill.' (Damiana Maria, VE, 36)

Life in a waste dump is part of a strategy that offers the most certain means of survival, but it is also the least valued and seen as a last resort, when nothing else is working. The *nomads* turn to the dump after trying everything else, because it is a place that prevents them from starving.

Others take the risk of paying rent in another neighbourhood of Maceió but they quickly come back to Cidade de Lona because of financial difficulties. Others do not even take the risk because they know they cannot afford the rent; the money they are able to get can only be spent on buying food.

'They leave but they come back. I think it is because of the rent; they cannot afford it, and then they come back again. If I had a place to go to, I would have already left, but if I have to pay rent, I would rather stay here. I will only leave when God wants it; to pay rent is very difficult … whether you eat or pay rent.' (Nadeje Ferreira, CL, 35)

'... sometimes I like it here. Then I feel like leaving but I don't have a place to go to, so I have to stay here anyhow. I've been here since the beginning but many people have already left. I think they left because they were discouraged by waiting for so long for their house or because they already have one somewhere else.' (Manoel Messias, CL, 37)

> 'We were left with nowhere to stay, - it was crazy. The owner of the house had demanded that we leave. Finally, we moved to another shack that was empty, and abandoned, and we went into it. One month later, the owner of the hut appeared at the Graciliano Ramos (a housing scheme) and forced us to leave again.' (Maria de Lourdes, CL, 26)

The multi-location survival strategy means the man leaves the family in the settlements and goes off to work at cane cutting for a while or, depending on the distance, returns on the same day. When the head of the family is a woman, this kind of mobility is more difficult. The children inevitably impose a burden, which means that the woman is more restricted in her means of getting sustenance for the family. But, in the medium term, moving on has a negative effect because it means people do not establish ties where they live and cannot benefit from public social policies, which are often linked to a place of residence. The children cannot attend school and thus are not entitled to the School Allowance Programme or PETI, and they are unable to register at a particular Health Centre. They do not feel attached to the community and hence do not participate in social organisations.

Financially, in the long term, the people cannot accumulate enough resources to allow them to invest in a proper space to live in. They always lose out when they decide to move to another area. Their rents are always going up. When they have to sell their shack, they do not always manage to get back the money they had invested, and moving entails unexpected costs. When buying a new shack it is usually necessary for them to sell their belongings, which have only been obtained with a great effort. They are usually willing to exchange a television, stereo, cooking gas, or bikes, for a shack.

> 'Today I pay R$40[115] rent for this shack. I wanted to get out of here and that's why I exchanged a shack that I had for a sofa that was already ruined. I went to Jacintinho[116] paying R$70[117] for rent; I couldn't afford it and came back to the waste dump.' (José Pedro, VE, 35)

> 'I bought a shack for a stereo and a television.' (Fabiana Amara, VE, 23)

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[115] Approximately US$13.
[116] Low class neighbourhood.
[117] Approximately US$23.

Photograph 6.8: Cross-section 2 of interviewees of Cidade de Lona
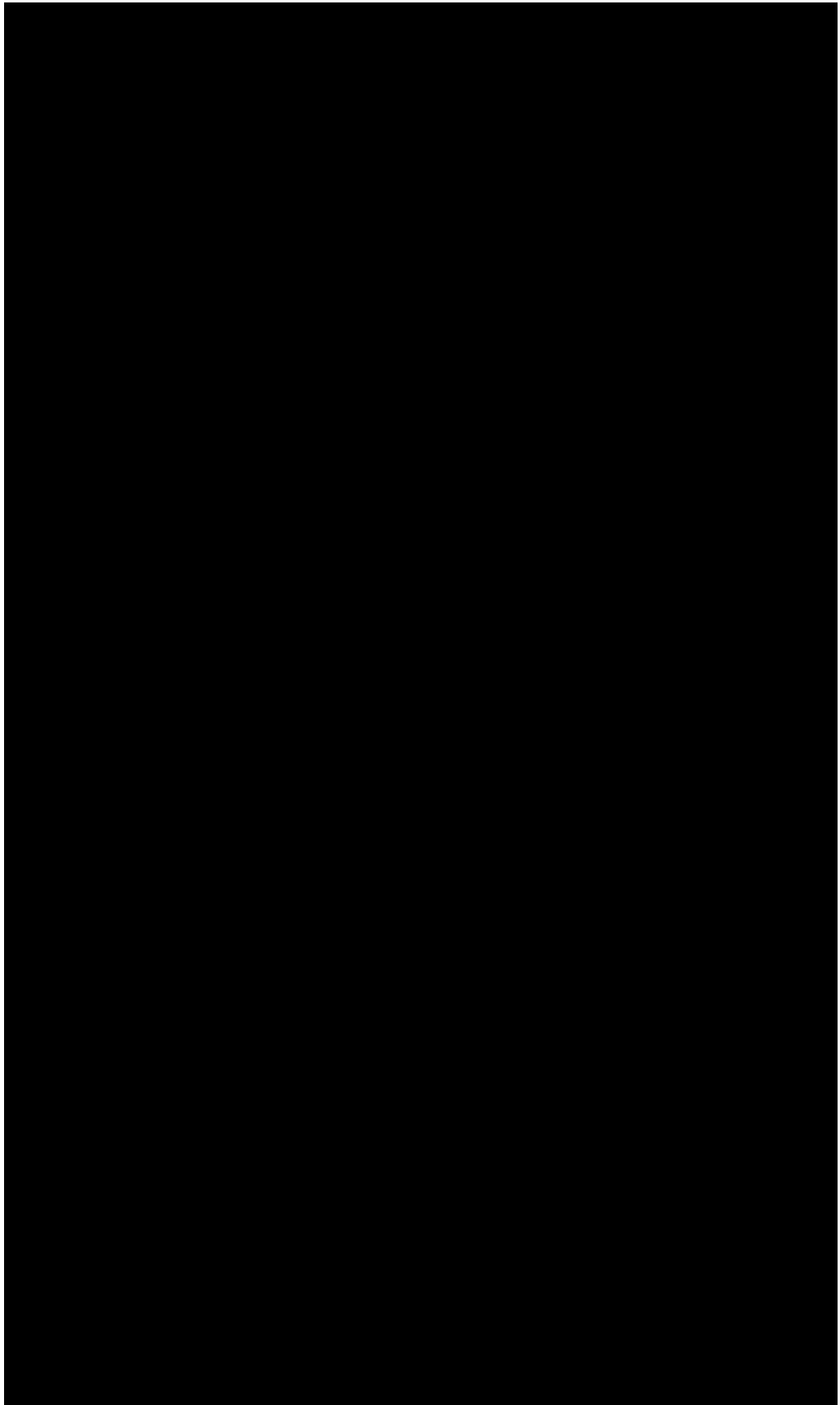
The lack of these amenities means these families may have to make an extra physical effort (walking instead of riding a bike or cooking with wood as a substitute for gas) and have less leisure (not having a TV set or record player).

Another important aspect of mobility, when viewed as a social practice against poverty, is the high turnover of residents in the housing projects undertaken by the state, which was particularly the case at Cidade de Lona. When the residents know there is a chance to get a house in the Capital of the State, they are prepared to take the risk of living under a piece of canvas for a long period of time. Some participate in the land occupation because they have no alternative, others because they already have a house in the countryside but want another one in the Capital for themselves or for their children or even to sell it.

> 'If I get one here, I'll leave it to my children, as well as the house that I have at Colônia Leopoldina, which I wouldn't sell for anything … Here people sell their shacks, go away and then come back again, then get another one and sell it once again. There is a woman here that lives in Arapiraca, she gets a house here, sells it and comes back here, then gets another one and sells it again. There are a lot of people doing that here.' (Maria Selma, CL, 44)

> 'There are many people that sell their shacks and move away. Then they get another one and sell it again saying that they have to sell it to buy food; they sell it for nothing, then they come back in an even worse situation and build another shack ...' (Maria Lúcia, CL, 40)

6.4.2 Strategies for Acquiring Goods and Financial Resources

As can be seen from the life story of Ana Lúcia (page 181), what the residents most value about the Lixão is having access to food and basic furniture. To be the owner of objects is associated with an enhanced feeling of comfort and well being as well as representing a landmark in the economic life of the family. Having one's own roof distinguishes one family from another and strengthens its self-confidence by conferring a status on the owner. Being able to sleep in a bed, sit on a chair, watch television programmes or play music of one's own choice and not having to use firewood to cook are all signs that a family is not so badly off. Acquiring goods is a real advance if one bears in mind that before coming to the Lixão many of the

residents wandered the streets begging for something to eat, or could be found sitting, and sleeping on the ground.

Thus the importance of the waste dump is not confined to the material picked out and sold to buyers. It also includes anything that has a possible use, and fulfils their few consumerist dreams.

> '… my life has improved a 100 percent. Before I had nothing inside my home but now I have a television, furniture ...' (Maria Rita, VE, 65)

> '... here, thank God, this dump has given me some money. I've even bought a little TV set; there is a little record-player too, all bought with money from the dump.'(Rosita Neves, VE, 56)

The residents' tactics and systems of economic bargaining for access to simple goods are a means of overcoming the problem of survival. As mentioned earlier, a common situation in all the precarious settlements is the large number of teenagers and young women who are pregnant or have many children.

> 'I married very young because I didn't have a mother. I ran away from home because I was physically abused, and came to live in Maceió, alone.' (Maria Barbosa, VE, 57)

> 'My mother started living with a young fellow and I started to live here and there, in my mother's house, in my grandfather's house ... my grandfather tried to rape me … When I was younger I dreamed of finding a man for myself and starting out on my own life.' (Michele da Conceição, VE, 19)

Most of the interviewees had their children before the age of 20, and for a high percentage, when they were about 15 years old. These early relationships often break up as a result of domestic violence caused by alcoholism.

> '… I suffered directly at his hands … When he drank, he did what he ought not to do. He spoke badly of me all the time to his friends. We broke up once and for all and I told him that I would not go back to him any more.' (Fabiana Amara, VE, 23)

The young women interviewed in Vila Emater II, are either without a husband, with three or-four children, or pregnant. After separating from their first husbands, they

look for a new partner to help bring up their children. They also have children with these new partners, and are again left alone. The young women under 22 who were interviewed had already had a relationship at least three times.

Moreover, in an attempt to force their husbands to support their family, they get pregnant again. Having babies is a contradictory way of assuring the survival of young women, although, the women manage to get some financial help from the fathers occasionally. These survival tactics reflect an economic facet of maternity. Anderson (1989:77) found in his ethnographical studies that in some circumstances 'babies and sex are used by some [women] for income; women receive money from welfare for having babies'. Some women at Vila Emater II got financial help to buy milk from the father of a certain child, and this resource was enough to buy milk for all the others. Others got money to buy clothes and school materials, and they shared their things with all the other children.

> 'My childhood was complicated, we were eight children … I got married when I was 15, lived with my husband for three years, had one child and then we separated … I joined up with another, had two children and I'm expecting another of his. It's two months now since he left me … I work in the Lixão and the fathers of the children help too; one gives me something every fortnight and the other every month.' (Edjane da Silva, VE, 21)

However, as the fathers are also young and do not have a stable job, they cannot always manage to fulfil their obligations, and often the mother is left with the responsibility of feeding and bringing up these children alone or are forced to give the child to some other member of the family.

> '… I am pregnant and he has told me that he is not going to give me anything. He earns a lot of money only he's not giving me anything, not a single *real* …' (Adelania Herculano, VE, 22)

> '… I live in other people's homes because I don't have a stove ... my neighbour helps me ... the father of my child, only now and then … when I ask him he complains. This week he only gave me some arrozina (rice starch), I told him I was going to claim my child's rights … I gave my eldest child to my mother for her to bring up. I'm expecting a baby and was going to give it away in the maternity hospital but my mother said that she would bring it up as well.' (Fabiana Amara, VE, 23)

In some cases, when women are the head of the family, the *lack of a man in the home* is given as a reason to explain the many needs of the family.

> '… I don't live well, I feel the lack of a husband's support, I have to feed off the rubbish …' (Maria José da Silva, VE, 41)

The young girls in Vila Emater II and Cidade de Lona relied on having babies as a survival tactic. The point is no longer to have children to provide a labour force to work in agriculture, but to find a partner, who will help the family, including the mother herself, to survive.

6.4.3   Land Struggle and Insecurity

The history of the occupation of Cidade de Lona is an example of how the residents fight against poverty and strive to obtain a place in the city. The process of occupation, the confrontations with the police and their permanent tenure of the land for more than eight years show the residents' capacity for resistance (and their lack of any alternatives). The feelings of the people during the land struggle fluctuate between enthusiasm and discouragement, and this leads to greater mobility and a sense of hopelessness about being able to obtain a better life.

The threat of eviction is part of the daily round of the residents of Cidade de Lona. The atmosphere of uncertainty surrounding the question of land ownership combined with the insecurity generated by violence has been harmful to the professional lives of the families located in Cidade de Lona. They cannot stay away from the shacks for long, and this restricts their ability to work as domestic house cleaners, in trade or industry. The Cidade de Lona is located 20 kilometres from the centre of Maceió and is situated in a residential area for low and medium income families where there is less demand for the services of domestic house cleaners. Moreover, the number of recycling materials available for the waste pickers is not sufficient in volume to be economically profitable. The residents are afraid of making improvements to their shacks or building a house, as they are not sure if they will remain on the land. The silence of the authorities and the lack of any prospect for them to finalise the ownership of the land leaves open the threat that they will be evicted by the police or suffer from a fire caused by arsonists.

'... I'm afraid of building a house here because suddenly the owner of the land may come and set fire to all the houses. So - I don't know how long I'll stay here, I'll keep on putting tiles on the roof.' (Maria Cícera da Silva, CL, 55)

'The most serious problem is this waiting. We don't know if they are going to build the houses or not. When somebody wants to build it with bricks they ask us not to do it and this uncertainty is the problem.' (Manoel Messias, CL, 37)

Their inability to afford to move to another housing settlement compels the Cidade de Lona residents to wait for a long time.[118]

'I would like to move from here because I'm afraid of being evicted; I don't have where to stay, or go to; many people have built houses here but I haven't because the land isn't mine and I'm not in a position to build a house either.' (Maria de Lourdes, CL, 26)

'All the children lived with me; we used to sleep on the floor because I had left everything in Paripueira as I had no money to pay for the move. If we leave here, where would we go to?' (Regina Maria, CL, 45)

Many of the residents feel uneasy about having to undergo a situation, which involves stress every day, and night.

'... I'm afraid of being evicted because I don't have anywhere to go; if they evict us from here, we'll have to go to another family home. I feel very bad about it because I don't have anywhere to go. I have no security at all.' (Maria de Lourdes, CL, 26)

'... this medicine is to help me to sleep, but can't sleep because of the violence here, I stay awake because of the fear.' (Maria Belarmina, CL, 31)

Other residents find comfort in religious faith and have abandoned the community struggle. They do not believe in the leaders with their combative speeches or in the politicians with their empty promises.

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[118] After lengthy negotiations, the remaining families, (approximately 500 altogether), have agreed to be relocated to a more isolated area, where they will move to new houses built by the state. They are not entirely happy because the place is very isolated but at least they will be granted a place that they can sell and then they can move to a more suitable place.

> '... I'm here for whatever, if I have to leave, I think everybody is going to leave. The police may force us out of here. I feel bad because I'm not sure if we are going to stay or not. Only my faith gives me security ... My life is in the hands of Jesus; - he will give what I deserve; I won't say I would like to be rich because I cannot be rich...' (Djalma Amaro, CL, 46)

The threat of eviction and everyday insecurity reflects the extent to which these people have been ignored and abandoned. In their struggle for a place in the city, they usually adopt individual rather than collective practices.

Conclusions

The characteristics of work (or lack of work) provide the key to understanding the daily routine of the urban poor in their fight against social and spatial exclusion. The poor people in the precarious settlements of Maceió become cut off from formal work in a process of fragmentation that occurs in cities and society. The decline of opportunities in the urban job market for the unskilled migrants, means that waste-picking becomes one of the only means of work available for poor people. Paradoxically, when the two settlements are compared, the location of Vila Emater II (inside the area of the waste dump) has benefits for the residents - they are able to eat every day and have access to simple possessions. In contrast, the Cidade de Lona residents live together under the threat of eviction and this leads to a life of uncertainty. The period of time when they have to wait for a reply from the state represents an interruption in their lives, and this is a setback to their development. They cannot leave the place to look for a job and as waste-pickers they cannot earn enough money either. These families are caught in a poverty trap caused by a lack of work opportunities and the failure of public policies to protect their rights as citizens.

The increased levels of violence in Vila Emater II and Cidade de Lona obstruct the development of both the individual and the community, especially the young males (victims of murders) and the women (victims of domestic violence). This atmosphere of violence allied to a past of destitution, prejudice and social stigma, has serious negative consequences for mental health, and causes learning difficulties, low self-esteem, hopelessness, isolation and alienation. In this atmosphere of scarcity,

material goods symbolise an ideal life-style. Some of the social practices of the residents of Vila Emater II and Cidade de Lona reflect their reactions against poverty and attempts to achieve greater autonomy: mobility, the search for consumer goods and the struggle for land. In terms of mobility, they are unable to remain in a fixed dwelling and constantly have to move about and seek other means of survival. People follow an economic rationale in their search for a way out of the poverty trap. Their mobility is part of this rationale. At the same time, young couples form relationships to acquire, exchange or save capital and individuals seek partners as a means of ensuring the survival of young women and children.

Finally, the most striking feature of this case study is the social segregation suffered by the residents of both settlements. This is felt in the silence of the authorities and of society in general when faced with the drama lived out by the large number of families who inhabit them. The social segregation is aggravated by several factors, including the following: the social capital they had before the occupation deteriorated in face of their struggle for survival; the feeling of abandonment experienced; and the resulting low self-esteem which they experienced when they compared their lives with those of other city residents. As well as this, the everyday suffering and the surrounding silence make them even more isolated. It is as if they live in a kind of *concentration camp* from which they may, in theory, leave, but given the complete lack of alternative strategies for survival and the increasingly remote prospect of having a house, keeps them bound to the spot.

Chapter 7 - The *Day After* Displacement

A State Response to a Precarious Settlement

The Conjunto Denisson Menezes is the third settlement studied for this research. Unlike the two previous examples, the Conjunto Denisson Menezes was planned and set up by the Brazilian state. The settlement was established when the Maceió Municipality displaced a group of people who were illegally occupying a piece of land to a new settlement that was considered a model of good practice and a pilot scheme for future pro-poor housing interventions (see Map 7.1 for settlement location). For this reason, the Conjunto Denisson Menezes provides a useful insight into the effects of *Day After* displacement. The main aim of this Chapter is to examine an empirical case study of displacement and a new housing scheme in order to reveal the micro implications (residents' daily round) of a macro state decision (social housing policy). It is my intention to explain what happened to the families who were moved to a purpose-built settlement after having lived on an illegal plot in very poor conditions for more than three years.

The importance of this case study lies in the opportunity it gives to reflect on public housing policies. It can enable one to observe the circumstances both before and after state intervention and to analyse who benefited from the decisions made by the planners and politicians. The primary sources of the case study are a community profile, historical records and the life stories. The Chapter focuses on showing how the most significant factors linked to grassroots political organisation, leadership and political pressure have been associated with individual perspectives. The investigation concentrates on social practices and the actions of the state, and discusses the gap that separates the declared objectives of the project from reality including the question of how people's everyday lives have changed since the scheme was implemented.

Map 7.1: Location of Conjunto Denisson Menezes in the Maceió Urban Area
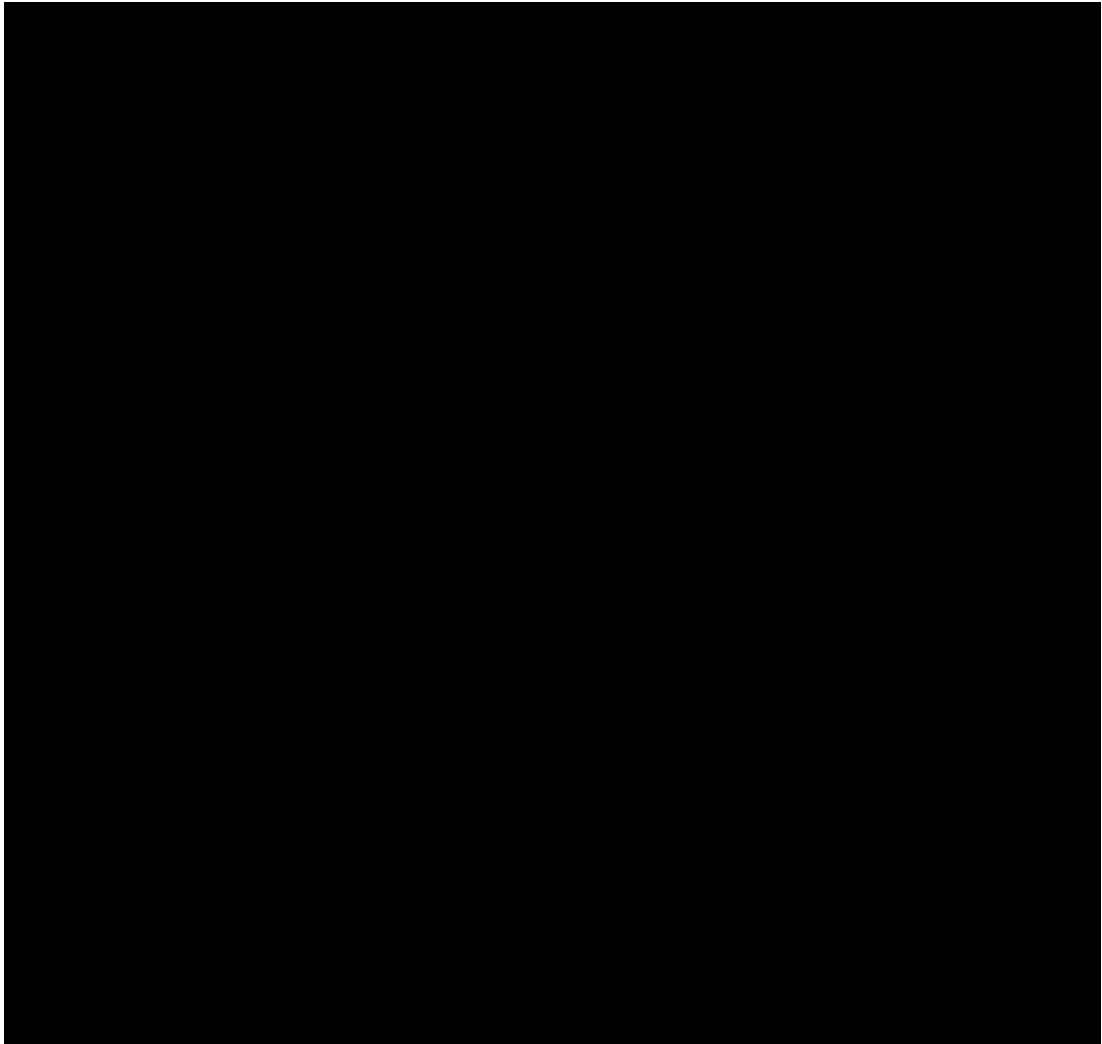
Source: Maceió, Prefeitura de (2000) *The Official Basis of Cartography*. Maceió: Maplan.

7.1   Conjunto Denisson Menezes: History and Characteristics

In 1996, a group of families led by the UMM-AL, known as Movimento dos Sem-Teto [Homeless Movement] occupied a plot of land on Durval de Góes Monteiro Avenue (also BR-104), a gateway into the city of Maceió, near the Posto da Polícia Federal [Federal Police Station]. The plot is situated in the Cidade Universitária [University Campus] neighbourhood, next to the Hospital Universitário [University Hospital], owned by Petróleo Brasileiro S.A. - PETROBRÁS [Brazilian Petroleum S.A]. The different names of buildings in the area caused some uncertainty among

the occupants when deciding what name to give the new settlement. Some occupants and people in general refer to the plot as Favela da PETROBRÁS, others as Favela da Federal, Favela das Lonas [Canvas Slum] or simply Os Sem-Teto [The Homeless ones].

The inhabitants came from small villages around the city or from Maceió's other precarious neighbourhoods. Although they were from different places, on the whole they came from similar social backgrounds. A striking feature about their lives was that they were constantly on the move, always looking for a house or a job, living with relatives or parents, paying high rent for miserable rooms, or living on the streets. Some had owned a house in the past, but for various reasons, predominantly caused by family separation, had been forced to sell up and spend their remaining capital. The members learned of the Homeless Movement through friends or relatives or even by observing the establishment of the settlement through the windows of a passing bus or on television. They gathered in meetings and listened to speeches about struggle, power, organisation, and resistance as a way of *changing their history*:

> 'We occupy the lands without fear of repression in order to *change our history*, and make a political impact even if this involves sacrificing our families'. (Interview with the Social Movement Leader 1)

In fact, most would-be occupiers were not familiar with or persuaded by the philosophy and values of the Homeless Movement, but joined out of sheer necessity and probably from an inner feeling that occupying the land would be their only means of obtaining a home. Their subsequent reflections confirmed these feelings:

> 'If I had never joined the invasion, I'd never have got a house; I had no way of constructing one or getting land.' (Antonia Ambrosio, 49)

> 'Before carrying out the occupation, we held two meetings; I took part in one and my husband in another. My mother-in-law knew the organisers of the Homeless Movement and she asked us: 'Do you want a house? Why don't you take part in a land invasion in order to fight for a house? In a short time you will have a house.' However, it took 3 years and 3 months.' (Maria Cícera de Oliveira, 25)

Before the land occupation, the Homeless Movement organised several meetings to inform the group about their alternative courses of action and the possible risks involved in the event of a confrontation with the police. They were prepared to face the police but they did not have any idea about how long the confrontation might last.

Initially, the state authorities reacted swiftly to the land occupation; they tried to evict the people with the support of the police. At the same time, the occupants resisted with the support of progressive politicians. However, after exerting pressure for a month, and imposing restrictions on peoples' freedom of movement, the police relaxed their surveillance. The following testimony of one of the first occupants illustrates the fear that was felt and the extent to which this stimulated their resistance and struggle for a permanent home:

> 'At first it was awful because they did not allow us to build a bigger shack. The police did not let the people enter with wood or canvas. On the second day, I made a fire on the ground and while I was cooking, a policeman trampled on the firewood and knocked the pan over; it fell down with the food slopping all over the place. We could not say anything. A month later, the lack of water became another problem, as well as the lack of electricity supply. The police had spent a month there trying to prevent more people from invading the area; they also caused some trouble to discourage people from settling in the area on a permanent basis. However, we refused to leave; we were going to stay there until we got our houses. There were only a few families, but later when the police left, more families arrived. At the beginning, there were just 200 and some families, who had come on the first day. The invasion took place during the night, and when I arrived at 2am, it was already overcrowded. The police arrived at 10am. When the police reached the area, many people had already left the site. Around 130 families remained, hoping that more people would arrive, to apply pressurize and negotiate. Heloísa Helena (PT Senator) and Paulão (PT State MP) arrived to encourage the people not to leave and insisted on negotiating with the police. After a month the police left, and things got better.' (Maria Cícera de Oliveira, 25)

The occupants were driven by need and the hope of improving their living conditions but for a long time these remained hazardous. The occupied land lacked toilets, fresh water, and a safe energy supply, and the canvas shacks did not provide shelter from the elements. The people were forced to buy more canvas, and hence spend relatively large sums of money on a makeshift solution (the canvas would only last a few

months before becoming tattered). The heat was unbearable and the children and elderly suffered from respiratory diseases. Life outside was not any better. Moreover, the lack of a formal address made getting a job extremely difficult, as employers mistrusted people whom they were unable to contact.

The illegal occupants and the Homeless Movement did not remain passive during their long stay; they carried out several activities to assert their claims to housing (SMHPS 2001).[119] In 1998, they invaded the Secretaria Municipal de Habitação Popular e Saneamento [SMHPS, Municipal Social Housing and Sanitation Department] and stayed there until the State Governor and Maceió Mayor agreed to meet them. Afterwards, having had no positive response from the State or Municipality, they decided to camp out on the Praça dos Martírios [Martyr's Square] in front of the Alagoas Government Palace, until they were moved to a new area, behind the Penitentiary Complex (see Map 7.2 for the location of the PETROBRÁS land occupation; the area which was allocated to the new Conjunto Denisson Menezes, and the Cidade de Lona). Again, they were moved to a new area without any basic facilities and everyone had to wait for the state to fulfil its promise to build houses promptly. The plot was a flat 90,000 m2 (150m x 600m) bordering on two other precarious settlements previously displaced by the Municipality: Conjunto Gama Lins and Conjunto Santa Helena, by the UFAL, and by the Penitentiary Complex Baldomero Cavalcante (see Map 7.3). The land was the property of the Justice Department of Alagoas; it was an annexe of the Penitentiary Complex.

Some residents decided to build their homes by drawing on their own financial resources or by borrowing money but the bulk of the occupants had to wait for houses to be built over their canvas shacks. Thus, even after the relocation and everyone had been granted a strip of land, the struggle continued with meetings and demonstrations. The people were afraid that they would be forgotten because the area was so isolated. Finally, the State officially recognised the plot as a housing project by enacting Law # 6.162 on June 26th 2000.

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[119] The history of the community organisation is outlined in the UEM Projeto Social PRODOC (SMHPS 2001) and supplemented by the interviews.

Map 7.2: Location of PETROBRÁS Land Occupation
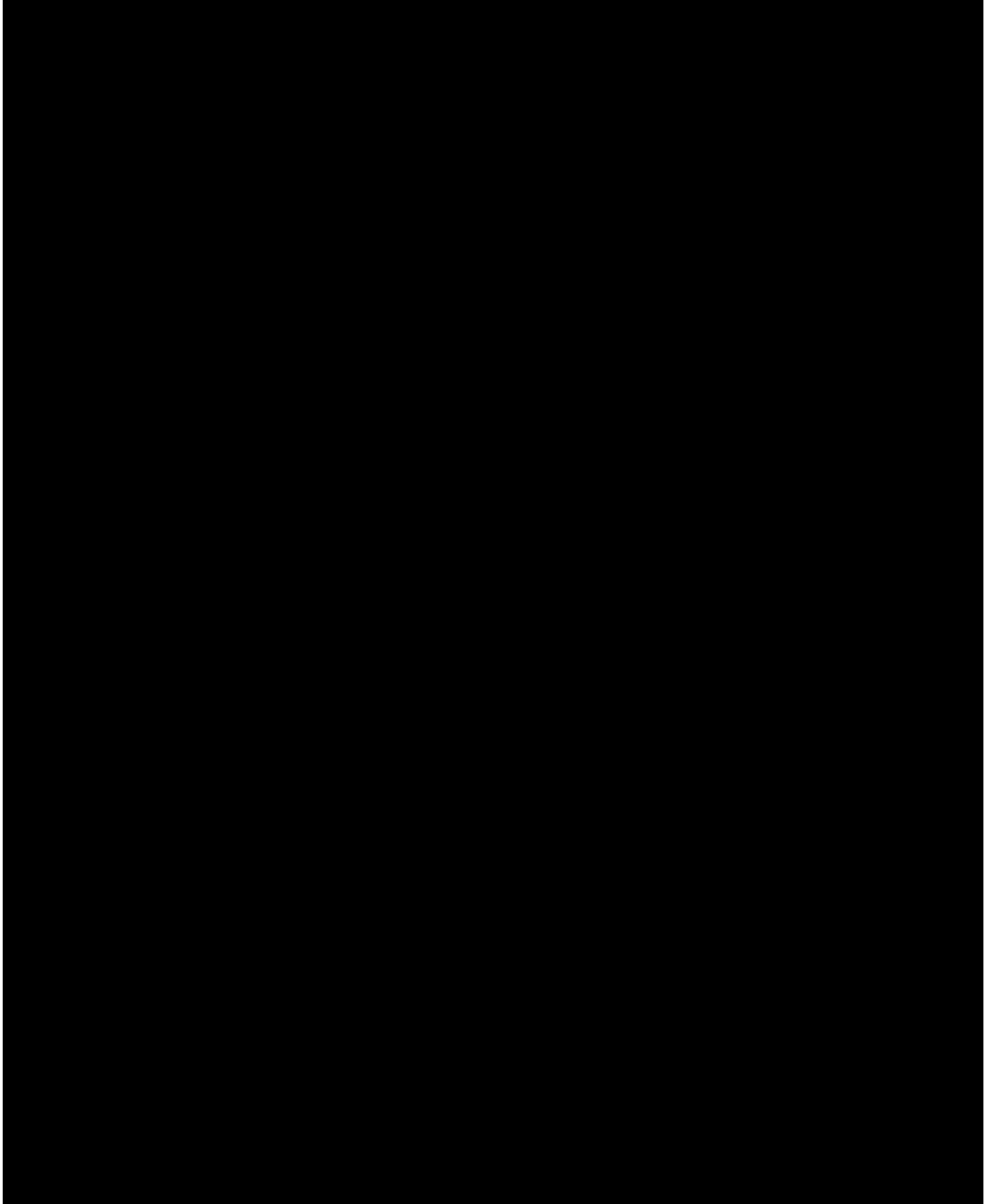
Source: Maceió, Prefeitura de (2000) *The Official Basis of Cartography*. Maceió: Maplan.

Map 7.3: Location of the Housing Project Site Land
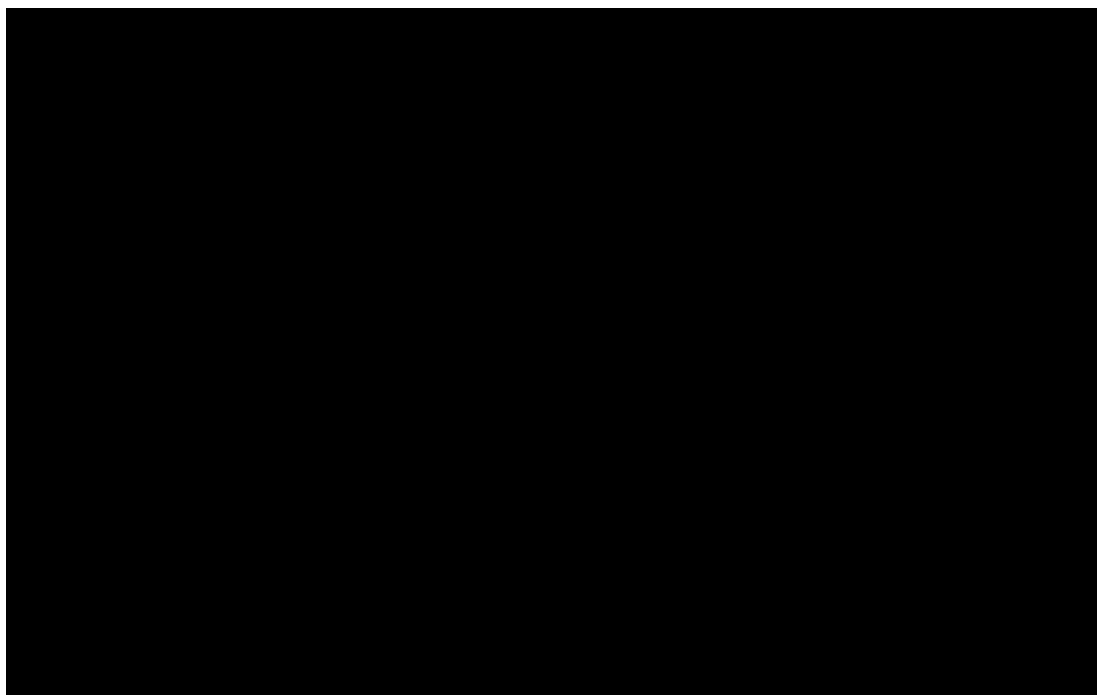
Source: Maceió, Prefeitura de (2000) *The Official Basis of Cartography*. Maceió: Maplan. Maceió, Prefeitura de (2003) *Conjunto Denisson Menezes HBB Project*. Maceió: SMHPS.

Immediately after the displacement of 1999, the Government embarked on the process of urbanising the Conjunto Denisson Menezes but this scheme was soon abandoned due to a lack of financial resources.[120] The State Government with the support of the Municipality built no more than ten houses and some collective toilets relying on prisoners to carry out the work. In the face of this setback, the people (especially the community leaders and the Homeless Movement) began a new wave of protests. In 2000, they organised a demonstration by walking to the Secretaria Municipal de Habitação Popular e Saneamento [SMHPS, Municipal Social Housing and Sanitation Department], some 15 kilometres away. Women, children and the elderly interrupted the traffic on Fernandes Lima Avenue, one of the most important avenues of Maceió, before handing to the SMHPS a demand for community buildings with facilities and services.

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[120] The name recognises Denisson Menezes, a human rights activist who was killed by the police.

In 2001, a new meeting was scheduled at the Government Palace with the Municipal Department of Housing to request a reliable energy supply system, a police station, and property title deeds. The residents and the Homeless Movement continued to press for a reply and they soon allied themselves with politicians of the PT and University staff, especially social workers from NUTAS [Action and Research Group for Social Assistance in Alagoas]. The search for resources meant that the Municipality had to make contact with the Programa Habitar Brasil BID - HBB and negotiate an agreement for Maceió.[121] Finally, in July 2001, two years after the displacement, the Municipality decided the community would be the beneficiaries of the first project of the Habitar Brasil BID Programme in Alagoas.

The HBB Programme - Conjunto Denisson Menezes project is based on two main pillars, together with a wide range of subsidiary components. The first is a social project, which includes the following: (i) mobilisation and organisation of the community; (ii) environmental and sanitary education and (iii) generation of employment and revenue. The second concerns architectural and engineering projects (see Figure 7.1), including: (i) a water supply system; (ii) an energy system; (iii) sewage and drainage systems; (iv) roads and pavements; (v) the landscape; (vi) community buildings: a police station, community centre, health centre, school, nursery, two squares, and a football field; (vii) 379 new housing units, four special new residential units, and improvements to the 185 units already built by the people; and (ix) legalisation regarding the title deeds of land.

Despite the early deadline (July 2001) for the implementation of the Programme in Conjunto Denisson Menezes, the first 50 houses were only finished in January 30th 2003. There was a delay over the transfer of funds from the Caixa Econômica Federal [CEF, Federal Savings Bank][122] and the Ministry of Cities, as a result of

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[121] The Programme depends on a loan granted by IDB through the Brazilian Government, which is designed to provide resources and technical advice. The HBB was initially regarded as experimental and aimed at helping the Municipalities to find ways of overcoming the problems of the precarious settlements and assisting the Central Government in planning urban and housing public policies. The Municipality had to provide the land, the technical personnel for the construction and social workers, and undertake the management planning (IDB 1999).

[122] CEF is the public bank responsible for financing urban development projects.

several problems regarding the documents prepared by the Municipal Housing Department, including the building contract that was cancelled because it failed to comply with the rules for tendering.[123] The forecast for the completion of the work within the projected schedule was estimated to be 21 months from the starting date but the project was only officially completed in May 2005, 45 months later.[124] The funds destined for the Conjunto Denisson Menezes totalled R$6,692,622 (US$2,230,874) while the local complementary funding was R$562,594 (US$187,531), representing 8% of the total amount.

Photograph 7.1: Aerial View of Conjunto Denisson Menezes
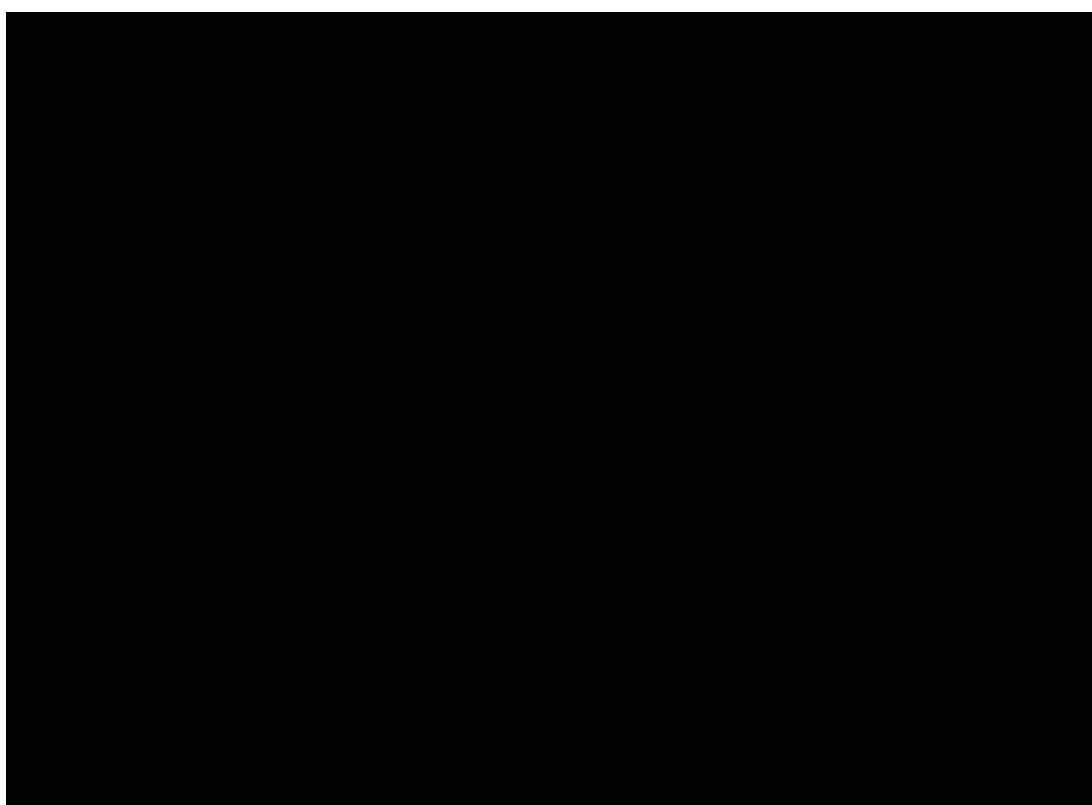
Source: SMHPS (2003)

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[123] The information gathered from the interview with the Policy Maker of CEF in Alagoas (November 2003) and the evaluation of the scheme carried out by the SMHPS illustrate the difficulty of implementing and interpreting the rules of the Programme. One mistake in the definition of a firm's proposed schedule led to the cancellation of the building contract.

[124] The Police Station was completed on September 18th 2001, the Community Centre on October 23rd 2002, the Health Centre on January 30th 2003 and the School in January 2004. The houses were built in several phases. The first phase of 50 houses was completed on January 30th 2003, the second phase on May 23rd 2003, with 73 houses, and the third phase, with 80 houses on September 27th 2003.

Figure 7.1: Conjunto Denisson Menezes Urban Design
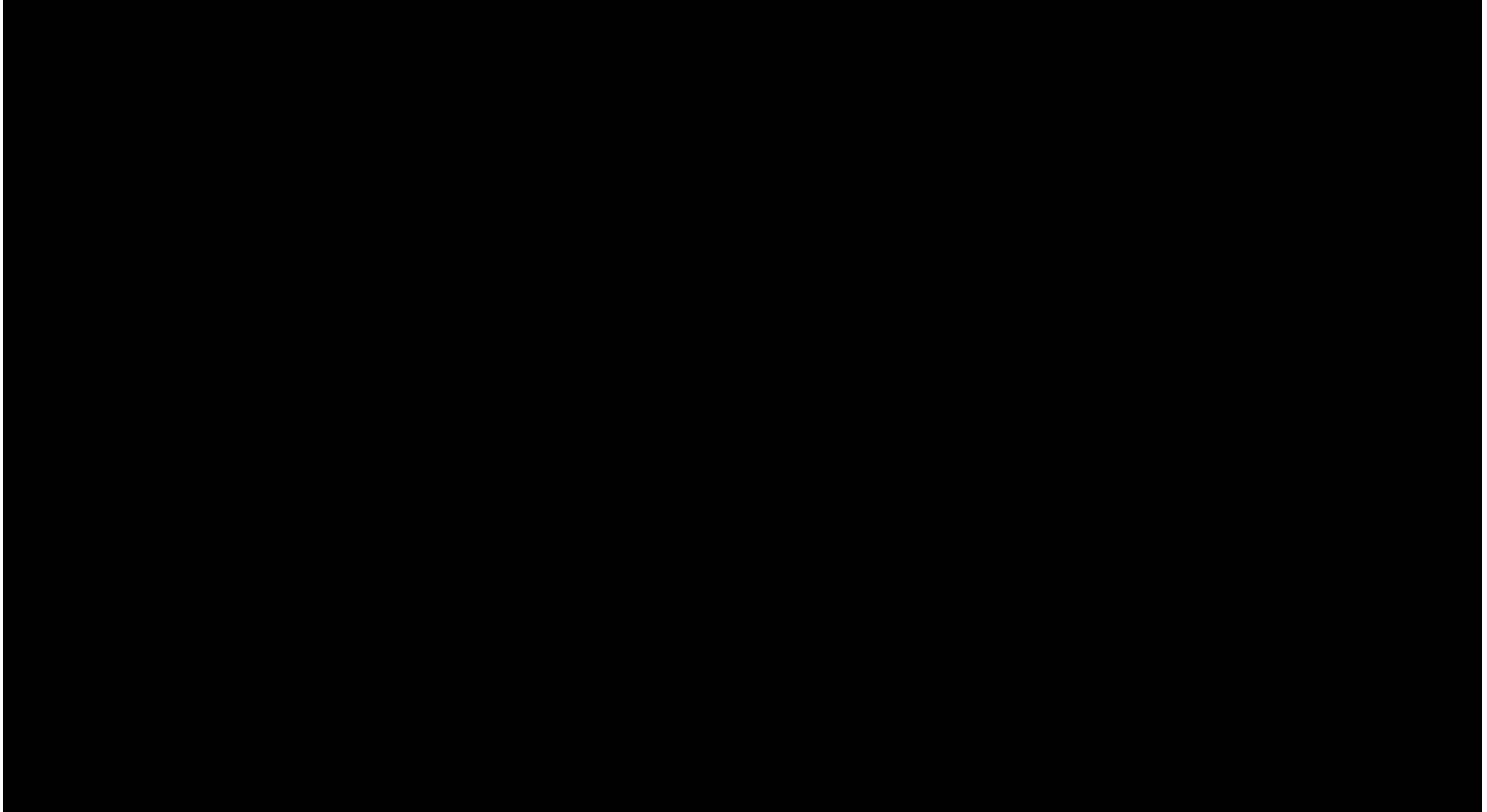
Source: Maceió, Prefeitura de (2003) *Conjunto Denisson Menezes HBB Project*. Maceió: SMHPS.

The Conjunto Denisson Menezes has an unpleasant appearance. It is a sequence of small boxes alongside long broad streets. The linear arrangement of the houses is visually monotonous and lacks any variation in design: it looks arid and fails to offer any visual stimulus (Photographs 7.2 and 7.3). This gives the place a sense of abandonment, which detracts from feelings of ownership and *appropriation*.[125] The buildings for the Health Centre, School, Community Centre, and Police Station are functional but seem to be out of place; two years after they began to be built, they are still incomplete and show signs of deterioration (Photographs 7.4, 7.5, 7.6 and 7.7). There are no squares or trees in the public spaces, despite the fact that there is financial provision for landscaping; there are just tiny yards, in front and at the back of the houses, where, on their own initiative, the residents are free to cultivate a garden. However, most of the residents do not want any vegetation in their space and argue that it leads to more problems than benefits: it means there are fallen leaves, irrigation is required, and other people can make use of the shade, especially noisy children. Conjunto Denisson Menezes is consistent with the standard aesthetics of state low-income people housing projects in Maceió: unattractive and open enough to allow them to be easily controlled by the authorities.

Photograph 7.2 and 7.3: View of the Streets of Conjunto Denisson Menezes

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[125] The word appropriation is used here to mean producing, using and consuming a space by establishing social (meeting, exchange), political (group dominance, public/private) and symbolic (social and spatial identity) relations (Cavalcanti 1994).

Photograph 7.4: Health Centre
Photograph 7.5: School

Photograph 7.6: Community Centre
Photograph 7.7: Police Station

Photograph 7.8: Public Space without Vegetation
Photograph 7.9: Trees and Bushes Planted by the Residents

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In between the houses, there are unused alleyways, which are normally blocked off by a gate formed of cardboard, pieces of wood or scrap metal. All the houses have the same initial design: the project does not allow any changes to be made to the original plan. However, this rule is often disobeyed and several alterations are made which do not follow any criteria and as a result, lead to a further decline in the aesthetic quality of the space (Photograph 7.10). There is no damp-proof treatment on the walls of the kitchen and bathrooms to prevent infiltration even though this was supposed to have been provided. The houses show clear signs of deterioration (Photograph 7.11).

> 'The door is covered in rust: it is useless. It is up to the people to make things better ... unless we have money to improve, we can't do anything, and we cannot make any progress.' (Rubem Cajueiro, 41 years old)

> 'They had *destroyed* all the land, with these alleys. They should make use of all the land and build two rooms and a patio. The ground behind and the side-alley are useless.' (Maria das Dores, 47 years old)

Photograph 7.10: Unauthorised Alterations to Houses
Photograph 7.11: Signs of Deterioration in Buildings

Conjunto Denisson Menezes is located in an area of difficult access, its inhabitants have high transport costs; 51% spend almost 25% of their earnings on public transport (SMHPS 2001). The distance from the new settlement to the closest avenue (BR-104) is approximately two kilometres by means of a dirt road. During the winter, it is unfeasible to drive by car and the people usually walk without shoes, because of the puddles and mud. When the settlement was first established, some

small, private cars used to charge R$1 (US$0.33) to take people from the settlement to the main avenue where they could catch the bus to the city centre. This short journey of two kilometres was more expensive than the entire trip to Maceió. Now, there is a bus line that follows an indirect route, which takes almost two hours to reach the centre, and does not keep to a strict timetable. Apart from the single bus line, there was no communal telephone, only six houses were connected to a landline telephone and 20 people had a mobile phone. The Conjunto is symptomatic of spatial and social isolation.

Photograph 7.12: Two Kilometres of Muddy Road

7.2   Experiences of Daily Round

The number of families who benefited from the project is calculated to be 564 (2,284 individuals). Municipal records from 2001 show that 373 families were from the PETROBRÁS land occupation and the rest from other displaced areas. Since its first contact with the PETROBRÁS land occupation in 1999, the Municipal Department of Housing has tried to keep records of the social and economic conditions of the

people (SMHPS 2001). However, largely owing to the high turnover of people, the records are inaccurate. The municipal records used in this case study have thus been compared with the results of my own interviews (25 interviews: 21 women and 4 men) and with the accounts of the life stories of the subjects.

Five out of the 25 interviewees were under 30, nine under 45, seven under 55, and four between 55 years old and 85 years old. Nineteen out of 25 interviewees came from the countryside, including three from Pernambuco.[126] Their marital lives started early, 19 out of the 25 interviewees got married or had their first baby before they were 20 years old, ten between 17 and 20 years old, and nine before the age of 16. In my sample, 50% of the individuals had no more than three children and among these 25, five have six children, three with ten and still five have more than ten children, including one family with eighteen children. In Table 7.1, one can see a decrease in the fertility rate of Brazilian women, although in the State of Alagoas this rate has remained high. It is perhaps not surprising in these circumstances that a notable feature of the interviewees was the rapid ageing process, particularly among the women. Some of them seemed to be 10 or 15 years older than they really were.

Table 7.1: Gross Figure of Birth Rate and Average Number of Children per Mother

	Infants born alive *(per 1000 inhabitant)*		Number of children per woman	
	1991	**2001**	**1991**	**2001**
Brazil	23.39	19.91	2.73	2.18
North-East	26.81	21.49	3.38	2.40
Alagoas	30.52	25.96	3.78	2.88

Source: Data from *Indicadores e Dados Básicos* [Indicators and basic data] - Brazil - 2003
IDB-2003 - Ministério da Saúde [Health Ministry]

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[126] The 2001 Municipal records show 564 families plus 13 families living in co-habitation. 45% of the inhabitants registered came from Maceió and 43% from the rural areas of Alagoas, which shows that there is an on-going migration from rural areas to the city.

Educational standards are low. According to the municipal records, 83% of the children up to six years old do not have access to infant schools. Forty-two percent of the population between 7 and 14 years old is out of school, 33% of the population between 15 and 18 years old is illiterate, 59% of the population between 19 and 45 years old is illiterate, and within this same population, 30% did not complete primary school. Eighty percent of the population between 46 and 65 years is illiterate. One hundred percent of the population over 65 years old is illiterate. In my sample, 14 out of 25 never went to school and 11 had some kind of education but only for a few years. They left school earlier than expected, without any formal qualification and the majority can be classified as *functionally illiterates* - which means they only know how to sign their names. Most find it difficult to concentrate and learn.

The general health conditions of the residents of Conjunto Denisson Menezes are unsatisfactory. In every house, one can find someone who is ill. Diseases linked to the environment, insufficient food and a lack of hygiene, are a part of daily life. Seven out of 25 interviewees were chronically ill and three had been confined to mental hospitals. Three of my interviewees stated that *hunger* was an integral part of their childhood experience; these same individuals belonged to the chronically sick group. The psychological and material surroundings of poverty and deprivation have an influence on health as a whole.

> 'I did not have any means to work ... My husband fell sick with heart and spleen problems, and he had to be operated on. He did not have enough money either to buy a house, or pay rent. We were displaced to *galpão* [industrial sheed] and these were very bad times. It was awful over there as it was full of drunken people, marijuana addicts, and thieves. I lost my health in that *galpão*.[127] I have high blood pressure; any noise upsets me. I am very nervous, and this is the reason for my sickness.' (Maria Cícera da Conceição, 53 years old)

The diseases mentioned by the interviewees can be classified into five groups: respiratory (asthma, flu, pneumonia), digestive (dehydration, diarrhoea, vermin infestation), dermatological (especially scabies), psychiatric and malnutrition in

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[127] After heavy rain in Maceió, the houses on the hills were destroyed and the people were displaced temporally to an old industrial shed - the *galpão*, where they remained for eight years. When finally tired of waiting to be rehoused, some of the families decided to participate in the PETROBRÁS land occupation.

general. The records kept by the Sistema Único de Saúde - SUS [National Health System], corroborate the high rates of chronic and mental diseases found in the Conjunto Denisson Menezes sample. It is possible to draw some conclusions about the prevalence of some diseases in the Brazilian North-East and in Maceió in particular, by observing the percentage of hospital confinements in 2002 (Table 7.2).

Table 7.2: Type of Disease or Health Condition Leading to Hospital Confinement

Diseases/condition	Maceió	North-East Region	Brazil
Pregnancy	27.47%	26.66%	23.82%
Respiratory	15.94%	16.25%	15.54%
Infectious and parasitic	10.96%	12.45%	8.90%
Psychiatric	6.41%	2.06%	2.39%

Source: Data from *Indicadores e Dados Básicos* [Indicators and basic data] - Brazil - 2003
IDB-2003 – Ministério da Saúde [Health Ministry]

The economic situation of Conjunto Denisson Menezes residents is dire and similar to that of the other precarious settlements that have been studied. Generally the inhabitants are made up of domestic servants, garbage pickers, beggars and the unemployed. According to the Municipal Records, only 16% of the heads of households were part of the formal job market, while 66% survived in the informal market as independent workers or doing small manual jobs. Eight percent were independent workers because they had some professional qualification and could work by themselves. Nine percent were supporting their family with allowances and retirement pensions (five interviewees were retired). The average income for 46% of the families is less than one minimum national wage (US$120) and 50% earned from one to three minimum wages (US$120 to 360). From my sample, only two out of 25 interviewees had a formal job with a *carteira de trabalho assinada* (registered work permit), and earned a salary based on the minimum wage.[128] The majority of the

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[128] *Carteira de trabalho* [work card] is an official document (a blue booklet) issued by the Department of Social Security and Labour. It is used by employers to sign a work contract together with employees, as well as to register all relevant social security and professional information. As well as containing a copy of the Consolidação das Leis Trabalhistas [CLT, Amalgamation of Labour Laws] on its

interviewees did not have any work contract; thus, their income was quite unstable. Sixteen out of 25 declared that they earned a minimum monthly wage and 7 out of 25 two minimum wages, although most earned less than US$120 a month and depended on the aid of relatives, friends, or institutions.

The following boxes provide an outline of four life stories of Conjunto Denisson Menezes residents and lay stress on the personal and familial events in their lives. They draw attention to the daily round poverty experienced both before and after the intervention of the state by means of the housing scheme and other social policies.

Box 7.1: A Life Scarred by Hunger

Rubem Cajueiro was born in Maceió, in the Bolão Favela in 1962. Forty-two years old, a father of six children, he is a sick man. When he was a child, he spent five years in hospital because he had a bone disease probably caused by poor nutrition. His diet consisted of beans, without meat or any other source of protein. Hunger and death has been an everyday fact in his family life. Three brothers died from malnutrition and two others were murdered. Today there are three sisters and two brothers left alive. Although the eldest of 14 children, Rubem never met his father. His mother had several partners. He blames the absence of a father for the need to go begging on several occasions. They lived in a house made of straw and adobe that they had tried to improve with some stones and bricks until they had to sell some of these materials so that they could eat. Rubem, and his brothers and sisters did not go to school because they did not have the necessary documents. His dream was to be healthy enough to get work, and to have food and a shelter. He is a man of faith and a Catholic, but he likes to attend the ceremonies of candomblé.

When he was 27 years old, he met his wife. They have two sons and two daughters, between four and 12 years old. He does not work any more because he was considered to be disabled and now receives the equivalent of one minimum wage per month (US$ 120). He has tried to work to increase his family's income but the jobs available to him usually involve heavy manual labour. His wife has a little nursery in one of their two houses in the Conjunto Denisson Menezes; one of the houses is registered in the name of his wife and the other in that of his mother-in-law. After his relocation to Conjunto Denisson Menezes, he invited his relatives, his mother and sisters to live in the same settlement, but they had to purchase their own houses.
He has always made a great effort to own a space for himself and his family. He lived in rented houses, but always found it hard to pay the rent. He lived with some relatives but felt bad in that situation. One day, while on a bus going to the centre of the town, he saw some people making canvas shacks in a plot near the University

first pages, this document also ensures that all employees are entitled to basic labour rights such as paid holidays, 30-day annual leave, Christmas bonuses, retirement benefits, sickness assistance and access to the unemployment emergency fund.

Hospital. There, he met a person he knew and she invited him to join them, but when he arrived with his stuff, the people said that he could not help them. However, he desperately wanted to be a part of the land occupation and decided to buy a shack. It was the first time in his life that he had taken part in this type of protest movement. Now, he has become one of the leaders, and takes part in meetings and demonstrations, including trips to Aracaju, and Brasília, as the representative of the UMM-AL and the PETROBRÁS occupation. Although he had bought a shack on the occupation, he criticised the practice of buying shacks.

> 'The people sold the houses because they did not know how hard it was to build them. They don't really need a house; they want to live like scavengers in the world. They leave one plot and invade another one, selling, changing, and taking advantage of the situation. They want to live like this; this is the problem of many people here. They sold plots for R$40, 50, or even 200 (US$15, 19 up to 77). But where are they today? Now, they are in a favela again, known as Eustáquio Gomes (Canvas City). They only want to obtain a home as a means of getting easy money by selling it again; later on, they return to the streets. Now, who is responsible? The only people responsible for this situation are the Governor and the Mayor. The politicians themselves are the culprits. When it is time for elections, they share out land even to those who have obtained thousands of plots; they will give anything to the people if they think it can be exchanged for a vote. The people allow themselves to be sold for a strip of land.'

After obtaining a home his life improved, although the lack of employment made things quite difficult. In his view, the biggest problem in the community is insecurity.

> 'The biggest problem we are facing here is insecurity. We do not have police protection. We have a police station but the policemen are never there. They should circulate inside the settlement to see what is happening.'

The other problem is health assistance.

> 'There are many sick people here; nobody has money, nobody can afford to get any sort of treatment. The ambulance only comes if someone has been shot or stabbed. Who do they think we are - are we all bandits? This week I went out with R$10 (US$3) which was the only money I had to buy food for my children; instead I used it to pay a taxi ride to help someone get to the Emergency Unit.'

Another problem for him is public transport. There are few buses serving the area and the residents of the settlements located in this region are not allowed to go into the University Campus to take buses from that point.[129]
Nonetheless, in his view, life is much better now compared with the days spent in the canvas shack.

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[129] There was a robbery at the University and the authorities denied access to the people who live in the settlements.

Photograph 7.13: Cross-section 1 of Interviewees of Conjunto Denisson Menezes
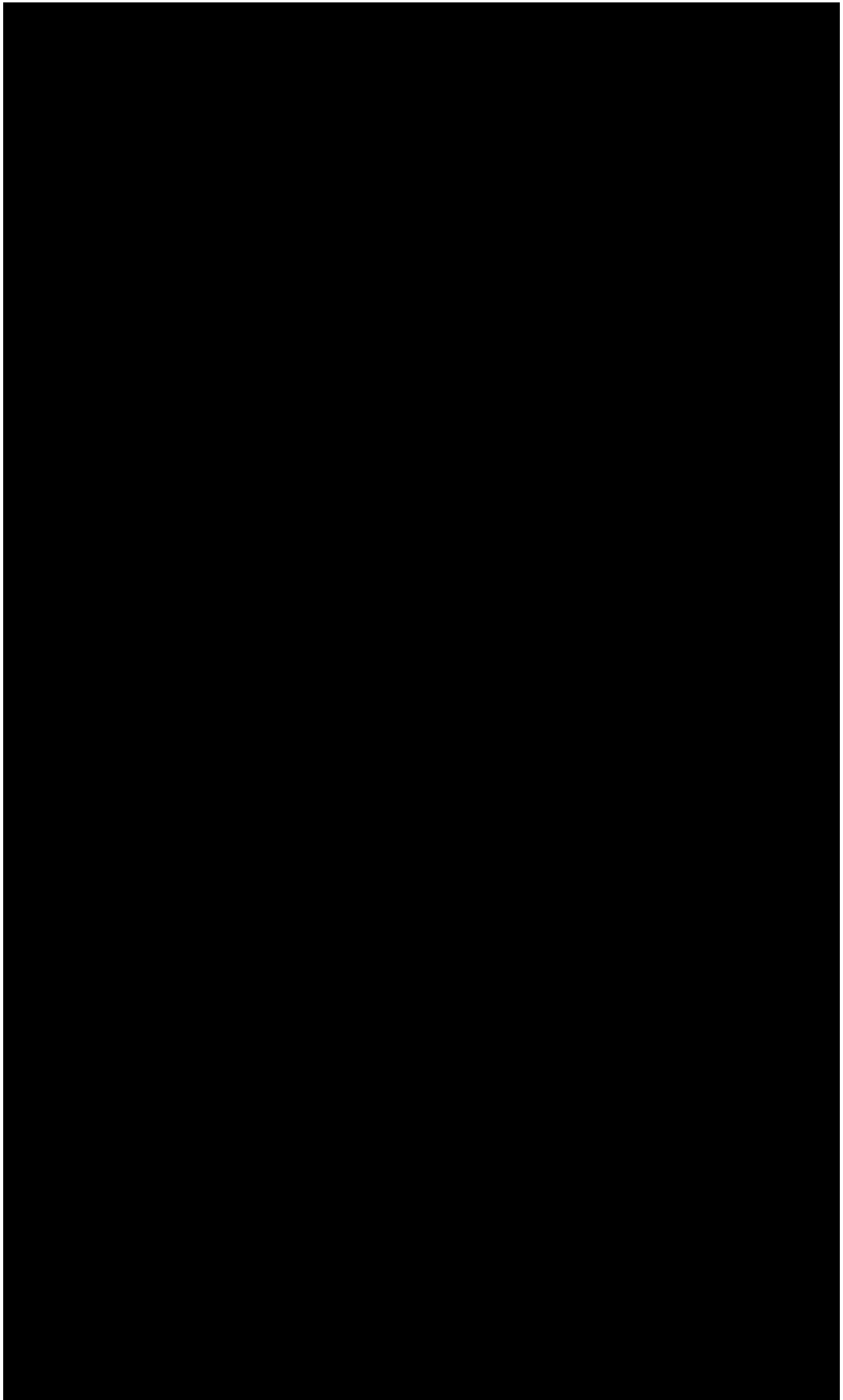
> 'Compared to the life I used to have before, things are better now. We lived in a canvas shack, which was very hot. Every month my son had to go to hospital. Altogether, he spent one or two months in the hospital.'

He strongly criticises the measures taken by the Municipality. He accuses the local government of forcing the people to accept everything, even if the size of the house is unsuitable and the quality of the construction is bad.

> 'What the Mayor would like to do is to take everybody out of the favela. She was not able to do that because the Movement, Maruza, Zezé (the leaders), and everybody else decided to oppose her intervention. Nobody was evicted. In the view of the government, the reality is this: we are poor, we are beggars, and we have to eat and to accept what they want to give us. We must always be under their orders.'

The politicians and even the local officials do not take account of his feelings or knowledge.

> 'I think that any citizen is entitled to be well received wherever he/she goes. If you have money, you will be welcomed; if you do not, you will have to spend all day long trying to do something. They say that we are incapable of arguing with them. People, as citizens, have the right to freedom of movement within any territory.'

He is pleased with his house and with his pension, because it means in the future he will not have to depend on anybody else, - 'I will only go where I want'- he said.

Box 7.2: Ignorance, Loneliness, and Naivety

Maria Cícera de Oliveira is a young mother of four children; she is 24 years old. When she was a child, her father abandoned her mother for a woman 36 years younger than him. She stayed with her father when most of her siblings left with the mother. She never went to school because her father never allowed her to.

> 'He said that if I had gone to school I would have dated someone. He said that my dating partner was the hoe. After I was nine years old, I had to work in the fields, cutting, cleaning, and planting sugar cane. I never went to school. I can only sign my name, and even this I can only do very badly; I learned how to do it from others. I would like to study and to learn a little bit more, because people that do not know how to read are useless.'

Nobody offered her guidance and she got pregnant with her first boyfriend. She was very naïve.

'No one gave me information about pregnancy or menstruation. I knew nothing. When I menstruated for the first time, I did not know what was happening. I spent the entire day inside the river, squatting; in order to see if the bleeding would stop but it did not. A neighbour of mine arrived and asked me: What are you doing inside the river all day? And I said: I don't know, it seems that I cut myself. I don't know what is happening. She explained to me what I would have to do. At this time, I was living with my father and nobody explained to me about this. When I started to date, I did not have any experience, I got pregnant. My father said that he was ashamed of me and that I had to leave his house'.

Cícera went to Maceió to live with her sister and seek her help in delivering her first baby; the baby's father did not help her bring up the little girl. She became evangelical.

'Before my life was an agony, a lot of pain. Now, I belong to God's Assembly Church and, compared to my former life, I feel very happy.'

She met her present husband, and they decided to take part in the land occupation since they could not afford to pay their rent. Life was harsh in the land occupation - mainly because of the police violence. She almost gave up her struggle for a house.

'At the beginning I didn't consider that anything was good; however, I didn't give up for the sake of my mother-in-law, who obtained a house in the Santa Helena settlement.[130] She said: You mustn't give up, you must struggle or else you will not have enough money to pay the rent. You are not working and your husband is unemployed and living in a relative's house', which is definitely not good. She gave us support and after two months he got a job and things improved.'

After two months of being displaced to the plot where the Conjunto Denisson Menezes was set up, Cícera's husband started to build their home. Now there are six relatives living in the same settlement.

She criticised the *attitude that required immediate results* and the lack of people's interest in spite of the chance to obtain a house.

'They don't realise the suffering we have undergone here. Hunger is a lame excuse for selling the house. When the people arrived here, they exchanged land for a television, HiFi systems or even for an old horse. Others sold their plots for R$30 (US$10) or R$40 (US$13), and this is not hunger. After all this selling, they returned to the occupied land of the Homeless; they are all in the Eustáquio Canvas City. I believe that, if the occupation hadn't taken place, they wouldn't have sold their houses, but while this sort of occupation remains active; they move in and out selling houses. Although they possess a house,

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[130] One of the neighbouring settlements of Conjunto Denisson Menezes.

they have never lived in it. Out of the original occupants, few people have remained on the land.'

On the other hand, Cícera did not want to move and she is happy with her new house as she states:

> 'My life improved a great deal because I have now my own little house and am free of worries. Before, we were full of anxiety. Someone would stop by and say that we were going to be evicted, and we thought: 'My God! After so many struggles, such distress and painful emotions, we are going to be evicted and leave this land without a house!'... Thus, the association started to organise meetings with the leaders of the Movement, and they encouraged us. However, there were some desperate periods on account of all of the rumours that were circulating. Several people didn't give up, thanks to the support of the leaders of the Movement, and I didn't either, because there were a lot of rumours.'

In the past, it used to be a shame for her to say that she lived in a favela. Now it is fine to be identified as a resident in a Conjunto. Nevertheless, she is worried about the future of the Conjunto Denisson Menezes.

> 'In ten years or more, I predict that this place will be converted into a favela. People do not know how to look after what they have, it is such a mess; they are destroying everything. The Health Centre is all dirty, the walls are all scrawled over, and the entire Conjunto is being neglected ... The Community Centre where we have the meetings and courses is all dirty. The people do not know how to recognise the value of their struggle, and what they have. They are dirty and aren't interested in anything ...'

With regard to her rights as a citizen:

> 'The rich do not respect the poor, the rich just like the poor people's work.'

She regards herself as a happy person because she has an address and, as a result, her husband always has a job. In the future, she wants to have a better life - to learn more, have a better income, and obtain a place for her children in school.

Box 7.3: Begging for Survival

Maria Cícera is 55 years old. She never went to school but worked in the sugar cane plantations instead until she was 20 years old. Later she worked some years as a nursemaid but after her mother's death, she left to take care of her young siblings. Her father began living with a new partner and she did not feel at ease in their house and decided to move to Maceió to seek employment. She lived with a cousin and

worked during the day. Her cousin died and left two young children behind aged seven and three years old respectively, as well as a six months old baby. She said:

> 'I was sad about my cousin because she didn't have either a mother or a father to take care of her children. I remained in her house (with my cousin' children and husband) after her death and I was the subject of a lot of gossip. Everyone said: How can a girl be at a man's house, if they are both young people? I said: What am I going to do? He asked me to live with him and I agreed. I had also lost my mother. Today we have been together for 40 years. I am a mother of 12 children, and counting the first three, its 15 altogether. However, I have only managed to keep six, as the other six have died.'

Maria Cícera bought a small house in Maceió on the cliffs. After six months living there, heavy rain destroyed her house and she was displaced to the galpão with 39 other families. She remained for eight years in the temporary shelter at galpão and because she did not see any way of escaping, she decided to take part in the PETROBRÁS land occupation and joined the Homeless Movement. The following part of her story is well known; however, what is important is that her miserable situation continued even after the house had been built. As she says:

> 'Nobody is working here. My husband hasn't worked for 12 years. He is 59 years old and not old enough to be retired. My husband is a sick man; nobody is offering him a job. I have already tried to get a retirement pension for him, but he has not been granted it. The official says: he is still young, he has children, and the children can help him to eat. However, at present, the children don't give anything to the father or the mother. I ask for something to eat out of charity and *run a campaign* [to beg] to avoid starvation, I take my bag underneath my arm, visit the houses and ask for aid. I don't work because I have problems caused by diabetes and heart disease; I am in a nervous state and take medicine, three times a day. My son gives me R$10 (US$3) per week to help me. He doesn't earn much money and he has two children. When he lived with me, he helped me more. My other single son earns R$40 (US$ 13) per week, and he gives me R$15 (US$ 5) to buy the meat. I try to get flour (cassava flour), beans, rice, by begging at people's doors. My life hasn't improved. When I was in my parent's house, we worked in the fields and did a little farming. My mother never allowed us to feel hungry or to go begging around the neighbourhood. Later, when I arrived in Maceió I started to ask for charitable aid. Today I'm still doing so with much regret. I don't like to remember the life I had before. Although I have always been poor, there was never a shortage of food either for me or for anybody who came to my house. But nowadays, I sometimes go through one or two days without eating, as happened last week. My son sent me a bag of mangos saying that he had not received his money. As I was hungry, I ate the mangos. I felt really bad as the mangos attacked my liver, and I threw up blood.'

Photograph 7.14: Cross-section 2 of Interviewees of Conjunto Denisson Menezes
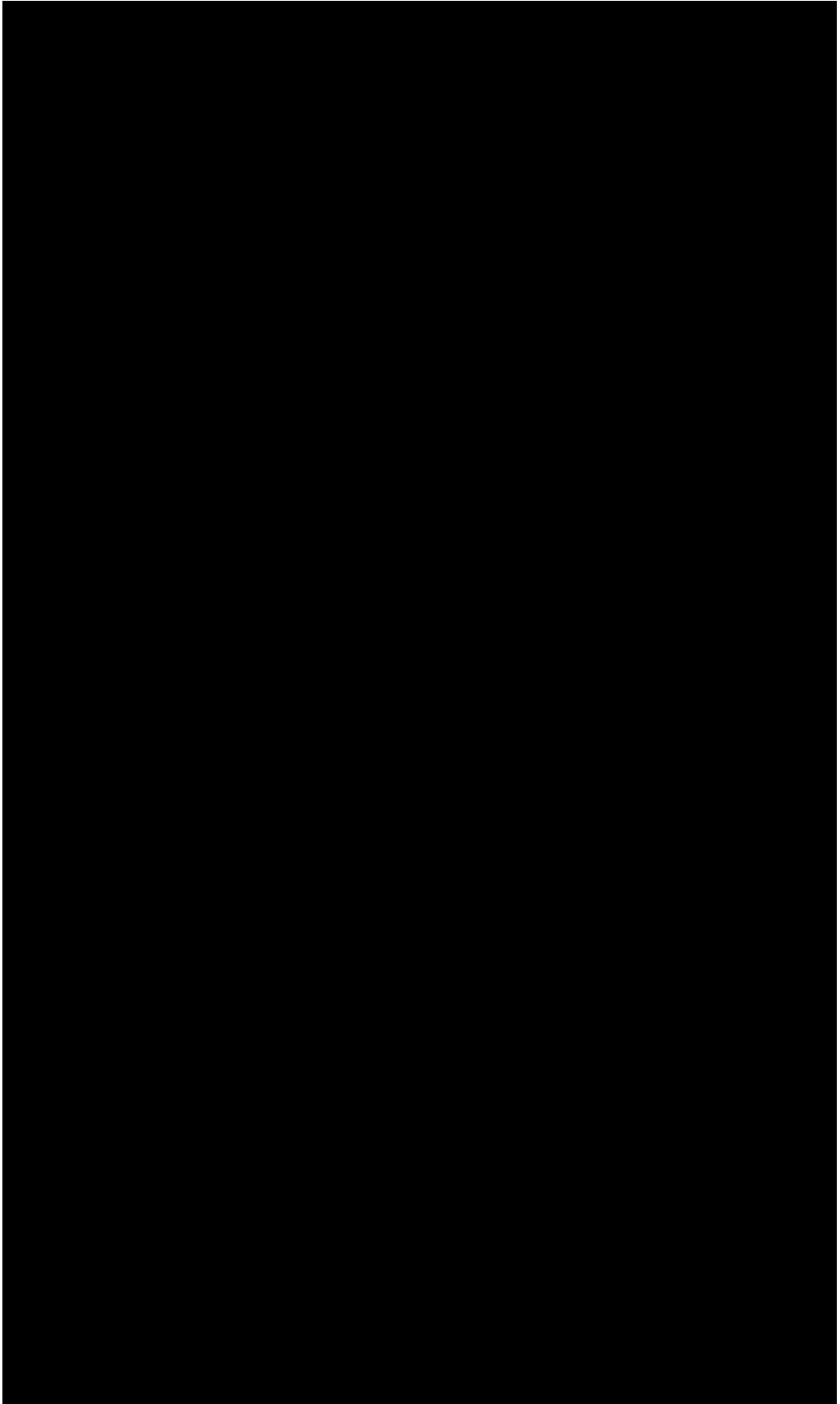
She does not have enough money to pay her bills or any kind of public transport that could take her outside the settlement, the only exception being when there was the old people's meeting, which was organised by the Housing Department.

It is five years since she was last able to afford to buy cooking gas, so she has had to resort to cooking her meals over firewood.

These accounts show that the money invested in the Habitar Brasil/BID project has not substantially changed the day-to-day routine of Conjunto Denisson Menezes and there are similarities with the daily round of the inhabitants of the other settlements. According to the life stories, the Conjunto Denisson Menezes residents have difficulties with regard to health care, education, and security despite the construction of public service units. As far as location is concerned, their daily round is even more complex on account of the isolation that prevents them from gaining access to the job market and the public transport network. Despite the resemblance to the other settlements, there are some important differences mainly resulting from the direct presence of the state (the implementation of the housing project) and the subsequent social reactions to the state actions. These are apparent in grassroots political organisations, which are essential to negociate from a better position, and in the adoption of personal strategies for overcoming the barriers to spatial and social integration. The level of political organisation can be analysed by examining the power relations present in the Conjunto, including the people's political organisation, the leadership, and the relations with the politicians (which is the subject of the next section). The personal strategies are examined in the social practices section that follows.

7.2.1   Political Organisation

POWER RELATIONS INSIDE THE COMMUNITY

The case of Conjunto Denisson Menezes enables one to understand the consequences of action by a social movement in the political organisation of the community. The *modus operandi* of UMM-AL was to make sure the local leaders persuaded the

people to fight for a house through resistance and confrontation with the state.[131] As well as the rise of local leaders, there were regular meetings held by outside leaders (UMM-AL co-ordinators), who addressed the people on issues concerning their rights or gave prominence to the problem of inequality by highlighting the hard life they had to undergo. In addition, there was the support of progressive politicians who provided a continuous, albeit superficial, input to the political organisation. The people were linked to the association or to the associative movement in a just, utilitarian and transitory way. During demonstrations or land occupations, when the circumstances became harsh, they remained together as a group. When they had attained their objectives, they dispersed and pursued a more individualistic life.

In the case of Conjunto Denisson Menezes, there have been three phases of community organisation. The first period began before the land occupation, when people from different backgrounds and geographical districts in the city arrived at a decision to take part in an illegal occupation on the grounds that it was not financially viable to rent a house or acquire a home with their own funds. This period is characterised by curiosity and hope. There was confidence in the leaders, most of whom were owners of houses - which had been obtained through similar processes and a feeling of certainty that this was the only way to obtain a house.

The second phase took place during the land occupation and was a testing period for the occupants, as they had to show their resilience in the face of difficult circumstances. Many gave up although they had to face both police violence and coercion and the unsanitary environment, and were forced to remain in canvas shacks so that they would not lose their place. The first months were of crucial importance because of the extent of the police violence and the need for resistance. This was a time for intense mobilisation and a high degree of solidarity. They cooked together,

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[131] The Brazilian MSTs [The Landless Movements] have served as a model for all social movements in Brazil. The MSTs have adopted a radical approach to achieve their objectives. They argue that the only way for the poor people to be heard is to use extreme measures. They used rhetorical expressions and appealed to their more passionate feelings of injustice to move the people and make them resist the police or other opposing forces. (see Brandford and Rocha 2002; Fanelli and Sarzynki 2003; Wright and Wolford 2003) The Homeless Movements borrowed many words and terms from the Landless Movements; the logo '*Ocupar, Resistir, Produzir*' [Occupy, Resist, Produce] was altered to '*Ocupar, Resistir, Morar*' [Occupy, Resist, Inhabit].

took care of each other's children and helped the most vulnerable, especially the elderly and sick. There was a constant presence of leaders from outside, who encouraged the emergence of local community leaders.[132] At the end of this phase, after more than three years, the people became tired and somewhat disillusioned. There was no more confidence in the state, owing to the number of unfulfilled promises. In the desperate throw of a single dice, one of the local leaders suggested that they camp in front of the Palácio dos Martírios [Martyr's Palace]. Following this, the state agreed to negotiate about relocating the settlement and they arrived at the new site.

The setting up of canvas shacks on individual plots at the new site marked the beginning of the third phase of the community's organisation. They obtained the financial resources for this task by asking a bank or friends and relatives for a loan, or by undergoing personal sacrifices to save money (such as going without meals). By engaging in an individual struggle to tackle their own immediate problems, the residents had to cease being involved with the community association. Meetings were held with the simple purpose of explaining the situation of the housing construction and especially of giving feedback on the Habitar Brasil BID programme negotiations. The outside and community leaders participated in these meetings; however, as they made little progress, the number of community gatherings began to decrease. When the Habitar Brasil BID Programme really took off, the community was disbanded.

Today most of the people occupying the Conjunto Denisson Menezes were not involved with either the first or even the second phase of the community organisation. Most of them are more recent buyers without any knowledge of the former collective struggle. Their efforts are individual; the money used to buy the house was earned as a result of their personal and individual work. The newcomers were not immediately integrated with the original occupants, and did not recognise the importance of the UMM-AL and local community organisation. The sense of

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[132] In fact, the movement identified who could be a leader and tried to incorporate these people into the Movement's activities.

collective action has been lost; only a few people (the original occupants) realised and experienced how hard and strenuous their struggle had been.

> 'We were more united. Here they are struggling for power and I don't know what kind of power this is - it's so little. They wanted to establish another association. I am out of it. Work with this community? No way. It is just a headache. These people never participated and they think we should show gratitude to the state for having given us the houses, when we should thank ourselves because we fought for our houses.' (Tania Couto, 39)

At present, the most representative community organisation, the Associação dos Moradores do Conjunto Denisson Menezes [Conjunto Denisson Menezes Residents' Association] is no longer functioning. After the last election for the Board Association (2003-2005), the former leaders distanced themselves from the new Board. An Alagoas State MP supported the Board President-elect with evident electoral interests.[133] After the elections, the new President disappeared. There was little participation in the meetings and decision-making, although nearly half of the interviewees stated that they were involved in the association. The centralised structure and the size of the group were not conducive to a better form of collective organisation. It was impossible for a small group of five leaders to represent all the aspirations and opinions of the 564 families involved in the project and, in theory, in the residents' association as well. The attempt to break up the association into smaller committees and groups was unsuccessful because this was organised and undertaken by social workers and not by the inhabitants themselves.

Despite the similarities of the political organisation with the other communities in Maceió, the Conjunto Denisson Menezes does not represent a model for evaluating the community development of Maceió's precarious settlements. The community was given constant assistance through the social work carried out by the state (a requirement of the Habitar Brasil BID Programme), which attempted to underline the collective character of the new settlement. For instance, before they could be eligible for a particular benefit, the inhabitants were required to be part of the association. This was one of the reasons why among 25 interviewees, 12 said that they were

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[133] The MP is Cabo Luiz Pedro, a military policeman who exchanged houses through a voting process.

association members. The people's association initially arose spontaneously as a result of need and later became a representative and formal body, which meant that state benefits could only be granted to those who were part of the association. The association no longer has political objectives but has become the channel for the allocation of state benefits.

7.2.2   Social and Individual Practices

It should be stressed that the social practices discussed in this section are linked to the search for social and spatial integration, the new challenges that arose after the construction of the houses and the reactions to the intervention of the state. One of these challenges is how to survive in this new fragmented and isolated space. Although the state project includes activities geared towards generating income, they have not yielded concrete results. The survival strategies adopted by the residents are similar to those found in the other settlements studied. The personal strategies employed to overcome poverty form a part of the social practices that are located in the new territories where the distinction between formal and informal, illegal and legal is every day becoming increasingly tenuous (Telles and Cabanes 2006). The polarities have vanished. A number of new strategies are emerging in the imperceptible threshold that lies between what is licit and illicit in the ambiguous sphere of Brazilian society. The differences with the social practices of other settlements are that in Conjunto Denisson Menezes there is a strengthening of geographical familial links that are brought about by the greater feeling of stability provided by the housing. As already noted, the community struggle was profound but has run out of steam; it has been replaced with individual oriented strategies, including turning to religion and these will be analysed in this section.

THE FAMILY AS A PRIVILEGED SOCIAL LINK

The varied origins of the people and the nomadic-like nature of their past lives makes it more difficult for them to establish social links than would have been the case if they had lived in the same community for many years. The principal social links that prevail are familial although all the interviewees claimed that they managed to maintain good relations with their neighbours. The interviewees think that the good atmosphere is due to the fact that there are a large number of relatives living in the

same settlement or only a short distance away. Keeping good relations with neighbours depends on being able to live independently and discretely and only seeking help in emergencies.

> 'Here everybody lives in his own way; they only join together if they are part of the same family.' (Edite Conceição, 55)

It is evident that most of the families have tried to keep their parents and relatives nearby or even in the same settlement. Many of the leaders managed to get houses for their relatives; they regarded this as a reasonable perk that goes with their voluntary job.

> 'All of my children live here. They also obtained a house. All of them occupied a plot until they got a house, thank God.'(Edite Conceição, 55)

> 'All my sisters have a house here and all of them were acquired through me … She bought a shack for a bicycle worth R$60 (US$20), a fan worth R$15 (US$ 5) and a watch worth R$10 (US$3). It was a cheap watch but the man was interested in the watch on her wrist; he thought that it was made of gold. … I told the Movement either you make sure my sisters obtain their shacks or I'm really going to put up a fight.' (Tania Couto, 39)

Some of the residents tried to do the same but were unsuccessful.

> 'I am living in a shack in the backyard of my sister-in-law's house but the Housing Department ordered me to leave this place. I'd already spoken to them about my situation, but the social worker said that it was impossible to remain there, because I had been given some land and had sold it. If she had listened to my problem, she would have understood it, but she didn't want to. It is a complete mess here! There are people who obtained a house, sold it and then bought and sold it again. Later on they got a new one, why am I different? But if she doesn't want to give me a chance, what can I do?'(Quitéria Rodrigues, 28)

> 'They (the Housing Department) didn't help me to place my daughter here, the guy sold (the house) to other people. They (the Housing Department) will only sort out the problem if they know your face (or if they are a friend).' (Romualdo Balbino, 61)

After some years living like *nomads*, getting the family together is a task that involves rebuilding lost social links. Overcoming the economic difficulties caused by unemployment means relying on a social network of relatives that live nearby. The

people who manage to install a significant number of relatives near their homes reduce the chances of having to move out of the settlement.

'She [my mother] changed several houses until she got this one next door.' (Rubem Cajueiro, 41)

The kinship network is useful in their everyday lives. They can leave the children with their relatives and quickly obtain money and food within this web. However, in spite of this support and solidarity, their general and increasing economic hardship does not prevent even minor crises from disrupting the survival strategies. This vulnerability does not end with the provision of a house and the proximity of relatives, even though a house is one of the most important factors in providing a sense of security.

INDIVIDUAL INTERESTS AFTER COLLECTIVE ACTIVITIES

Focusing on individual or personal interests in this context means an unwillingness to participate in collective activities and a refusal to be involved in community organisations. There were tensions between individuals and collective goals, which could hinder the development of group or community feeling, and its institutional body - the association. After obtaining a house, the people concentrate on tackling their own economic problems. Some who had previously worked in the association or in commissions think they have already contributed enough to the community and that now it is time to think of themselves. Living at a subsistence level which alienates them from the community is a factor that adds to their vulnerability in their continuous search for other important benefits; however, they also need time off from collective work to recover from the physical, social, economic and psychological stress experienced in the process of obtaining shelter. As the interviewees put it:

'I do not participate anymore; when I arrived here, I was involved in the association. I was one of the association's members, but this caused me a lot of problems. The members of the association couldn't agree amongst themselves - it was chaos! I made enemies instead of friends. I didn't want to participate anymore in any group. The organisation is important for the development of the community but I think that it is very difficult to work here with these people.' (Eliene Maria, 39)

> 'I don't want to talk about the Movement anymore. I'm going to devote my time to hydroponics. I'm going to take care of my life and take care of my future husband. I don't want anything more than this - I just want to have enough money in my pocket.' (Maruza Rodrigues, 53)

> 'I want to get away from the Movement. I don't want to work for anybody any more. It is not worthwhile fighting for the people, because you are not rewarded in the end you just get sworn at.' (Elione de Lima, 44)

Survival is an everyday struggle and leaves no room for planning one's life and even less to community planning.

The residents of Conjunto Denisson Menezes were successful in their fight for a dwelling. But this proved to be a hollow victory, since most remained poor and they now had to cope with added financial burdens, such as having to pay monthly electricity and water bills.

> 'In ten years' times the people who will be living here are the rich, because the fools are selling and the rich are holding back. The poor will leave because they cannot afford to pay the expensive bills. They will end up selling their houses and going to Canvas City and to other slum quarters.' (Antonio Leopoldino, 84)

> 'Who will be able to pay the bills? Those who can pay are the owners of the supermarket and the bakery, but what about the people that have to ask for charity to live? (Maria Cícera da Conceição, 53)

The initial occupants and subsequent residents were united by the same purpose - the acquisition of a house once the land had been occupied. But getting a house was only an immediate objective; they had not planned to live there forever. Some of them would have preferred to have the resources to build a house in another place and/or use the capital to survive. When the state defined where each of the occupants was going to live in the new area, these individual interests began to surface. A small group, made up of the leaders and some other occupants, tried to stay together in the new settlement; most of the leaders settled in the same block where they attempted to rebuild and extend their original social network.

> 'We know now how to identify ourselves better. We used to be ashamed to say that we lived in the slum quarter. This is not a slum quarter - it is a *Conjunto*.' (Maria Cícera de Oliveira, 24)

> 'Many people have praised (this place), saying that we live in a respectable quarter. Today I have a proper address. I am a citizen and have more peace and harmony. I live better and have left behind the times of affliction.' (Maruza Rodrigues, 53)

This collective effort seems to have been helped by the considerable improvement in their self-esteem.

A second group, which was spread across the territory, did not have such close ties with the leaders. Several people in this group decided to sell their houses. Some even returned to illegal land occupations. There were a number of reasons for this: some couples split up; some could not stand the neighbours or put up with everyday problems such as petty violence and robberies; others disliked the location of the Conjunto, and the distance from their jobs.

> 'Few people that were in the land occupation came here. They didn't like the place and found that it was far from everywhere, and it is true. Try going to the town-centre on a one-day trip.' (Tania Couto, 39)

The different problems and patterns of life experienced by each individual led to a high degree of mobility amongst the inhabitants of Conjunto Denisson Menezes, which thus prevented them from developing a sense of collective cohesion. Even from my sample of 25 interviewees, during one month, two people moved, one to Salvador, and another to a different house in the same settlement.

PERSONAL STRATEGIES

The life stories reveal some personal strategies employed by residents as a way of becoming socially and spatially integrated in the city, even though some of these strategies are illegal, involve dishonesty, or appeal to religion. In the first quotation, one of the leaders shows how she used her status as a foreman to get building materials for her house.

> 'My house is ready because I got hold of some material left over by a construction firm where I was working by myself. I was the supervisor of the

firm's work, and claimed whatever was left over after 5pm as mine.' (Elione de Lima, 44)

One of the oldest interviewees explained to me the way he *escaped* several times from paying the rent to the property owners because he could not afford it. Other residents used similar strategies to avoid paying the rent, which, according to the interviews, put them in an awkward and embarrassing situation.

> 'Never use your real name in public. I was never imprisoned because nobody found Januário (my false name) they just found Romualdo (my real name). I deceived the guys; I didn't pay any rent and moved to another house. When 3 or 4 months had passed without paying the rent, I went to live in another place and left the keys of the house with the neighbour.' (Romualdo Balbino, 61)

There are various strategies for getting a house, which depend on local circumstances. One of the interviewees with a large family went to a radio station to ask for a house and was given a shack in the most well located favela. She then sold it and bought a house in Conjunto Denisson Menezes. Her husband has joined the MST [The Landless Workers' Movement] with the aim of obtaining land and another house.

> 'My husband spends the weekend here, and then goes back again to the land invasion, because he is landless and waiting to obtain a piece of land there in the Usina Peixe (sugar factory).' (Maria Auxiliadora, 51)

The same family often used to go together with other urban poor families to relatives' houses in search of shelter and job opportunities, even if the relatives lived as far away as São Paulo.

> 'When it was not good in São Paulo, we returned to Maceió; we spent a little time here and a little time there.' (Luciene Conceição, 39)

One of the common strategies is to install a small shop. However, attempts to set up local businesses are usually unsuccessful because the residents have insufficient income to support them.

> 'I sell clothes in my house and at the weekend in the small market of the *Village Campestre* (a nearby middle-class neighbourhood). I sell *flal* [hand made sherbet], candy and these little clothes in my house.' (Tania Couto, 39)

The exceptions are a bakery and supermarket, both set up by outsiders.

A recent social phenomenon observed in precarious settlements has been the emergence of an increasing number of evangelical churches, especially neo-Pentecostal.[134] Although seven out of 25 interviewees belonged to the Catholic religion, four stated they belonged to Pentecostal denominations. Faith has a significant influence on their daily lives; however, rather than having a moral importance, it is used as a means of escape from everyday problems. The beliefs of the New Pentecostal churches are based on a kind of syncretic Catholicism, traditional Evangelism, and African religions. Participation in services requires *personal sacrifices* and financial offerings, including a strong emphasis on the tithe as a means of receiving gifts from God - in particular, material and financial blessings. Some of these churches, including the most well known in Brazil, the Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus [Universal Church of God's Kingdom], operate as business enterprises, which carve out a market niche within poor communities. They own TV channels and radio stations and possess strong political representation through the active presence of several MPs and local politicians all over the country, at both local and national levels. Times of crisis offer a fertile ground for the emergence of religions that promise financial progress and psychological well being.

> 'Having a religious life makes a great difference to my everyday life, because if I arrive at home full of worries and suffering from stress, I can just go to church, pray, sing, play, or enjoy myself with the other worshippers ... I then return home feeling well and more relaxed. Life becomes easier to cope with and I soon feel ready to face other daily problems.' (Maruza Rodrigues, 54)

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[134] There are a number of references to the replacement of Catholicism as the leading form of popular religion in Latin American with an evangelical form of Protestantism, particularly Pentecostalism, and in Brazil, by the more recently introduced Neo-Pentecostalism, which is based on a theology that lays stress on prosperity and success (see Stoll 1991; Chesnut 1997; Garrard-Burnett 1998; Pierucci and Prandi 2000; and Corten and Marshall-Fratani 2001).

The absence of public spaces for leisure and the difficulties in using public transport all help to increase the congregations of these services, which usually take place in churches located at a convenient walking distance. Conjunto Denisson Menezes has three Evangelical churches.

7.3   State Project - Theory and Practice

Maceió is a city which lacks a tradition of pro-poor housing projects or even a housing policy. For this reason, the Municipal government regards the Conjunto Denisson Menezes as a model for its future housing projects despite the many difficulties that had to be overcome to get it set up.

> 'In undertaking the Conjunto Denisson Menezes project, the biggest difficulty was how to use the Municipal staff to carry out the social work. At the beginning, the staff did not have any guidance; they did not know how to manage the programme. They (the National staff) did not hold any meetings to explain the project, which made it more difficult to tackle the problems later on. The result of this lack of initiative was that all the projects were delayed, which, as a result, added to the expense. Everything had to come from Brasília, and there were huge difficulties.' (Policy Maker 3, UEM-HBB)

> 'Unfortunately, we had some difficulties in carrying out the work; there were even financial delays for bureaucratic reasons. The bureaucratic process was out of proportion simply because an International Bank sponsored it. The lack of a comma in a text is enough reason for them not to approve a project. The Municipal staff is experiencing several difficulties and the City halls don't have a competent team, especially when they have to handle an international operation. (Policy Maker 2, CEF)

Conjunto Denisson Menezes was the first Project of Habitar Brasil BID in Maceió.[135] The objectives of the Programme are wide-ranging and it is unrealistic to ignore its benefits, even if they are theoretical and aspirational rather than practical. The social component, which was seldom absent from the public housing programmes, received special attention. But this position presupposes greater involvement of the local

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[135] The official name of which is Projeto Integrado e Participativo de Urbanização de Assentamentos Subnormais e de Fortalecimento Institucional dos Governos Municipais [Comprehensive and Participatory Scheme for Substandard Settlements and Urbanisation, and Institutional Strengthening of Municipal Governments].

government with urban poverty problems and a place for democratic participation. Social participation is a user's right and a crucial element in ensuring the sustainability of programmes and policies. For this reason, social work is one of the main concerns of the evaluation. There is a clear attempt to change the cultural and selfish behaviour of the urban poor to foster a *proper* way to live in the community as one of the most significant aspects of the Programme.

By contrast, the Programme did not believe there was a need for a cultural change in the way that the officials regarded the community. It is clear from both the discourse and practice that in the way social work is conceived and applied, there is a lack of awareness about the needs and inadequate knowledge of the social practices of the urban poor. The municipal staff are usually not concerned with social factors and do not pay enough attention to the specific needs of poor families. As an example, there was a conflict between the officials and residents because the people wanted to stay on their own plot during the construction and the Housing Department wanted the land empty to make it easier to carry out the building work. Following hard and long negotiations, the Housing Department complied with the people's wishes and allowed them to move to the back of the land.

The following quotation is an extract from the dialogue between the leader and the social worker:

> 'This is what the people want; they want to decide where to live. *Fulana* (the social worker), has one thing on your mind - these people know what is good for them, and they know how much they have suffered and so they don't want to leave their places.' (Maruza Rodrigues, 53)

The officials did not acquire theoretical and practical competence in the use of participatory methodologies, which involved social workers. According to their own accounts, most of the officials (whether from the field of engineering or architecture) were unable to work with poor families, and this led to conflicts and problems in the day-to-day running of the project. The method of dealing with the people was based on fear and threats and was enforced by people's unawareness of technology, in particular the *power* of computers (as already mentioned).

'They put their names in the computer, the municipality can find the name of the people even after three years, and they found my name like this.' (Romualdo Balbino, 61)

The social side is increasingly being regarded as an ancillary matter; the most important element in the view of the Municipality is construction. There is no dialogue between the poor people involved and the officials. The absence of a channel of communication means that practices and rules are imposed in an arbitrary way even though they are not part of the urban poor families' daily life, and there has not been any previous discussion and agreement.

As a result, the residents resist and normally reject the *rules*, which disturbs the relations between the residents and officials, including the social workers. There are two examples mentioned by the interviewees of a measure that was imposed without any discussion and led to conflicts and another that did not work: first, the registration of the house in the name of the woman; and second, the prohibition on moving out the house or selling it.

'In many cases that we see, it is right for the ownership of the house to be in the woman's name, because there are a lot of husbands that spend their lives drinking *cachaça* [alcohol made from sugar cane]. When one of them arrives home, he beats his wife and turns her out of the house even if the house is in her name. Many women are frightened of making accusations against their husbands, because they say: if you 'inform against me, I'll kill you'. At the same time, many women take advantage of the fact that the house is in their names and they are the owners. If they want, they can expel their husbands, stay with the children and later *arrange* another one.' (Rubem Cajueiro, 41)

Owing to their social, economic and cultural circumstances, the families react in a way that makes organisational and social work difficult. The Habitar Brasil BID Programme has failed to allow the community to participate, although there are references to collective participation in its documents and papers. One leader resident noted the following:

'The Municipality should work more closely with social movements. They are neglectful with regard to this issue; for example, they did not invite the housing Movements to discuss the Habitar Brasil BID project, or how it would be implemented. They believe that everything is fine; we have to accept the *package* without asking any questions. We remained without any

information; I have never seen the Conjunto Denisson Menezes blueprints, although I live there. The project was certainly worthwhile; it improved people's quality of life, because today they can say that they have a residence and an address. For instance, in the canvas shack, we never received any letters. Today we are in fact citizens. On the negative side, nothing has been achieved regarding the conditions of the project. They carried out all the alterations to the project without providing us with any explanations. The entire infrastructure was built, but it still lacks many things, including the most important of all - social policies.' (Zezé, leader of UMM-AL and resident of Conjunto Denisson Menezes)

In the case of Conjunto Denisson Menezes, the pedagogical goal of achieving participation and democracy did not work.

The analysis conducted concentrated on the evaluation of the processes and the evaluation of the product did not give positive results. In general, both the houses and the urbanisation plans, showed failings in conception and execution, including faults in the infrastructure, size, and architectural design.

'The cesspits are always leaking on to the street. The pipe from the bathroom is blocked. One cesspit for eight houses!' (Maria Nazaré Leite, 38)

Officials from the Housing Department planned the Conjunto Denisson Menezes project. In terms of design, the project is particularly shocking; the most elementary rules of housing design were neglected. Surprisingly, the CEF and the HBB National Board team accepted the project as it was and went ahead with the construction. The design made it difficult to extend the houses (as shown in Figure 7.2) although it was obvious that, in the future, people would attempt to do this.

'The house is not suitable for anyone who has 4 or 5 children, unless they are in a position to build another room. But they are not in this position because these people are poor and can't afford it.' (Antonia Ambrósio, 49)

'I find the houses attractive but for anyone who has a large family, it is small.' (Tania Couto, 39)

'Anyone who is in a position to do so is going to construct it again in the way they like.' (Terezinha Ferreira, 41)

Figure 7.2: Ground Plan of the Conjunto Denisson Menezes House
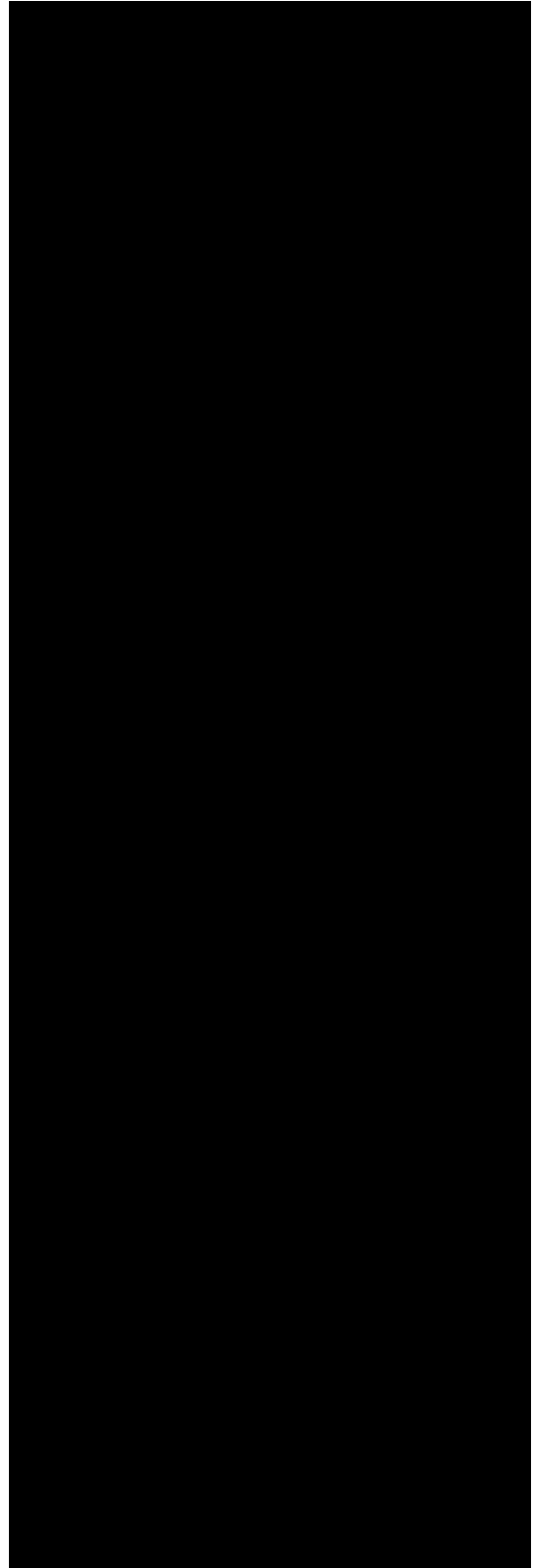
Source: Maceió, Prefeitura de (2003) *Conjunto Denisson Menezes HBB Project*. Maceió: SMHPS.

The streets were designed to be broad and more importance was attached to road traffic when most of these people do not own any cars (as shown in Photograph 7.2 and 7.3). The construction materials are of a dreadful quality. According to the interviewees, the budget was enough to build better houses in terms of space and quality. In its comprehensive approach to improving the neighbourhood, the Programme attempts to offer a solution to the problem of overcrowded houses. But in the Conjunto Denisson Menezes the units are small and occupied by large and/or extended families.

7.4   How Everyday Life Changes: the Results of State Intervention and Social Practices

Relocation to Conjunto Denisson Menezes has a considerable impact on the lives of its residents. When asked about what they have achieved in their lives, most of the residents regarded having a house as their most important triumph. To have a place to live in without paying rent every month makes a substantial difference to their everyday lives. The extent of the significant improvements is illustrated in the following statements:

> 'It makes a huge difference to have a house; the little money we get is enough to survive if we have a house. If not, the money is just spent on rent; it is not enough to live on.' (Rubem Cajueiro, 42)

> 'I feel I am rich because I have a house.' (Maria Cícera de Oliveira, 24)

> 'My life has improved a lot here. Today I am proud to say that I have a house. The house has helped me to succeed.' (Tania Couto, 39)

> 'We used to sleep on coconut palm straw and today we have a bed to lie down on. When I die, I'll leave the house to my daughters.' (Josefa Marta, 59)

> 'The house changed my life a lot; the belly is fuller, and we have a few more clothes to wear.' (Antonio Leopoldino, 84)

> 'My life improved a great deal mainly because we no longer live under canvas. It used to be very hot, the children were often sick and sometimes I have to take them to hospital. Today the doctors visit the houses. We used a

handcart to collect water far away, and now we have running water inside each house.' (Veronilda Maria, 25)

'My life has improved; after just having left a canvas shack, I now have a small bathroom, with running water and a toilet.' (Leda Inácio, 50)

'It has improved because in the canvas shack, nobody could leave; because when they came back everything had gone. It is safer here and the house is made of brick.' (Maria José of the Conceição, 37)

'I am more relaxed; so far I haven't had to go to the doctor because of my nerves. There is less suffering. When I lived in the favela, there were often shootings, bandits, or the police.' (Maria Auxiliadora, 51)

These important improvements are threatened by the absence of other ancillary activities, in particular those linked to work, maintenance of the buildings and strengthening the organisation of the community, that allow people to continue their struggle to achieve more.

'I obtained the house but I am in debt with the speculators. People can only say they are happy when they are not in debt to anybody and can live on their wages without being in debt.' (Romualdo Balbino, 61)

'We call it a Conjunto but it seems to be a place for rich people. But if they do not look after this place, it will never stop being a slum quarter.' (Veronilda Maria, 25)

'With the courses (professional training) that have been run, the people's lives have changed. But it lacks a feeling of union; one person goes to work and another doesn't, one believes the project is worthwhile and another doesn't - so it isn't easy.' (Maruza Rodrigues, 53)

'One day we eat and another day we don't eat; that's how we live.' (Rubem Cajueiro, 41)

'In the land occupation, things were better than here. We had more aid (food, clothes) there; there is nothing for us here.' (Maria José da Conceição, 37)

Others aspects of their lives, such as health and education, have not received the same positive evaluation. In the Conjunto Denisson Menezes project, there is a Health Centre and a School. The Health Centre has not been working properly, according to the interviewees, because it takes a long time to get an appointment, and after a consultation, the Health Centre Pharmacy does not supply the medicine

needed and they cannot afford to buy the medicines prescribed at the local pharmacies.

> 'The Health Centre is excellent. The only problem is that it only has one Doctor. It takes 15 days to get an appointment. I've never had an appointment there. I only went there once for nothing, I won't go there anymore; I prefer to go to other Health Centres. I don't have enough money to buy medicine. We are sick and almost dying, but we still have to wait for 15 days more. It's too much.' (Antonio Leopoldino, 84)

> 'The health care service in the CAIC (health centre located near PETROBRÁS land occupation) was better than the one here.' (Romualdo Balbino, 61)

Sometimes by the time they get their appointment, they are no longer sick.

Although the construction of the school building had been completed, it remained closed during my interviews, while all the other schools in Maceió were functioning. Education is part of the social development project, but in the last 20 years (as is confirmed by the interviews), it is no longer a means of ensuring an improvement in living standards. Eleven out of 25 interviewees who attended school have not experienced any significant alteration in their lives - no increase in income, or a better job, but just more dreams. The quality of teaching and the ability to remain in school are two important facets of education as key factors in the attempt to overcome poverty, which are sometimes, hidden and forgotten by the official discourse regarding wider access to education. The children go to school and they do not have good grades or they drop out for other reasons. The fact that one attends school does not automatically mean that one can have a better life than those who have not had this opportunity. Other sorts of knowledge, for example regarding rights, can sometimes be more useful in improving the living conditions of the urban poor.

> 'I studied for six years; I know how to read and write. Yet I don't work, but depend on my mother; she sends me food every week.' (Quitéria Rodrigues, 27)

> 'I went to school, but the teaching was no good. I only learned how to sign my name, thank God.' (Veronilda Maria, 25)

Their economic situation has not changed despite the professional courses and projects for improving their incomes. The Habitar Brasil BID Programme includes among its activities the development of skills and enabling people to increase their incomes. These activities involve the organisation and support of productive groups with the aim of training skills such as the following: paper packaging, making bamboo products, embroidery, sewing, quail farming, domestic cleaning, dyeing fabric, hairdressing, cooking, and hydroponics. Owing to the rural origins of the families, agriculture often featured as a productive vocation. The project installed a hydroponics garden so that this agricultural labour force could be utilised. The first garden was situated in a plot in UFAL [Federal University of Alagoas]. In 2006, the garden was moved to a corner of the settlement. Although it proved to be impossible to maintain continuous participation, as few people were interested in the activity, at present the garden provides an income for five people. In general, attempts at forming economically productive groups in the Conjunto Denisson Menezes have not proved successful. They are hampered by their distance from markets, the high cost of transport, their lack of business experience and the fiercely competitive nature of their activities.

Photograph 7.15 and 7.16: Facade and View of the Hydroponics Garden

As an exception, there are positive changes in the economic situation of some residents which can be attributed to the stability brought about by the possession of a house and thus of having an address.

> 'My husband is now no longer jobless, in the way we lived before.' (Maria Cícera de Oliveira, 24)

Living in a place that is hard to reach has outweighed the benefits of owning a house. The distance from potential work places and the inability to pay for public transport are part of a vicious circle, which traps these people into living in a daily round which entails the production and reproduction of material poverty.

> 'I would like to move away from here, because it is a long distance from anywhere and hard to look for work, - but it is good living here, it is a quiet place. However, it is only good for those who are retired or who have their own business. But for those who have to fight to survive and have to take a bus every day, it is very hard. Where I lived before, in Jacintinho[136], it was easy to find a job and there were plenty of cleaning jobs. Every Saturday I earned R$25 (US$ 8). I could simply go and come back on foot. Here I am in a bad situation.' (Luciene Conceição, 40)

The high level of mobility confirms the economic vulnerability of its inhabitants. Within the social housing projects, there is usually a rule forbidding people from selling their houses for a certain number of years. All the beneficiaries formally accept this rule. Nevertheless, there is a real estate market established inside the settlements. The parallel social housing market shows that there is a conflict affecting the urban poor who are facing financial hardship. After participating in an illegal land occupation and finally being given a house by a municipal scheme like Conjunto Denisson Menezes, there is a strong likelihood that they will lose it. This is because the house constitutes their only valuable asset and can be easily sold in times of personal financial crisis, which can be seen to be a constant feature of their everyday lives. However, some of the interviewees justified the sales not in terms of financial need (alone) but in the context of the state and the social movement indiscriminate and unjustifiable sale of houses to begin with.

> 'They shouldn't do what they are doing: selling and changing their houses. It is the Housing Department, which is to blame. If they sell their house, it is because they do not want it. It is no use fighting for these people. The Housing Department should have been firm; there should be no more exchanges and if someone changes their house, they shouldn't be given another one.' (Tania Couto, 39)

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[136] Jacintinho is a low-income neighbourhood located close to the richer districts of Maceió.

> 'Most of the people who sold their houses here, did not sell out of necessity, but sold them for mercenary reasons, and went to the slum quarter, because they had some means of support there. I broke away from the Movement because of this. If the people that sold their houses here, had been thrown out on the street, and told that they wouldn't any longer be able to participate in a land occupation, there would be no Movement to give them support, and nobody would want to sell their house and go to the slum quarter.' (Maruza Rodrigues, 53)

> 'The politicians are guilty of the house sales because when there is an election, they share out the land. The land buys the people.' (Rubem Cajueiro, 41)

But:

> 'Several people have moved away from here; there are few people who have been here since the beginning. The majority of them sold their houses soon after moving in. I cannot accept this. They claim they do not have jobs and so they have to sell their house to solve their financial problem. I tell them: 'Wait a minute, if you sell the house you will say that you have solved the problem, but where are you going to live later on?' (Maruza Rodrigues, 53)

In other words, some of the residents do not sell their houses again because they regard it as the most important asset that they have. They believe it will be easier to find a way to survive after they get shelter.

Violence, which was almost unknown by the occupants of the former Favela da PETROBRÁS, is the problem most often referred to by the people in Conjunto Denisson Menezes. Although a Police Station was built, there were no permanent police officers on duty owing to a lack of personnel and local organisation and so it was never used. The residents tried to furnish the building themselves as one of the interviewees pointed out:

> 'I ran a campaign to equip the PM Box [Police Station]. I obtained three mattresses and cups. I took them some coffee and toilet paper.' (Antonia Ambrosio, 49)

Social instability is aggravated by the absence of streetlights and this causes fear and insecurity, especially at nighttime. Furthermore, there is no venue for leisure or cultural activities. There is only a football field and no records of others leisure activities have been kept.

> 'There is nothing to do here; I don't go anywhere. Sometimes I want to go to the beach but when I think on the bus about the distance and length of the trip I give up the idea.' (Eliene Maria, 39)

This fact, together with the economic precariousness of the young lives, means that they spend their free time getting involved in violent situations (fights, arguments, murder, etc.), sexual practices at an early age, alcoholic abuse and the use of illicit drugs. Some areas in Maceió, including the Conjunto Denisson Menezes, were considered a *no man's land*, and outside the rule of law. [137]

> 'There are many points spread around the Conjunto where drugs are sold. It would be good to have some activities to occupy the people.' (Maruza Rodrigues, 53)

> 'I've twice been the victim of a rape attempt.' (Eliene Maria dos Santos, 39)

> 'We cannot let our daughter go alone to school.' (Antonio Leopoldino, 84)

> 'There have already been four deaths here and there is no prison for the criminals. There are many quarrels between people drunk on *cachaça* [effect of large amounts of sugar cane alcohol].' (Romualdo Balbino, 61)

The social and economic activities carried out by the Habitar Brasil BID Programme were not enough to ensure a safe space for the families.

Although there had been an improvement in the self-esteem of the residents, there was still a significant amount of prejudice against the inhabitants of Conjunto Denisson Menezes, which was largely due to the location, and isolation of the settlement, just behind the Penitentiary Complex.

> 'There are a lot of prejudices; everyone thinks that we are outlaws here. I would like to move to a better quarter because of this discrimination.' (Eliene Maria, 39)

> 'Even our families have prejudices. They said that I was here because I was a beggar. This is not true; I am here because I needed a shelter.' (Elione de Lima, 44)

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[137] There has been an increase in violence, because the Conjunto Denisson Menezes is a well-known centre for drug dealing.

The accounts of the interviewees provide evidence that the project was not able to integrate the people either in social or spatial terms or bring about real changes in their daily round. As shown in this section, in spite of the benefits of the location provided by the ownership of houses, in fact, they led to further exclusion and are a kind of spatial trap - a territory of poverty.

Conclusions

In this chapter, I have analysed the process and results of relocating people who were in an illegal occupation and how a new settlement was constructed by the local municipality within a National programme scheme. The Brazilian state, together with the local municipalities, has set up and supported a housing project with the aim of including a comprehensive approach. The experience of Conjunto Denisson Menezes is not a model for pro-poor housing policies but a reassertion of social and economic exclusion. In spite of the clear benefits involved in owning a house, its remote location represents where the poor are situated in society: in a state of physical and social alienation. This settlement is a place in the *invisible* and *unofficial* city of Maceió.

The Chapter outlines how the project has had a positive but only partial effect on improving the lives of the public housing policy beneficiaries. The positive impact of having a shelter is outweighed by the difficulty of getting a job. New extra charges (water and electricity supply) and ineffective social services such as school and health centre facilities have caused general disillusionment. Moreover, the new status of the residents as *home owners* has led to the original organisation being disbanded and shattered the necessary collective desire for a community association. The lack of grass-roots political pressure to obtain other community benefits has meant that other social policies have not been implemented, and those already existing have not operated on a continuous basis after the houses have been delivered. The sense of community, which was a reality during the period of the land occupation, has been gradually lost. The people that currently live in the Conjunto Denisson Menezes are not the original occupants. Most of the initial occupants have sold their houses or the shacks where they were living in exchange for a bicycle, a HiFi System, or some

cooking gas, which are worth much less than the cost of the actual material. And this movement has not stopped.

The social and spatial segregation of the urban poor in the Conjunto Denisson Menezes is evident. The economy is characterised by a scarcity of money and represented as a lack of food, health and education and puts any prospect of a better future in jeopardy. The interviewees, who decided to remain in the same house offered to them, are normally families with someone working on a regular basis or retired, as well as those who are too old to face another occupation. In the *Day After* relocation the characteristics of isolation, exacerbate some aspects of the chronic poverty experienced by the residents of the current Conjunto Denisson Menezes. The *Day After* the displacement of the PETROBRÁS land occupation has upset the lives of the families, since the residents no longer live close to their work-place and access to effective central urban services such as hospitals and schools have become more difficult. Providing the urban poor with a house is not enough. They have no feeling of security, brought about by having a house, as a result of the daily violence and, in particular, thefts of their personal belongings, which they were constantly exposed to without having any protection.

Chapter 8 - Conclusions

This thesis has sought to understand the daily lives of people in favelas. Their existence is characterised by urban segregation and poverty and has been studied on the basis of two research questions, as defined in Chapter One. The first question addressed the life experiences of the poor and their degree of social and spatial urban integration, and drew upon personal and familial histories. The research was interested in knowing the main features and circumstances of the everyday life in what I call precarious settlements, and how, in their day-to-day lives, the poor try to alleviate poverty and become integrated in the fabric of society. The second question sought to consider the responsibility of the state with regard to the creation of what I label *territories of poverty*. The thesis considered how state action affects the everyday lives of the urban poor and asked how the state, by means of its agents, regards and deals with the residents of the precarious settlements. In considering this relationship the thesis attempted to assess the impact of the state on the production of territories of poverty. The research was thus undertaken in full awareness of the influence of public policies, agents and territories and the methods and instruments employed by the state.

These research questions were investigated through the use of ethnographic techniques in order for the social actors to have a chance to speak, especially those who are not usually allowed a political or social space to make their positions clear. The words of the people are my most important evidence (and I wish to give the poor people involved in my research a place in my conclusions too). The first part of the Chapter provides a brief reminder of the methodological approach adopted in the research, before providing a general outline of the main findings of the research with regard to urban theory and practice, as well as policymaking and planning. The Chapter will then be an updated theoretical definition of urban poverty, an analysis of the links between poverty and space and suggestions for a new approach to integration and mobility. In addressing the question of practice, the Chapter discusses the daily social practices of the urban poor in the territories of poverty including the weight that should be given to their personal and familial history. Following this, the

Chapter will examine the ineffectiveness of the state's policies and planning, together with the work of urban professionals, in tackling poverty and segregation. Finally, the Chapter considers how new pro-poor housing policies can be drawn up and offers suggestions for possible areas of future research.

Methodology: a Synopsis

The methodological implications of using ethnographic data are that the social actors can assess their own particular situation by revealing (or in some cases withholding) their opinions. Life stories are a means of finding out the attitudes of the urban poor and allowing the researcher to make inferences from observations with less risk of overlaying a personal inflection on the narratives themselves. In the course of fieldwork I was aware that life stories were subjective accounts of reality, as understood by the person speaking as it were, and might be influenced by prevailing political discourse, media or another recent event. In view of this, I realised there was a need to be aware that the life stories offer interpretations of a private world, that might be corroborated by other sources but the value of which is not the exactitude of the portrait of reality but the human insight into the perspectives of the poor. Since a life story is an individual experience in time, in this thesis an attempt has been made to strike a balance between individual stories and socio-historical contexts. The Focus Groups, for example, helped to identify conflicts in the evidence obtained from the interviewees and that of my own observations, as they provided an opportunity for spontaneous discussions to be held with all the people involved in the research. The combined use of semi-structured interviews with NGOs and members of state institutions, social movements and universities enabled me to consider how much weight to afford single aspects of peoples' lives.

The stories illustrate how far the poor have to struggle for a place in the city. The dynamics involved in the search by the poor for social and spatial integration are also revealed in the day-to-day observation of the precarious settlements. In the research I introduce the concept of the *daily round* that has enabled me to understand both the social integration and segregation that are experienced by people, particularly in the way the macro (policies) affects the micro (social and individual practices). I believe

that the daily round and the life stories represent a challenge to the official version of the facts, the decisions made by state action and the hegemonic social view of the poor. They show that the everyday lives of the poor reflect an acute degree of suffering, a collective state of anxiety and feeling of stigmatisation. In the main body of the thesis I considered it important to let quotes stand extant wherever possible, but even shorter statements are indicative of these characteristics.[138]

> '… I've always lived in a shack… I don't have anywhere to go… whether I eat or pay rent… No way of getting a house without joining an invasion… I must fight for a house…' Vila Emater II

> '… Nothing has gone right since my childhood… Choice between begging and stealing… Victim of violence everyday…' Cidade de Lona

> '… One day we eat and another day we don't eat…' Conjunto Denisson Menezes

Often a brief statement will combine these conditions, and speak to a seemingly perpetual quality unaffected by what we understand to be the broader, macro, changes to poverty and livelihoods in Brazil.

Urban Theory

Towards an Updated Definition of Urban Poverty

The research for this thesis was undertaken in circumstances where there was a bitter and complex struggle for space and integration experienced by the urban poor. During the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries Brazil experienced considerable economic growth but showed a limited capacity for reversing the spread of urban poverty. In more recent times, the neoliberal agenda, as it has affected the state education system, health and employment has produced a generation of people who have only experienced poverty. They are poor people who are cut off from the world of formal work, because they lack the skills needed for the urban job market. Moreover, the informal job market is no longer able to absorb everyone. Official

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[138] As stated at the start of this thesis, my approach is to allow the research participants a voice in the presentation of findings, an approach that I wish to maintain in this summary chapter.

figures show that, at present, 52 million Brazilians are excluded and can be characterised as living in precarious conditions, while being engaged in illegal or informal activities, and relying on the irregular occupation of land. They constitute a legacy of vulnerability and exclusion, where there is little evidence of change and social mobility is almost non-existent. Nothing that is done can ever make up for the years of hardship and deprivation which these people have been subjected to.

Urban poverty should thus be understood as a concept that captures both an experiential and inter-generational situation. As outlined in Chapter Two, a number of writers have attempted to understand poverty from different perspectives, starting, for example, with the culture of poverty associated with the work of Oscar Lewis. These perspectives have led on to theories about marginality and more recent concepts such as vulnerability, exclusion and advanced marginality in the work of, amongst others, Wilson, Townsend, Sen, Kowarick, Wacquant and Auyero. The regular usage of these terms has varied over time, and has been largely dependent on academic paradigm shifts and policy motivations rather than the changing material conditions of the poor themselves.

As a result of working with the three settlements in Maceió, this thesis drew on the concept of *new poverty* (the most recent interpretation of urban poverty), which is a hybrid of previous concepts, its most distinctive features being isolation and separation. As it is a concept that is still being formulated, general terms, the new urban poverty can be thought of as a state where the comforts and basic needs of life are absent and the prospects of rising to a higher social level are increasingly limited. The lack of effective policies aimed at bringing about the economic and social integration of the precarious settlements, condemns them to deprivation. In recent times, people with poor parents have only rarely managed to escape from poverty.

> 'My life involves buying canvas, only canvas… Cooking with firewood… No work because I live in a canvas shack… To beg to survive… Working hard as a child…' Cidade de Lona

As I became aware during my fieldwork, none of the theories and definitions of urban poverty has had much influence on public policies, which still retain strongly

culturalist attitudes, where the poor are blamed for their condition. This view, in turn, advocates remedies such as the removal of favelas, cleaning up the cities and constructing housing settlements for the people, which owing to budgetary constraints, the scale of the *problem* and political imperatives need to be located a long way from the city centre and often from other sources of employment or limited public amenities.

On the basis of my findings, I prefer to regard the new poverty as *turbo-poverty* or *hyper-poverty*. These terms take us beyond redefining current poverty as being similar to poverty in the past towards a multi-dimensional poverty that i) is affected by cultural circumstances, ii) can be interpreted subjectively depending on factors such as sex, age, and ethnic origin and iii) is aggravated by a lack of acquired skills, as well as structural factors and political attitudes. The term suggests that today's poor have little prospect of finding the necessary means to improve their situation. This is quite unlike the idea of poverty from 20 or so years ago, when it was believed that the poor had a chance to improve their social position by saving money (and thus enduring social hardships) or acquiring education (for example in the work of Perlman, Santos, and Portes). Turbo poverty no longer offers these alternatives as it is believed that economic inclusion is both extremely limited - almost none of the members of households in the study settlements was a *worker* in a factory, retail outlet, or office - and provides little chance of obtaining it in social, cultural and political spheres, at least not in any determined path or time-frame. Remarkably, however, as the interviews show, the poor think that they are only living in the favelas on a temporary basis, and thus make little attempt to improve their space or surroundings. Later, they find they are unable to leave and this turns the favelas into no more than areas of shelter from social and material destitution.

> '… I would like to move away from here… I try to pay rent but it is impossible to pay it to the Lixão when one can't earn any money…' Vila Emater II

Their poverty becomes worse and permanent - life in the favelas is no longer transient but an acute form of intergenerational poverty.

The concept of poverty that is applicable to present-day circumstances and can thus result in the implementation of suitable policies and practices requires a different method for dealing with it. Instead of laying stress on the production and provision of national resources per capita, attention should be paid to measuring the quality of life. The old-fashioned way of implementing policies around, for example, education and health seems to be more efficient than the recent democratization of these services. There was a loss in quality after the bad implementation policy of schools and hospitals for everyone.

> '… This is no way to live… being left out on the streets… It is very hard to survive… waiting for state assistance… I go to the health center but I don't have enough money to buy medicine… I went to school but it was no good…' Cidade de Lona and Conjunto Denisson Menezes

Humanising poverty means understanding that the poor have similar, albeit greater, needs than other citizens and require more attention and resources.

Poverty and Space

The spatial components of the new (turbo or hyper) poverty have not been comprehensively examined by urban theory and practice or rather, the territories of poverty have been regarded by society and the state as an isolated phenomenon (although they can be found in every city in Brazil). The response of the state has been to make various local, superficial and sporadic interventions, often devoting considerable time and resources. Yet, it has rarely involved the poor people themselves in determining their own way out of poverty, or been accompanied by urban reforms such as providing everyone with the *right to the city*. Neither in Brazil, nor internationally, has there been much discussion or action on the question of how the spatial settlement of the poor within the urban fabric might be effected by granting a right to the city. Segregation has been and remains the official sign of contemporary urbanisation. Whenever the issue of combating or alleviating poverty is discussed, spatial questions are hardly ever mentioned.

After examining in detail three settlements that are in different ways subject to threats of removal and/or isolation from the surrounding city, my argument is that the

problem of space needs to be understood as both the cause and effect of a segregated society. In the case of Conjunto Denisson Menezes, it is clear that moving to a new settlement has not led to significant changes in the lives of the people but has reconfigured the territory of their poverty. By employing the concept *territories of poverty*, the thesis has attempted to highlight different facets of urban segregation, the inter-generational cycle of poverty and the prevalence of a common attitude towards segregation.

Indeed, with regard to segregation, there are political and ideological processes at work that help to maintain it. An analysis of the location of the poor in Maceió shows that segregation is: i) an instrument of the dominant classes, ii) is led by the state, and iii) is strongly influenced by the real estate market. The constant attempts to move the Vila Emater II are clearly driven by the interests of the real estate market because the land commands beautiful, i.e. valuable, views of the sea. The inhabitants of Cidade de Lona are going to be relocated to the Benedito Bentes area where Maceió poverty has been spatialised for the last 20 years. Despite numerous changes to the general political discourse and legal instruments at the states disposal, the exclusionary tactics of the state continue to avoid improvements to the quality of space available for the poor and prefer displacement to ensure that the poor are kept out of sight. There is ample evidence (continuous migration and a self-regulated consolidated rental market for shacks with high levels of control and coercion) to show that the territories of poverty will become more intense in the 135 officially recognized Maceió favelas.

Integration and Mobility

Urban integration can be defined as the ability to carry out work necessary to have an urban life, playing a social and political role and having a chance to occupy a determined space. This thesis provides evidence to show that poor people are not integrated in the urban fabric for the following reasons: they are kept in economically-deprived conditions, are homeless or have substandard housing in the city and barely have the minimum chance of ensuring their survival (in some cases they are unable even to do this). One of the strategies of poor people for overcoming this problem and improving their living conditions is to be constantly on the move.

Interviews and conversations revealed that mobility occurs in three directions: to relative's houses, to rented accommodation in the consolidated areas or to other land occupations. None of the situations is permanent, - they do not remain with their relatives, they cannot afford to pay their rent and they are evicted from the land occupations and relocated elsewhere. This *mobility* through instability has important effects on their family life, especially with regard to gaining access to state welfare services like health care and education that are organised on a territorial basis and require proof of residence.

The new settlements in Maceió were established by the state with the aim of relocating the people from the different land occupations. However, they did not bring about integration because the places where the people were relocated constituted spatial poverty traps (insofar as they were far away from job opportunities and lacked any social or physical infrastructure). As a result, they had to move away, and look for a better located place, sometimes returning to their former land occupation (the case of some residents of Cidade de Lona that had been residents of the Conjunto Denisson Menezes). The state was not prepared to address this situation and tried to restrict the movements of the poor people through repressive legal measures. However, this policy did not work and gave rise to an image of the state as either corrupt and ineffective or financially irresponsible.

> 'The politicians are responsible for the sale of the houses… We are forced to accept what the state gives us without asking any questions… The state should be firm with those who sell the houses…' Conjunto Denisson Menezes

Practices, Policy and Planning

Personal History and Social Practices

Empirical evidence shows that the difficulty residents have in achieving social and spatial integration, their continuous lack of access to the job market and the ineffectiveness of basic social policies (such as health and education) have trapped the poor in an isolated world of destitution. Their segregation and personal and familial history makes urban integration difficult to achieve. There is a common pattern found in the life stories which almost all speak to extreme poverty and

violence. As I noted in the main text, and underscore here with a short indicative comment,

> '[I recall]… Work and being beaten like a wild animal when I was a child…'
> Cidade de Lona

Most grew up without a father or a mother or both; they spent their childhood working in the fields, mostly in the sugar plantations, their attendance at school was intermittent and sometimes infrequent and most recall the constant attempts to escape from the oppression of parents or guardians; including marriage at a very early age. The same pattern can be found in their own families – the size of which is similar to that of previous generations, possibly due to the limited knowledge of contraceptive methods, the only difference being that they are characterised by greater physical mobility. They also experience constant movement within the city but stasis in social terms, make repeated attempts to return to the rural areas or migrate to other cities. If they are *successful* in renting a shack, this is followed by the discovery that they are unable to afford to pay the rent. Finally they reach a point where they decide to occupy a plot in an illegal area. The lack of employment and the low level of education and health among all family members, force them to remain in poverty, and reproduces inter-generational poverty. The discussions revealed that parents, who were once poor, have not had a proper education and have had to work during their childhood, pass on this inheritance to their children.

The life stories reveal how, despite attempts to do so, it is very difficult to interrupt the cycle and find a means of overcoming obstacles in this environment. Although people continually express a *faith* in social mobility or the belief that one can rise in society by one's own efforts (through hard work and maintaining one's moral integrity), in most cases jobs are acquired through clientelist networks and social contacts, including marriage, or through having children. In many cases, especially among the young, illegal activities are often more attractive than working eight hours a day for a minimum monthly wage.

Observation of the practices of the urban poor in Maceió, show that when faced with social and spatial exclusion (segregation) - which together make up the territories of poverty - people adopt social practices that to some extent, help to alleviate their

poverty but are insufficient to allow them to escape from these territories. Many of the residents are opportunistic (like other members of society) and take advantage of the situation to sell their smallholdings or houses which have been provided by the state. Their main concern is to obtain some capital which can be exchanged for goods. Although, as one participant put it, 'hunger is a lame excuse' for selling the house, occupying a piece of land represents a chance to acquire an asset (that can be sold in times of scarcity or emergency) when the state authorities provide them with a house.

The fact that, in both theory and practice, the state is almost *absent* induces people to employ strategies (which are sometimes dishonest and may include violence, opportunism and economic and political bartering) to obtain a space in the city. The occupation of land illegally and the subsequent unauthorised sale of a plot or shacks is one example of the survival strategies adopted. There is a clear break with the past, today people use individual strategies of selling houses whereas in the 1960s and the 1970s social organisation was one of the most powerful means of social change. At that time, there was solidarity and collective action for improving people's living conditions. After the 1980s, solidarity among the members of the community was eroded or became weakened; mutual cooperation was barely in evidence beyond immediate neighbours or even the family.

Indeed, the field research showed that apart from having to devote a lot of time (and hence resources) finding a house, the people also spend a lot of time and money making sure that they do not *lose their place in the city* (that is, keeping guard over their shacks and goods, and even lives). In such circumstances, there is no time (and barely much interest) to form social networks and hence find opportunities to obtain jobs outside of settlements or to improve their housing conditions. From the many discussions I gained a strong, and disquieting, sense that social networks have lost their significance. Isolation and general lack of financial resources of the poorest section of the community prevent them from achieving group solidarity. In the best of situations, as mentioned in Chapter Six, the social networks of the urban poor are restricted to the family, especially when there are retired parents who are guaranteed a steady source of income.

In the period of *new poverty*, what many people hoped would be an active civil society in which associations would strengthen social networks has proven unfounded, and associations that do exist play only a subsidiary role. Furthermore, the NGOs and associations have failed to take measures to persuade the state to change its rationale, and the fact that there is a climate of political violence in Alagoas hampers any social expression of disagreement. Indeed, as people noted in their comments of weariness about social organisation, anti-democratic attitudes both inside and outside of organizations seems to prevail. The transition to democracy in the mid 1980s led to the social movements being disbanded and, especially with the Workers' Party (PT) as the government power (in 2002), movements lost leaders to posts in state agencies. Those left behind appear to have been less enthusiastic about democratic practice and the opening of organisations to wider involvement at the grassroots.

The Policies of the State and the Role of Urban Professionals

The state alternates between phases of action and inertia and has done little to address poverty or tackle spatial exclusion in the past, and does so even less today. In the daily round, the state seems to have little positive influence on the integration of the urban poor. Yet the state is not entirely absent. Its presence is felt in the areas where it grants social allowances and sets up housing projects. The state's treatment of the urban poor is so intermittent and of such a low standard that it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that *urban policy* is really a disguise on its incapacity and lack of will to improve the welfare of the precarious settlements, by claiming that it is doing something but hampered by a lack of financial resources. Housing provision, even if it includes social and physical infrastructure, can hardly be regarded as a remedy for the problems of the urban poor in this time of hyper or new poverty. When people do obtain a house, it changes the family's life but many are aware that the effect may not last long. As one person commented, this settlement will become a favela in ten years, alluding to the lack of integration into the wider urban fabric. The decision of the state to locate the new settlements on the outskirts of the city can be classified as pro-segregationist. Even when the policies regarding the precarious settlements attempt to encourage upgrading (as has happened far more extensively in other cities such as Rio de Janeiro with the Programa Favela Bairro for example), it

is more a response to social pressure than a wish to bring about integration with the help of all the agents involved. The housing strategies are not complemented by social and physical infrastructure to assist the integration of poor people.

A good example of this last point is the Bolsa Família (Family Allowance) Programme that has had a considerable impact on the economy of the country and brought some little improvement to poor families. But, in Maceió, the poorest people are not receiving the allowance because they are unable to show that their children attend school or because of administrative delays. Indeed, as discussed in the Focus Group of Conjunto Denisson Menezes, the inhabitants themselves question the value of replacing a policy that seeks to provide job opportunities with compensatory policies involving the allocation of resources.

Chapter Seven examined the *Day After* a pro-poor state intervention that aimed at integrating the poor in the urban fabric by means of a comprehensive housing project. This scheme shows how the state sets about creating territories of poverty through its social policies and urban planning. Urban planning does not take into account the views of the poor and, furthermore, the Conjunto Denisson Menezes experience reveals a lack of relationship between the technical staff, politicians and residents that might allow them to address urban problems. The Conjunto, in fact, turned rapidly into a favela, with a noticeable physical deterioration in the quality of units and public amenities, as well as other social problems, while the state claimed a *success* on the grounds of the quantitative number of units built.

Although I was unable to conduct a larger number of interviews with the planners, it was evident from their voices and those of the inhabitants, that most of the professionals linked to urbanism have not objected to the way the urban question has been handled by the forces of capital, especially because, as the data from this research showed, the elite are not concerned about the issue of poverty. My interviews with the academics questioned whether there is an urban policy as such and the few housing projects are simply a way of locating poor people out of sight. Although the *right to the city* is increasingly becoming a concern of researchers, segregation is not a prominent issue within this debate in Brazil. A few academics

have been important allies of the social movements in their struggle to find a place for poor people to live in the city. However in most cases, this support is theoretical rather than practical and there are very few ties between the university, the social movements and residents, and as a result there has been little leverage over local government officials to change their current policies.

For this reason, the planners have been able to retain a technocratic view of planning which takes little account of wider social and political debates. With such a restricted view of the problems, they tend to implement measures that are narrowly compartmentalised and fail to undertake a critical analysis of the tasks before them. As long as they stick to a technocratic view, they are immune from exploring alternative courses of action that might enable the people to satisfy their needs (either individually or through the social action). The lack of social knowledge and sensitivity on the part of the urban planners has led to technocratic naivety. The traditional policies towards the favelas had always been to overlook or stigmatize the territories by describing them as abnormal. The limited knowledge that the state (and its agents) has of poverty can be seen in the results of its actions and the way its programmes have been criticised by their intended beneficiaries. Instead of heeding this criticism, the planners in Maceió appear to regard the attitudes of the middle classes as more important, attitudes that are governed by fear of violence and the need for protection. The paradox, of course, is that these views are reinforced by the attempts of the poor people to be spatially integrated in the city through the illegal occupation of land. This both prolongs the problem for the poor (as we have seen in the case studies) and persuades the planners that it is difficult to work with them in a technocratic way. Furthermore, it is hard for integration to take place, in either a physical, legal, or economic context when there is a high degree of suspicion and prejudice as well as limited communication.

The response of the Brazilian state has been disproportionate to the scale of the problem of the urban poor and the problem has begun to reach dimensions that are almost impossible to reverse. The Statute of Cities (2001) is a piece of new legislation that lays stress on the struggle and protection of rights, but, in reality, it fails to address the question of the denial of rights. Despite the enactment of The Statute of Cities, very little has changed. The issue of social and spatial segregation

and evictions continues to be part of the poor's daily round. The state has only a formal presence in the precarious settlements and fails to implement policies regarding health, education, employment or the generation of income. It usually condones the poor's presence in unpleasant and hidden locations, and its own actions force them to live in conditions of isolation which is harmful to their survival. In the case of Maceió, even with the election of recent PSB [Socialist] and PSDB [Social Democracy] local governments, there has been no sign of change, and even a statistical rise in the level of poverty. The discursive emphasis on legal issues (rights) has been a useful distraction to divert attention away from the lack of projects and finance, and social knowledge of the poor's daily lives.

A New Housing Policy for the Urban Poor

The official policy of the state with regard to the precarious settlements is to ignore or stigmatise the territories of poverty. On the basis of the findings of this research, it is clear that the housing policies should attempt to undertake the following: i) take into account that residential mobility is a desirable goal; ii) plan and design spaces so that they can be adapted to the needs of poor families both with regard to their size and adaptations of use; iii) give thought to the different *housing products* that can cater for people at different stages of urban integration; iv) revert to the idea of breaking up the settlements in the urban environment of people in low income groups so they are not grouped together in the form of ghettos where there is little prospect of overcoming poverty; v) take measures to select the most suitable size and location for the settlements and later make a careful assessment of the degree of success of each project; vi) limit horizontal urban expansion; vii) increasing the overall compactness of cities while including the less well-off within the urban fabric; viii) introduce health and educational services of a good standard; ix) provide an incentive for creativity and the potential business enterprises for the urban poor; and x) give the people a chance to survive through legal means and thus avoid having to resort to strategies that assist in the social and physical destruction of the environment.

The programmes and policies should also attempt to forge links with the people at the centre of planning, execution and control. Clearly the networks of socialization

are adapting to the social changes which they are undergoing but they still play an essential role in the organisation of the communities. The urban poor should have greater opportunities to speak, to be listened to and be respected for their opinions when the policies and projects designed for them are put into effect. Knowing how to recognise the value of the accumulated knowledge and experience of the poor should be treated as an essential feature in the success of policies. These people have the right to take part in the way their destiny is defined, as well as to be both integrated by having rights realised in practice and having their duties clarified so that they share the responsibilities of citizenship.

Future Research

There are several areas requiring further research into the urban integration of poor people. This research could be broadened if it included an investigation into the possibility of the real participation on the part of the planners in the definition of where of the poor could be located in the cities and an evaluation of the impact of the new *pro-poor* policies on the living conditions of inhabitants. There is also a need for further empirical research into the so-called new poverty. This research has found that the new poor suffer from discrimination, do not have their rights recognised and do not have the chance to improve their situation by themselves because of a lack of jobs. What is the role of urban planners with regard to these poverty conditions? What approach should they adopt towards the poor, their life stories, background and influence? It is possible to take a positive view about the recent impact of the *pro-poor* policies (Fome Zero and Bolsa Família [Eradication of Hunger and Family Allowance Programmes]) of President Lula's Government on the living condition of poor people (demonstrated by the high levels of popularity and approval ratings of President Lula). The question is how these compensatory policies treat the problem of hyper poverty, citizen participation, social networks and community building.

Further research is also required into the pattern of mobility and migration, and their implications. Combining different regions in the same study could help to examine the role of migratory flows in the *territorialisation of poverty*. What should be the role of *return migration* and *circular migration* to the spatialisation of poverty? From the research it is evident that the process of migration in cities such as Maceió is still

significant, with street sleeping of people and families noticeable. This new research could be carried out by means of longitudinal and inter-generational studies of poverty that might determine to what extent the state of poverty is persisting.

Finally, the cataclysmic global financial events at the end of 2008 have altered the entire economic order of the world beyond recognition. What the future holds is not clear, but the new poverty, segregation, and unemployment, remain a part of the daily round of the urban poor. How are we to understand the continuing distance between the establishment of a right to the city in principle and the daily round of people in the precarious settlements in the cities such as Maceió when economic factors are uncertain and likely to bring new calls for limited state interventions. This is the horizon that our research and practice should aim to reach in the coming years.

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TAPED SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS		
PRECARIOUS SETTLEMENTS RESIDENTS LIFE STORIES		
Name	**Community**	**Position**
1 Rubem Cajueiro	Denisson Menezes	Vice President of Association
2 Maria Cícera de Oliveira	DM	Community leader
3 Tania Couto	DM	Resident
4 Maruza Rodrigues	DM	Community leader
5 Terezinha Ferreira	DM	Resident
6 Edite Conceição	DM	Resident
7 Maria Cícera Alves	DM	Ex- community leader
8 Eliene Santos	DM	Resident
9 Elione Alves	DM	Community leader
10 Antonio Leopoldino	DM	Resident
11 Romualdo Balbino	DM	Resident
12 Josefa Marta	DM	Resident
13 Veronilda Maria	DM	Resident
14 Leda Inácio	DM	Resident
15 Ma. Cícera da Conceição	DM	Resident
16 Antonia Ambrósio	DM	Community leader
17 Ma. José da Conceição	DM	Resident
18 Maria Auxiliadora	DM	Resident
19 Maria das Dores	DM	Resident
20 Maria Nazaré Leite	DM	Resident
21 Quitéria Rodrigues	DM	Resident
22 Ana Lúcia	DM	Resident
23 José Gustavo	DM	Resident
24 Maria José	DM	Resident
25 Luciene Conceição	DM	Resident
26 Maria Selma	Cidade de Lona	Community leader
27 Maria Lúcia	CL	Resident
28 Maria Cícera da Silva	CL	Resident
29 Nadeje Ferreira	CL	Resident
30 Maria José Marques	CL	Resident
31 Rosineide Ferreira	CL	Resident
32 Claudemir José	CL	Ex- Community leader
33 Fernanda Torres	CL	Resident
34 Jobete Maria	CL	Resident
35 Regina Maria	CL	Resident
36 Marlene Paixão	CL	Resident
37 Manoel Messias	CL	Resident

38 Selma Lopes	CL		Resident
39 José Cristóvam	CL		Resident
40 Hermes Freitas	CL		Resident
41 Djalma Amaro	CL		Resident
42 Maria de Lourdes	CL		Resident
43 Ana Rosa	CL		Resident
44 Maria Cícera Correia	CL		Resident
45 Roseli Maria	CL		Resident
46 Bianca Maria	CL		Resident
47 Marileide Cavalcante	CL		Resident
48 Maria Belarmina	CL		Resident
49 Margarida de Oliveira	CL		Resident
50 Lucineide Ferreira	CL		Resident
51 José Pedro	Vila Emater II		Resident
52 Fabiana Amara	VE		Local contact
53 Maria José da Silva	VE		Resident
54 Adelania Herculano	VE		Resident
55 Ana Lúcia Paulo	VE		Resident
56 Maria Rita da Conceição	VE		Resident
57 Benedita Digna	VE		Resident
58 Maria Nazaré da Silva	VE		Resident
59 Maria José dos Santos	VE		Resident
60 Valdirene Correia	VE		Resident
61 Michele Soares	VE		Resident
62 Maria Teresa	VE		Resident
63 Damiana Maria	VE		Resident
64 Maria José da Silva	VE		Resident
65 Flávia de Souza	VE		Resident
66 Rosimeire Ambrósio	VE		Resident
67 Maria Betania	VE		Resident
68 Bertolina Renilda	VE		Resident
69 Maria Barbosa	VE		Resident
70 Silvana Lima	VE		Community leader
71 Marina Francisca	VE		Resident
72 Maria das Graças	VE		Resident
73 Josefa de Jesus	VE		Resident
74 Rosita Neves	VE		Resident
75 Edjane da Silva	VE		Resident
SOCIAL MOVEMENTS LEADERS LIFE STORIES			
Descriptor Code	**Organisation**		**Position**
76 Social Movement Leader 1	UMM/AL		Co-ordinator
77 Social Movement Leader 2	MDF		Co-ordinator
TECHNICIANS LIFE STORIES			
Name	**Organisation**		**Position**
78 Architect 1	AGAHU and ex- COHAB		Architect
79 Architect 2	UFAL and COHAB		Architect

80 Planner 1	SMCCU and ex- SMHPS	Architect
81 Planner 2	SMPD	Architect
82 Planner 3	Citizen Budget	Social work
83 Planner 4	UEM/HBB at SMHPS	Social work
84 Planner 5	UEM/HBB at SMHPS	Engineer
85 Academic 2	UFAL	Teacher
86 Academic 3	UFAL	Teacher

TAPED SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

INSTITUTIONAL INTERVIEWS

Name	Organisation	Position
1 Policy Maker 1	AGAHU	Engineer
2 Policy Maker 2	CEF	Manager
3 Policy Maker 3	UEM/HBB at SMHPS	Architect
4 Policy Maker 4	SMHPS	Architect
5 Planner 6	SLUM	Enginner
6 Planner 7 (with Planner 1)	SMCCU and ex- SMHPS	Architect
7 NGO 1 and 2	Pastoral das Favelas	Technicians
8 Prosecutor	Prosecutor Office	Lawyer
9 Academic 1	NUTAS at UFAL	Teacher
10 Social Movement Leader 3	UMM/AL	Member of Board

COMMUNITY MEETINGS

11 Focus Group 1	*DM*	
12 Focus Group 2	*CL*	

NON-TAPED SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

EXPLORATORY INTERVIEWS

1 Sebastiana	Ipiíba, São Gonçalo, RJ	Resident
2 João and Manuel	Ipiíba, São Gonçalo, RJ	Resident
3 Cris	Ipiíba, São Gonçalo, RJ	Teacher and resident
4 Maria	Herbert de Souza, RJ	Community agent
5 Ana Paula	Colmeia, Campo Grande, RJ	Resident
6 Lúcia, Isaura and Alexandre	Fundação Bento Rubião, RJ	Social workers and architect
7 Rute and Marielvis	Vila Brejal Project	Co-ordinators

INSTITUTIONAL INTERVIEWS

1 Ana Lúcia Magalhães	CEASB	General co-ordinator
2 Luzenira	CL	Local contact and comm. leader
3 Jorge	CL	Community leader
4 Pedro	VE	Community leader
5 Roseny Almeida	Local Cáritas	Co-ordinator of urb. programme
6 Cláudia Mello	UEM/HBB	DI co-ordinator
7 Juçara Justina	CEF	Architect responsible by the HBB
8 Lindemberg Medeiros	UFAL	Director of IGDEMA
9 Ana Regina and Fátima	SMPD	Architects

10 Ana Paula Acioli	SMCCU	Municipal GIS Co-ordinator
11 Nadja Barros	SLUM	Architect
12 Geraldo Majela e Verônica Robalinho	UFAL	Teachers
13 Maria do Rosário	UFAL	Teacher
14 Maria Elisabete	Cáritas	Project co-ordinator
15 Fabiana Rodrigues	SEPLAN-AL	Architect

POST FIELD WORK COMPLEMENTARY EMAILS

1 Juçara Justina	CEF	Architect responsible by the HBB
2 José Cláudio dos Santos	CMP, UMM/AL	General co-ordinator
3 Nise Sarmento	AGAHU	Architect
4 Maria do Socorro Silva	UEM/HBB	Social work co-ordinator
5 Regina Lins	UFAL	Teacher
6 Paulo Sérgio Barbosa	CEF	Urb. development superintendent
7 Therezinha Falcão Freire	NUTAS	General co-ordinator
8 Ana Lúcia Magalhães	CEASB	General co-ordinator
9 Roseny Almeida	Local Cáritas	Co-ordinator of urb. programme
10 Nadja Barros	SLUM	Architect
11 Neison Freire	Nat. Integration Ministery, DF	GIS consultant
12 Adonai Seixas	AGAHU	Architect
13 Elen Nogueira	NUTAS	Social worker
14 Francisco Gaetani	PNUD Brasília	Director
15 Charles Fortin	IDB	Co-ordinator
16 Letícia Osório	COHRE	Co-ordinator