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# CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AS A DRIVER OF HOUSING POLICIES: THE CASE OF THE OCCUPATION OF THE CAMBRIDGE HOTEL

## LA PARTICIPACIÓN CIUDADANA COMO MOTOR DE LAS POLÍTICAS DE VIVIENDA: EL CASO DE LA OCUPACIÓN DEL HOTEL CAMBRIDGE

## A PARTICIPAÇÃO CIDADÃ COMO INDUTORA DE POLÍTICAS HABITACIONAIS: O CASO DA OCUPAÇÃO HOTEL CAMBRIDGE



**Figura 0.** Registro do estado do edifício durante a ocupação.  
Fonte: Jardiel Carvalho/R.U.A  
Foto Coletivo, 28 nov; 2016

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## RESUMEN

Frente a la ineficiencia del Estado en la provisión de vivienda, se pretendió identificar posibilidades en la lucha por la vivienda social, teniendo como estudio de caso la Ocupación Hotelera de Cambridge, ubicada en el centro ampliado de la ciudad de São Paulo. El edificio, originalmente un hotel construido en la década de 1950 con incentivos fiscales limitados al Plan de Conmemoración del IV Centenario de la ciudad, terminó sus actividades en 2002. Fue expropiado en 2011 y ocupado por el Movimiento Sin Techo del Centro, en 2012. Luego de tensiones y participación en consejos participativos, el Movimiento obtuvo la donación del inmueble y una licencia en un programa federal de recalificación. A través de un análisis cualitativo del déficit habitacional del Brasil, concentrado en exceso de renta y precariedad de la propiedad, frente a políticas habitacionales centradas en la producción de unidades a través de programas de desarrollo en localidades periféricas, se entiende que el análisis de los determinantes de la factibilidad del estudio de caso puede contribuir a la discusión de las políticas y acciones gubernamentales. La metodología, basada en el campo procedimental, métodos observacionales y revisión de literatura, en el campo lógico se estructuró en los métodos dialéctico e inductivo de investigación, sistematización y análisis crítico de referencias bibliográficas y documentales y, en procesos empíricos, en el análisis cualitativo de entrevistas semiestructuradas y visitas de campo. Se concluyó que el poder de diálogo y formación de redes del Movimiento, y su estrategia basada en rodearse de actores que solidifican su lucha, contribuyeron a la viabilidad del Hotel Cambridge para su uso residencial. A partir de los datos analizados, también se defiende la innegable participación de los municipios para viabilizar la dotación de viviendas en zonas céntricas. Sin embargo, considerando el sesgo hegemónico identificado, la acción política de los movimientos sociales y la participación de la academia en su instrumentalización son de suma importancia para fortalecer la relación Capital-Estado y posibilitar la confrontación de políticas territoriales que contemplan el derecho a la ciudad.

**Palabras clave:** participación ciudadana, ocupación, movimientos sociales, actores sociales, financiación de la vivienda.

## ABSTRACT

Faced with State inefficiency in housing provision, the occupation of the Cambridge Hotel, located on the outskirts of São Paulo's city center, was used as a case study to identify possibilities in the struggle for social housing. The building, initially a hotel built in the 1950s, closed in 2002, was expropriated in 2011, and occupied by the Downtown Homeless Movement (Movimento Sem Teto do Centro) in 2012. The movement, after social tensions and participation in participatory councils, obtained the donation of the property and its license in a federal requalification program. Through qualitative analysis of the housing deficit in Brazil, characterized by the excessive burden of rents and the precariousness of real estate, in contrast to housing policies focused on the production of units through development programs in peripheral locations, it is understood that the analysis of the determining factors for the case study's feasibility can contribute to the discussion of government policies and actions. The methodology, based on the procedural field, observational methods, and literature review in the logical field, was structured in dialectical and inductive methods for the research, systematization, and critical analysis of bibliographic and documentary references and, in empirical processes, in the qualitative analysis of semi-structured interviews and onsite visits. It was concluded that the power of dialogue and formation of the movement's networks and its strategy, based on surrounding itself with actors that solidify its struggle, contributed to the viability of the Cambridge Hotel as a residential property. Based on the data analyzed, it is also argued that the participation of municipalities is undeniable in enabling the provision of housing in central areas. However, considering the hegemonic bias identified, the political action of social movements and the participation of academia in its instrumentalization are essential to strengthen the Capital-State relationship and enable the collation of territorial policies that the right to the city contemplates.

**Keywords:** citizen participation, occupation, social movements, social actors, housing financing.

## RESUMO

Diante da ineficiência do Estado na provisão de moradias, pretendeu-se identificar possibilidades na luta por habitação social, tendo como estudo de caso a Ocupação Cambridge, localizada no centro expandido da cidade de São Paulo. O edifício, originariamente um hotel construído na década de 1950, encerrou suas atividades em 2002, foi desapropriado em 2011 e ocupado pelo Movimento Sem Teto do Centro, em 2012. Após tensões sociais e atuação em conselhos participativos, o movimento obteve a doação do imóvel e habilitação em programa federal para requalificação. Mediante análise qualitativa do déficit habitacional do Brasil, caracterizado pelo (?) ônus excessivo dos aluguéis e na precariedade dos imóveis, em contraposição com políticas habitacionais centradas na produção de unidades por meio de programas de fomento em localização periférica, entende-se que a análise dos fatores determinantes para a viabilização do estudo de caso pode contribuir para a discussão de políticas e ações governamentais. A metodologia, baseada no campo procedimental, em métodos observacionais e revisão de literatura, no campo lógico se estruturou nos métodos dialético e indutivo para investigação, sistematização e análise crítica de referências bibliográficas e documentais e, em processos empíricos, na análise qualitativa de entrevistas semiestructuradas e visitas de campo. Concluiu-se que o poder de diálogo e formação de redes do movimento e sua estratégia baseada em cercar-se de atores que solidifiquem a sua luta, contribuíram para a viabilização do Hotel Cambridge como imóvel de uso residencial. Pelos dados analisados, defende-se, também, a indelegável participação dos municípios para viabilizar provisão de moradias em áreas centrais. No entanto, considerando o viés hegemônico identificado, a atuação política dos movimentos sociais e a participação da academia em sua instrumentalização são de extrema importância para tensionar a relação Capital-Estado e possibilitar o cotejamento de políticas territoriais que contemplem o direito à cidade.

**Palavras-chave:** participação cidadã, ocupação, movimentos sociais, atores sociais, financiamento habitacional.

## INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

In 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, promulgated by the United Nations, declared housing as a universal human right:

Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing, medical care, and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control. (United Nations, [1948] c2023, art. 25)

In 2020, the crisis generated by the COVID-19 pandemic exponentiated the relationship between health and urban planning (Borges & Marques, 2020). Social disparities and precarious housing conditions were preponderant in the face of deaths concentrated in peripheral neighborhoods, where informal construction, lack of basic sanitation, and densification heightened the spread of the virus. The distance of peripheral social housing projects aggravated the isolation difficulties due to the workers' need to stay on public transport for long periods. This framework greatly reinforces the essential character of the Right to Housing and how it is intrinsically linked to other social rights. Meanwhile, social movements that demand housing in infra-structured areas<sup>2</sup> struggle to guarantee these rights.

Regarding the Brazilian legal system, although it became a Republican State in 1889, the implementation of an urban policy was possible only in 1988—almost a century later—with the promulgation of the Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil (1988), in the resumption of democracy after the coup d'état and military government.

In this context, the right to housing was included, through a complementary amendment as a social clause, in the Federal Constitution of 1988. Engels (2015, p. 6) called it the "right of all rights" at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and described, as a founding theoretical framework, the consequences of accelerated urbanization and the dualism of the countryside-city in 18<sup>th</sup>-century England. This situation would be reproduced over time in other countries, simultaneously with the march of urbanization under the molds of the industrial production process and the speculative extraction of land value:

The expansion of large modern cities gives an artificial, enormously augmented value to land in certain areas, particularly central locations. Instead of increasing this value, the buildings built on them lower it since they no longer meet the changed conditions; hence, they are demolished and replaced by others. This happens first with centrally located working-class dwellings, whose rents never or only rarely slowly exceed a certain maximum, even if the houses are extremely overcrowded [...]. The result is that the workers are driven from the center of the cities to the outskirts, that workers' dwellings and small dwellings, in general, are becoming rare, expensive, and often even impossible

<sup>1</sup> This article includes research funded by the Coordination of Personal Improvement of Higher Education (CAPES, in Portuguese), modality 2.

<sup>2</sup> The neologism "infra-structured", with a hyphen, is used here, appealing to the negative value of inferiority or lack connoted by the prefix infra-, as opposed to the term "infrastructures", which indicates the positive presence of infrastructures.

to find because, under these conditions, the construction industry, for whom the most expensive dwellings offer a much better field of speculation, will only exceptionally build workers' dwellings. (Engels, [1873] 2015, p. 18)

Brazil followed this movement: the urban population jumped from 31% in the 1940s to 84.72% in 2015 (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística [IBGE], c2023). Ermínia Maricato, in her article "Knowing to Solve the Illegal City," states that, although urbanization initially seemed an alternative to the independence from the *coronelista* command, modernity was accompanied by its archaic side: "[...] modernization is only for a few; citizenship and rights, idem" (Maricato, s. d., P.1).

Contemporaneously, it is confirmed that despite the inclusion of a chapter on Urban Policy in the Federal Constitution (1988), regulated by the City Statutes (Law n. 10.257, 2001), an instrument that represented a crucial legal advance in recognizing the social role of property, the fragility of the Federative pact (Caldas, 2015), the obstacles of the judicial system and the hegemonic character of the state-capital relationship, where the law "for the few" is applied, is influenced by the inheritance of socio-spatial stratification that permeated the urbanization process. Hence, as a rule, such laws are not sufficiently applied - given the inclusion of the right in a precarious way-which allowed the perpetuation of a process where the right to the city is restricted to access to housing through development programs, recurrently through financing and not provision, and comes to represent the means and not the end of the policies implemented.

Some references outlined by Marx (2011), especially the use value and the exchange value, and their reading by Harvey (2013), are articulable to the fundamental concepts of the right to the city of Lefebvre (2001) and analyzed under the right to housing, advocated by the foremost legal frameworks such as State duty and the unreachd fundamental right, if the deficit of 5.87 million homes in Brazil is seen (João Pinheiro Foundation [FJP], 2021), in contrast to the existence of 7.9 million idle properties (fjp, 2018). This dichotomy is aggravated by the distortion caused by exchange value — which reinforces the consolidated model in the country where the policy is reduced to promotion programs despite the diverse needs identified through quantitative analysis of the housing deficit.

Such solutions imply that access to this fundamental right is reduced or conditioned on the beneficiary's possibility of access to credit (Royer, 2009; Rufino, 2015), and the requirement of cadastral regularity ultimately excludes most of those in need.

In this context of the inefficiency of the State's action in providing fundamental rights and the administration of the legacy of unbridled urbanization, it is seen that social movements are strengthening as

**Figure 1.** MSTC Material that distinguishes the terms “invasion” and “occupation.”  
 Source: Downtown Homeless Movement, MSTC, Aug.13th, 2020. Retrieved from <https://web.facebook.com/movimentosemtetodocentro/photos/pb.100069050783385.-2207520000./2831744037102259/?type=3>



essential agents of tension in the State Capital relationship. This is the context in which this article is inserted, which defends citizen participation as a fundamental instrument of opposition to the hegemonic bias by making tangible, for the other sectors of civil society, the limitation of the State, both in the provision of social housing and in ensuring the application of the social role of property, as can be exemplified by the material disclosure of the MSTC shown in Figure 1.

In the same sense, Caldas (2015) reflects on the gains assigned to social movements in fighting for urban reform, regarding “[...] the critical and organizational capacity, even if the disputes are not victorious, at first.” The author also highlights the importance of the Movement’s potential during this dispute to bring “society closer to reflection on the city, citizenship, law and democracy” (Caldas, 2015, p.91).

## METHODOLOGY

To achieve the proposed objectives, methodological strategies in the procedural field, observational and literature review methods, and dialectical and inductive methods for investigating, systematizing, and critically analyzing bibliographic and documentary references were utilized in the logical field. We also made on-site visits to the case study and territory of direct influence.



The qualitative analysis of semi-structured interviews with representatives involved in the project's feasibility and testimony collections during field research was used to investigate the actors' participation and vision.

Articulated research, which resulted in an article, with the quantitative and qualitative analysis of materials in sites selected related to the movement's leader, Carmen Silva, also contributed to the investigation into the formation of her public figure and to the systematization of facts related to the movement itself, since, considering the low academic production related to it, as well as the absence of formal systematization by the movement itself, such vehicles became an important source for this case study.

### The case of the Cambridge Residence – Socioespacial Clipping

The Cambridge Hotel opened in 1953, during the expansion of the hotel network in São Paulo, to celebrate its IV Centenary. The Hotel — designed by Francisco Beck, an exponent of modern architecture — witnessed the center's rise and decline after the migration of its commercial activities to expansion areas, closing down in 2002, with labor and tax liabilities (Figure 2).

**Figure 2.** Cambridge Hotel.

Source Photo: Werner Haberborn, 1940-1960.

Source: Paulista Museum Collection, University of São Paulo, iconography. Retrieved from <http://acervo.mp.usp.br/IconografiaV2.aspx#>

The building is located on Avenida Nove de Julho, a vital corridor connecting the downtown area to the main neighborhoods of São Paulo's southwest. It is inserted in an area equipped with infrastructure and access to numerous public facilities. Considering the predominance of housing developments of social Interest in peripheral areas to guarantee the expected return by private capital, the location factor is the most recurrent theme of criticism of the *Minha Casa Minha Vida* (My house, my life) program, the main housing program in Brazil. In a document prepared by the Comptroller General of the Union, the legacy that the “[...] social segregation and mobility difficulties are direct effects of distancing, in addition to the lack of urban infrastructure nearby” is highlighted (Ministry of Finance, 2020, P. 47).

However, as with the Cambridge Hotel, there are numerous idle properties in the metropolises of Brazil and the world. In particular, for the case on the agenda, we mention the city of São Paulo, where the housing deficit is 358,000 units. Contradictorily, the city is estimated to have more than 2,800 idle, abandoned, underused, or sites without buildings, equivalent to two million square meters unused (São Paulo, 2016; 2020). The waiting list for the provision of social housing in the city of São Paulo has more than one million people. City Hall projections point to 20,000 citizens living on the city streets, 60% in the central area (Companhia de Habitação Popular do Estado de São Paulo [Cohab-SP], 2015).

Nevertheless, in the academic field and among public entities, there is a discussion of the need to requalify the central areas, which underwent a process of abandonment from the 1970s with the induction of new economic centralities. However, it is confirmed that sparse governmental actions directed to their requalification, such as legislative incentives for retrofits, as well as for the production of Housing of Social Interest by the Municipal Master Plan of 2014, at least in the municipality of São Paulo, they ended up being appropriated by private initiatives. Production of housing for higher income groups was stimulated, reversing public resources, directly or through granting exemption from fees and taxes, as instruments of private capital (Santo Amore, Sampaio, Higushi, & Pereira, 2015).

São Paulo is the largest city in Latin America, and the Metropolitan Region of São Paulo is the 4<sup>th</sup> most populous on the planet (World Population Review, c2023). The legacy of anti-cities, generated by the urbanization phenomenon induced by the capital-state relationship — fed back by targeted government actions — represents a socio-spatial situation that is replicated in metropolises of several countries, which makes this agenda relevant, as well as the systematization of social tensions caused and solutions built through this dialectical process. Through its critical analysis, the intention was to contribute to the discussion of alternatives for public policies and urban planning in large centers.

## The Downtown Homeless Movement (*Movimento Sem Teto do Centro*)

This case study starts with the Downtown Homeless Movement (MSTC, in Portuguese) — a social movement with relevant activity in the central region of São Paulo — which provided more than 3,000 homes (MSTC, c2014). The movement started from a group of women who met in a tenement association. 60% of Brazil's housing deficit is suffered by women (FJP, 2021). Their first joint act was occupying a building on Rua Álvaro de Carvalho in 1997, now known as *Ocupação Nove de Julho*. The MSTC is led by Carmen Silva, whose insurgent background stands out from forming networks and partnerships to fight for the right to housing.

In an analysis of occupations in the center of São Paulo, Buonfiglio (2008) mentions:

The occupations of buildings in the centers, dating from the 1990s and intensifying after 2000 in several Brazilian capitals, cannot be explained as the product of isolated actions but inserted in a period of resumption of urban struggles as resistance against the deepening of poverty and social precariousness linked to the context of neoliberalism. The political and legal context of democratic consolidation brought the debate on the social role of property and the city with the Federal Constitution of 1988 and the City Statute of 2001. (Buonfiglio, 2008, p. 1)

The MSTC considers that housing is a fundamental right, a “mainstay” for other rights, for which the movement also fights:

[...] the *Movimento Sem-Teto do Centro* is a movement of the struggle for housing in the central region of São Paulo. It comprises over two thousand people, including adults, children, and young people. We defend the fundamental right to housing, guaranteed in the Constitution, and universal human rights. Housing is not just about physical property. “Home” means much more and includes family life, safety, health, education, access to transportation, and community living. (MSTC, n.d., as cited in Moraes & Luz, 2023, p. 3)

Currently, MSTC coordinates five occupations and one development- the Cambridge Residence, completed through the Federal My Home My Life Entities program. Recently, the *Pode Entrar* program, linked to the municipality of São Paulo (Diário Oficial da Cidade de São Paulo (São Paulo, c2022, p.1)), selected it for the construction of 200 units.

The Movement's objective is “to improve the quality of life, housing, health, leisure and culture for all members and those who want to be part of the MSTC, defending, organizing and developing social work free of charge.” Through the grassroots groups, in weekly and/or biweekly meetings, which take place in four locations in the city of São Paulo, rights and duties in access to citizenship are debated, based on the following lines: empowerment of

low-income workers as subjects of rights; valorization of children's education and family health; community life and working together for self-management; right to housing; the importance of regularization of members' documentation; access to social investment funds for housing; the relationship of the City's Statutes with social movements; right to the city; incentive to participation in the agendas of public entities (Escola da Cidade, 2019, p.5). From the debates — through grassroots groups and with the participation of civil society — the movement seeks to value and encourage popular participation as an instrument for forming public policies.

### Social tensions circumscribed to the residential

Through popular participation and provoked social tensions confronting the *status quo* identified in the housing provision, the MSTC could reverse the direction of the property it currently legally occupies. The former luxury hotel in São Paulo, expropriated by the municipality after several studies for requalification and negotiations with the owners — who had tax debts for more than ten years — would initially be directed to a private initiative through a public-private partnership. However, it was then destined for donation to the MSTC and subsequent selection in the federal financing program for reform (Moraes, 2023).

The film "*Era O Hotel Cambridge*" (Aurora Filmes, 2016), in which the occupation was the central theme, including the performance of real characters, received several awards, which made it possible to experience later an artistic residency<sup>3</sup>, a situation that, in addition to the reconfiguration of the form of appropriation of space -which guaranteed, to the Residence, the award in the Urban appropriation category by the Paulista Association of Art Critics (APCA) in 2016-, also enabled the projection of the movement and the occupation itself to segments that would not access their demands, enhancing their projection and struggle<sup>4</sup>:

From these perspectives, it is possible to infer that the building, in the course of its existence, as a Luxury Hotel, a decadent and inactive Hotel, an alternative bar, occupation, film set, artistic residence space, and, later, a residence, constituted, in itself, the representation of "city-making," as defined by Agier (2014).

City-making must be understood as an endless, continuous, and purposeless process. It makes sense in the context of continuously expanding social and urban universes. This is why it seems possible to elaborate the theoretical hypothesis (and the political wager) according to which city-making is a pragmatic declination, here and now, of the "right to the city" and its establishment. Movement is essential in this conception of the city as a permanent construction. (Agier, 2014. Q. 491)

During the Movement's struggle, the Cambridge Hotel, despite having been identified in the Special Zone of Social Interest (ZEIS) by the Strategic Master Plan of the municipality of São Paulo (São Paulo, 2014), would be destined, for

**3** The Cambridge Artistic Residency took place in the period from March 2016 to January 2017, with the presence of five residents in the Cambridge occupation. The work had as central objectives: the creation of collaborative work; the use of common areas as a place of work; the formation of the interlocution network with the community, focusing on the duration of the initiatives beyond the period of residence. The collaboration of psychotherapists was highlighted, for group sessions between residents and members of the occupation (Yzquierdo, 2016).

**4** The projection of the Movement and the public figure of Carmen Silva to other social segments was identified through research of media outlets about the leader Carmen Silva (Moraes & Luz, 2022).



**Figura 3.** Registration of the state of the building during the occupation. Source: Jardiel Carvalho / R. U. a collective Photo, Nov. 28th; 201

the most part, for families with income higher than six minimum wages, which circumscribes its dispute to the hegemonic character, imposed by the capital-state relationship, in the application and interpretation of laws. The inertia of the municipality, considering the time elapsed since the end of the hotel's activities and the study of its direction for higher income groups, conditioned that as a way of denouncing the inaction of the public power in guaranteeing the social function of property, the building of the old hotel was occupied, in 2012, by the Downtown Homeless Movement.

Between the occupation, which took place in 2012, and the delivery of the development — currently called *Residencial Cambridge* — more than ten years passed. Despite the numerous adversities, among them the struggle to donate the land; challenges expected in requalification works; delay in payments, due to fiscal restrictions; criminalization process, which involved the leaders of the movement; and serious restrictions caused by the pandemic, the project was finalized with the active participation of residents in assemblies, with the fulfillment of their demands such as, for example, changing the initial project, to install a tank in all bathrooms, dispensing with the collective laundry that had been proposed in the original project (Hodapp, as cited in Moraes, 2010).2023).

### Case Study

In our research, we identified that the citizen participation of the Movement's members occurred in all phases of the process of guaranteeing ownership of the property, project, and reform works, including, initially, the act of occupation and encampment in front of the City Hall as a form of protest against the direction provided by the municipality — when the direction to entities was effectively negotiated. This was decisive for the reported reversal and the achievement, by the MSTC, of the transfer of the property with charges, which occurred in December 2015 (São Paulo, c2022).

## RESULTS

Thus, the history of the hotel, which was the object of “city-making” (Agier, 2015) through the MSTC’s struggle, the upkeep of the collective strength of the Movement — even in the face of so many adversities—, the power of the networks created, and the experience of the actors chosen by the Movement, indicate possibilities that oppose the imposed reality related, at first, to the protagonism of the plaintiffs in accessing their right and opposition to the predominant peripheral locality.

As advocated by Maricato (1997), regarding the importance of transformation in the ideological plane and on the awareness of the excluded about their rights, it is possible to identify that, in an empirical and effectively practical way, the phenomenon object of this study intends, through its city-making movement, a possible “rupture” of the *status quo*. He highlights the MSTC:

[...] We emphasize, therefore, the recognition of housing as a right (guaranteed in the Brazilian Federal Constitution of 1988), as well as the expansion of the concept of housing, not only as a roof but as a right to the city, including health, education, mobility, culture, security and all the infrastructure for a dignified life in a sizeable exclusionary metropolis such as São Paulo, where real estate speculation has caused serious consequences to the lives of homeless and low-income people, primarily black. (Escola da Cidade, 2019, P. 4)

The consonance of the Movement’s strategy and actions with its conceptual scope and its respective contribution to the ideological plan, whose need was highlighted by Maricato (1997), could be evidenced through the bibliographic and field research carried out. The diversity of spectra of their actions demonstrates the complexity of their structuring and the sophistication of their instruments of struggle in the course of their maturation, as demonstrated by the historical milestones summarized in Figure 4.

Regarding the governmental action for the property’s destination, it should be noted that this was circumscribed to the same context of overlapping private and public interests, overcome through the Movement’s resistance and action in participatory councils. “Why not take advantage of public assets to make 100% of social housing viable?” (Santo Amore et al., 2015, P.1).

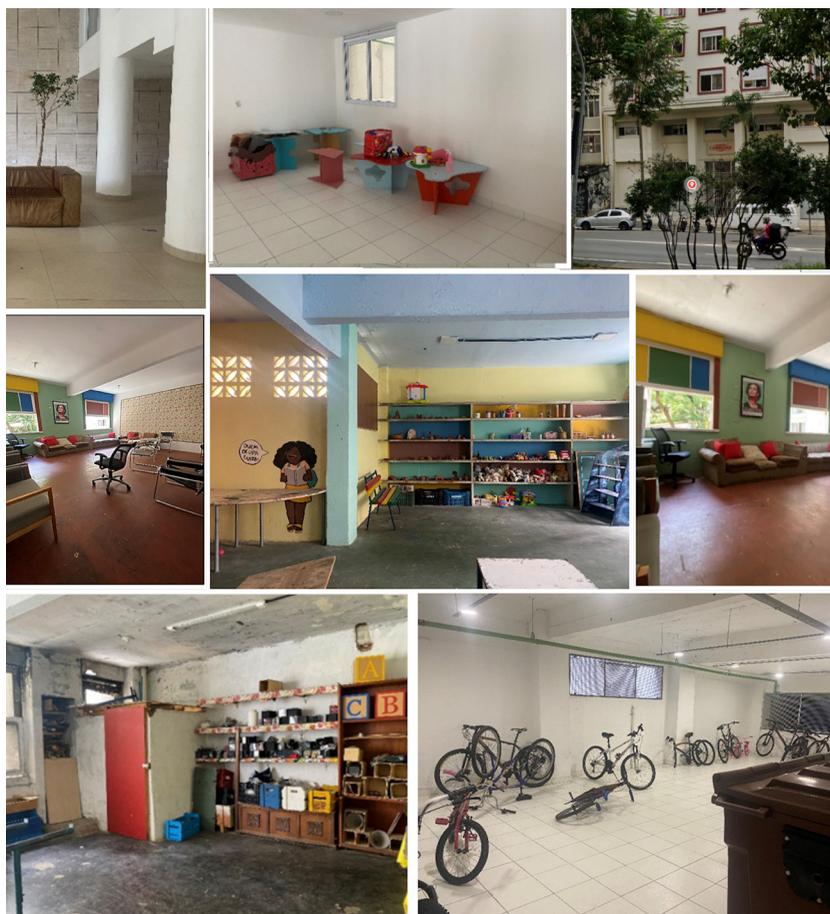
The organization of the space was carried out through the initial occupation -when the building was cleaned, an immense amount of garbage was removed. Electricity and hydraulic installations were carried out-, first, by the distribution of suitable environments for its occupants, according to family or personal organization, as well as collective environments, among which the following stand out: space with a library and computers for common use, community kitchen, environment for children’s activities and games, entrance hall with spaces to sit, reception and access control, among others. All decisions, daily or special, are always taken collectively through assemblies, including recurrently with the external participation of



**Figure 4.** Timeline with MSTC milestones. Source: the authors, from MSTC data.

guests, among which, on some occasions, one or another of the authors of this study was present, and especially with the presence of professionals and technical collaborators, during the retrofit project and works. After completing the work, the rooms were ready for use, of high quality, and adapted to collective and individual demands, including detailed aesthetic aspects.

**Figure 5.** *Residencial Cambridge Residence and Ocupação 9 de Julho.* Source: From right to left, from top to bottom: Cambridge Residence: ground floor entrance hall; playroom; external view of the building from Avenida 9 de Julho; meeting and study room; Ocupação 9 de Julho: Library; Meeting Room; Joinery. Cambridge Residence: space for future collective use provisionally intended for bicycle storage. Source: Author. Images taken between February and March 2023. External Googlemaps image, captured January 24th, 2024.



## DISCUSSION

Given the facts identified, the indelible municipal action for the viability of this case study can be seen surveying idle properties and with possibilities of expropriation, effective negotiation of the property, and direction to the entity through public appeal, situations that have legal provision and could be replicated as a fundamental process in the revitalization of central areas. Despite this decisive action for the viability of the project, the achievement of its direction for housing of social Interest had, as a preponderant factor, citizen participation, including architects, technical advisors, academics, and representatives of social movements, as members of the Municipal Housing Council. The questioning of the actions of this body allowed the withdrawal from the agenda, twice, of the proposal, which generated the time-lapse necessary for specific action of the MSTC, which, among other actions, organized the occupation itself and camp in front of the City Hall (Moraes, 2023) and, later, in the elaboration of the technical and social project and the monitoring of the construction and handover of the residence.

In an interview on the occasion of a work presented at the 11<sup>th</sup> Architecture Biennial of São Paulo, Carmen Silva highlighted the importance of the participation of social movements in municipal councils, which would configure a practical possibility of interference in public policy, in line with their demands:

That is why we are feared. Our organization causes the state to fear us because we are an organized group, not an alienated one. This fear is nonsense because we only want to be part of this state. How are we part of the state? Participating in the councils and their respective elections. The councils are a great decentralization of public power that guarantees popular participation in supervision and implementation. (Ferreira, 2017, as cited in Studio XRio & Columbia GSAPP, 2019, p. 8, bold section added)

In the universe of this case study, despite the difficulties imposed on the MSTC, it can be seen that the option taken by the Movement to associate with partners with experience in technical assistance for Social Housing (ATHIS), institutionalized by Law no. 11,888 (2008) allowed the involvement of employees and the discussion based on information and technical proposals, given the need to overcome numerous challenges. These challenges were due both to the limits of the program, the overload of activities imposed on the Movement, and the absence of investment readjustment, as well as to external factors that had an important impact on the viability of the Enterprise: fiscal restriction by the federal government, pandemic restrictions, inflationary impact and criminalization of movement leaders. Through these data, one can infer the importance of ATHIS for realizing similar projects, which could also be stimulated by government programs in all its spheres.

According to this qualitative analysis, the organizational structure of the Movement is also worth highlighting, mainly its ability to rely on other social actors, foster the construction of their knowledge, expand the potential of their demands, and strengthen their capacity for struggle, a process that Carmen Silva, during the formation of her public figure, calls “exchange of knowledge [...] with which everyone learns a little” (Ferreira, 2017, as cited in Studio XRio & Columbia GSAPP, 2019, P.8).

This article seeks to demonstrate the importance of social movements and citizen participation as a way to compel the state, through its political action, in its duty to provide social housing and also to ensure that the properties under its management exercise their social role, obligations that, without the tensions caused, could not exceed the normative progress, given the hegemonic bias identified in government policies, programs, and actions.

Under the normative aspect, it should be noted that, in Brazil, the City Statute (2001) established general guidelines for urban policy, regulating articles 182 and 183 of the Federal Constitution with the definition of instruments that would allow municipal management, among which the following can be found: concession of real right of use; concession of special use for housing purposes; compulsory installment, construction, or use; special usucaption of urban property; surface right; right of preemption;

## CONCLUSIONS

onerous grant; right to build; transfer of construction and land regularization (Brazil, 2001). Nevertheless, the lapse between the Hotel's first tax debt enforcement action in 1999 and its effective expropriation, which occurred by agreement between the parties in 2012, demonstrates the challenges to be overcome for its effective use (Moraes, 2023, p. 46).

The MSTC's stance on opening the doors of the occupation to artistic residency and other cultural, academic, and income-generating activities, which take place at Cambridge Residence, and to cultural, education, leisure, and income-generating activities at Ocupação Nove de Julho, located next door, seemed to be the right strategy in the authors' opinion. The Movement considered the possibility of adding to its struggle social actors who would not be affected if this position were not adopted. This methodology can collaborate, if replicated, with the formal introduction of popular actors in a systemic way in the state and more plural social relations. The Movement's strategy, by allying with various segments of society and providing opportunities for such contacts to enhance their knowledge and symbolic power, may represent an important inducer of alternatives for the struggle for housing in Brazil, as identified in this research.

Due to its centrality and protagonism, this case study's cut is located in the field of exceptions. However, the systematization of its success can indicate the adequacy of existing public policies.

As Carmen Silva reflects (Ferreira, 2017, as cited in STUDIO XRio & GSAPP, 2019, P.8), "Every right without action is dead." Public management should be based on quantitative control methods, as they already exist, but also qualitative performance methods, which could support territorial and evidence-based public policies.

Considering the status quo identified in this case study, the articulation and struggle of social movements has proved to be an important instrument of opposition and inducement so that public policies can go beyond formal progress and urban reform into the realm of utopia.

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