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Insurgent regeneration:

spatial practices of citizenship in the rehabilitation of inner city São Paulo

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Abstract

The city centre of São Paulo has increasingly become a key site for local housing movements to challenge the rules and practices of differentiated citizenship in urban Brazil. This is in line with Sassen's analysis arguing that the last two decades have seen an increasingly urban articulation of global struggles, and a growing use of urban space to make political claims. Organised vacant buildings and occupations led by social movements in the centre of São Paulo are prominent examples of urban spaces being appropriated to advance the claims of otherwise marginalised urban subjects. In the face of rising inequalities and social and spatial divisions across the city, squatted buildings emerge as a space of negotiation with political consequences at various times and scales. Apart from acquiring a symbolic value in the debate over regeneration and gentrification processes in the inner city area of São Paulo, vacant building occupations are simultaneously intended by their proponents as a means to provide shelter to those in need; experiment alternative ways of producing low-income housing in well-located urban areas; and contribute to wider demands for urban reform across Brazil. This article explores in detail the spatial practices of individuals and groups occupying a building known as Ocupação Marconi. It focuses on the production of the building being seen as a device for advancing alternative formulations of citizenship, and discusses the implication of this interpretation for a renewed definition of the notion and practice of urban regeneration.

Introduction

This article interrogates the notion of *insurgent regeneration* as a starting point to discuss the relation between the re-appropriation of urban spaces in inner city areas, and the construction of citizenship. Urban studies literature has widely explored the interface between the actions of ordinary people seeking to change the city, and the expansion of citizenship rights. The notion resonates with Asef Bayat's (1997) theory of the 'quiet encroachment of the ordinary', focusing on urban dwellers' everyday forms of resistance; Solomon Benjamin's reading of 'occupancy urbanism' (2008); Ananya Roy's (2004, 2009) analysis of the informalisation of 'vesting' and the constitution of de-facto land rights; and Holston's (1998, 2008) terming of 'insurgent citizenship', absorbed into planning discourse by Sandercock (1998a, 1998b), Friedmann (2002), and Miraftab (2005, 2009).

Building upon this body of work and other recent trends in urban studies, this article focuses on inner city areas experiencing pressure for regeneration as the locus of specific urban development narratives and dynamics, as well as a hotspot where distinctive practices of contestation can open up new possibilities to imagine citizenship and belonging. Differently from other processes of urban change, the political economy of inner city regeneration initiatives can be largely linked to Neil Smith's (1979) rent-gap theory, describing the gap between the actual value of the property and its potential value – which both the state and the private sector aim to exploit through the practice of regeneration. The processes of resistance and appropriation taking place within this contexts play an important role in challenging this form of practice, which prioritises capitalist property markets over the use value of urban space. Furthermore, it can be argued that the physical and social organisation of space and the social structure of inner city communities can potentially produce specific processes of belonging and citizenship-making, which the article sets to explore.

In the central areas of São Paulo, a long history of exploitation of people and urban spaces, along with progressive struggles for land, social justice, and urban reform have produced a variety of highly contested conditions of social inclusion and exclusion. Since at least the 1950s, the area has housed some of the city's poorer populations, often deciding to live in extremely precarious conditions in order to be in the central region "where all the sacrifices of cramped,

unhealthy, and expensive housing are compensated by the proximity of work and public services" (Fix et al. 2003: 9). At the same time, regeneration plans advanced from the 1990s onwards have mostly proposed market-led redevelopment strategies prioritising middle- and high-income groups over actually existing communities. Within this context, the article focuses on the informal practices of occupation and rehabilitation of vacant buildings organised by social movements that campaign for state provision of low-income housing in well located urban areas, vis-à-vis current pressures for regeneration. We argued elsewhere that by operating through both transgression and critical pedagogy (Freire 1974, 1996), organised occupations hold the potential to steer the notion and practice of urban regeneration towards more socially just outcomes (De Carli et al. 2015). Here, we are interested in revealing how in this process of regenerating the city, new forms of citizenship are also being constructed.

To address this question, the article draws from both citizenship and urban studies literature in order to develop an analytical lens that interrogates occupant practices in inner city São Paulo in relation to changing ideas of citizenship. Citizenship is broadly defined here as membership in a political community. The aim of the analytical lens proposed in this article is to examine which emerging forms of membership can be traced by observing practices of occupation in inner city São Paulo, and to interrogate the extent to which these practices can facilitate the emergence of more expansive and inclusive ideas of citizenship.

Following this introduction, the article is structured into four parts. The first section addresses the idea of citizenship, and elaborates on the notions of relational, differential, and insurgent citizenship. The following section develops the definition of insurgent regeneration, linking citizenship debates to the informal transformation of inner city areas. The third section introduces urban struggles in São Paulo's central areas, and the fourth analyses three different ways in which occupation practices promote more inclusive forms of political membership: *encountering diversity*, *practicing solidarity*, and *fostering recognition*. The conclusion highlights insurgent regeneration as a means through which the notion and practice of citizenship can be re-scaled and re-territorialized in the context of inner city transformations.

Relational definitions of citizenship

Traditionally, modern citizenship has been defined within the realm of the nation-state. In many areas of the world, what it means to be a member of society has come to be understood as 'what it means to be a right-bearing citizen of a territorial nation-state' (Holston and Appadurai 1999: 2). This definition is grounded in the understanding of citizenship as a legal status regulated by the nation-state system, and marked by specific sets of civil, political, and social rights and obligations. Such conceptualisation situates the nation as the singular scale at which membership is constructed, and identifies one's national citizenship as the dominant frame of identity that subordinates all other identities including religion, gender, age, ethnicity, and so on. In this framework, citizenship is an achievement that can be requested, obtained, and eventually economically transacted through an engagement with the nation-state (Mezzadra and Neilson 2011), and the citizen is first and foremost a bearer of rights and obligations, operating in relation to a pre-set norm of good citizenship.

Over the past three decades, such normative definition of citizenship has been increasingly contested. As Isin and Turner highlight, the citizenship debate per se is not novel, but the conditions that underpin the production of citizenship are presently undergoing deep transformations, largely due to "processes of post-modernization and globalization" (Isin and Turner 2002). On-going transformations, they argue, involve the rights and obligations of citizens, as well as what it means to be a citizen, and which individuals and groups are enabled to hold rights and obligations in the first place. In other words, "the three fundamental axes, *extent* (rules and norms of inclusion and exclusion), *content* (rights and responsibilities) and *depth* (thickness or thinness) of citizenship are being redefined and reconfigured" (Isin and Turner 2007: 2). The work of Isin and Turner has important implications for our discussion on the construction of citizenship, because it highlights firstly, that under conditions of global political restructuring, the notion and practice of citizenship is unstable; and secondly, that citizenship is fundamentally *relational*, as both the definition and the experience of political membership are negotiated through social interactions. Status, inclusion and exclusion, duties and responsibilities, and rules that shape and define political membership emerge through

tensions and conflicts, alliances and negotiations that take place simultaneously at the global, national, and local level**.**

Differential citizenship

Grounded in this relational definition of citizenship is the terming of *differential citizenship*. The notion is based on the observation of lived citizenship, and draws attention to the existing disjuncture between membership in society as sanctioned and documented by the nation-state, and citizenship-as-practice, or the actually existing reality of access to rights and opportunities. Holston and Appadurai point to this disjuncture when they highlight that "although in theory full access to rights depends on membership, in practice that which constitutes citizenship substantively is often independent of its formal status" (1999: 4). In their seminal introduction to the volume *Cities and Citizenship*, they label these different conditions as *formal* and *substantive* citizenship – the first referring to legal membership status, the second to the rights that people actually possess and exercise.

Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Nielson (2011) operate a similar distinction through their terming of 'differential inclusion', which emerges in the context of a discussion on the role of borders in the definition of citizenship and justice. On the one hand, differential inclusion highlights that inclusion in political membership takes place in a selective manner, and that there are multiple mechanism of selection that mediate one's capacity to access membership. On the other, Mezzadra and Nielson's concept of differential inclusion acknowledges that among those who are included within formal notions of state-hood, there are many who are not able or allowed to belong, and therefore the experience of a citizen's rights and obligations – or lived citizenship – is highly heterogeneous amongst formal members.

Drawing from both perspectives, the notion of *differential citizenship* used here alludes at the same time to the multiple lines of separation that fragment the experience of membership, as well as to the increasing dissolution of formal citizenship as the principal frame that coordinates identity and belonging.

Insurgent citizenship

The framing of differential citizenship allows for an explicit engagement with those practices that aim to challenge existing disjunctions by operating both within the spaces of formal citizenship, and from outside the existing normative and institutional definitions of belonging to the national society. Such practices have been labelled as "insurgent citizenship" by Holston (1998, 2008). Insurgent citizenship links to Isin's idea that an examination of contemporary citizenship must necessarily tackle the moments of political becoming "where the practices of citizenship are actively taken up, reshaped and overturned through the actions and voices of Others, as they struggle to redefine the dominant regime of belonging and collective judgment" (Latta 2007: 325). Along similar lines, Holston terms insurgent citizenship as 'a transformative impulse' and a form of active engagement with society, that derives from the experience of those who are excluded from substantive membership, pushing back against the experience of domination, exploitation, marginalisation, and oppression. In Holston, insurgent citizenship refers to the transgressive and unruly practices of spatial production of the deprived, dominated, and oppressed in the city, and to their capacity to produce new political communities that transform and expand the notion of citizenship. By concretely making the city, these practices claim access to housing, property, sanitation, health services, education, and so on "on the basis of citizenship": "in this assertion, they expand the scope and understanding of entitlement. Is adequate housing a right? Is employment?" (Holston 1999). The emphasis is on the definition of political subjects through struggle, and on a citizenship practice that destabilizes entrenched modes of discrimination by concretely reshaping the spaces of exclusion.

Insurgent regeneration: citizenship-as-practice in inner city areas

Entrenched within contemporary readings of insurgency and urban citizenship, is the establishment of a link between political membership and dwellers' practices of inhabitation, appropriation and participation in urban space and decision-making. Seen through this lens, insurgent citizenship allows for highlighting the city and its social production as a site for forging new solidarities that challenge experiences of unequal membership to the nation-state. Contributing to this discussion, our entry into analysing the links between citizenship and the

urban is through the notion of *insurgent regeneration*, and through a focus on the insurgent practices of organised dwellers reshaping inner city areas vis-à-vis the growing socio-spatial inequalities that mark contemporary urban landscapes.

In the modern understanding of citizenship, membership in political communities at other scales – urban, regional, or global – are subordinated to membership in the national community. Today, the pressures brought by globalization on the territory question this definition of citizenship associated to the sovereignty of nation states. Linking to this discussion, Purcell (2003) identified three key transformations in the contemporary spatiality of citizenship. Firstly, citizenship is being *rescaled*, as the creation of political communities at other scales challenges the dominant national scale of community. Secondly, citizenship is being *re-territorialized*, as the link between the nation-state's territorial sovereignty and political membership is increasingly contested. Thirdly, citizenship is being *reoriented* as other communities and identities (religion, gender, ethnicity, sexuality etc.) question the community defined by the nation (Purcell 2003: 571-576).

Debates on the rescaling and re-territorialisation of citizenship imply that citizenship is being constructed and experienced in a multiplicity of sites both below and above the nation-state, and point to the growing significance of cities as salient spaces for citizenship. At the same time, they suggest that urban dwellers are producing new notions and forms of membership and identity (some of them restrictive, some expansive) through their practices of inhabitation and appropriation of urban space. Against this background, we turn to *insurgent regeneration* as a way of exploring the content and implications of the rescaling and re-territorialisation of citizenship as it takes place in dwellers' struggles for the transformation of inner city areas, in urban regions characterised by stark inequalities in the distribution of resources and opportunities. In so doing, we join a wider field of studies exploring the actions undertaken by ordinary women and men seeking to reuse and rehabilitate declining inner city neighbourhoods, and the ways in which their practices engage in dialogue with exclusionary urban regeneration agendas. The analysis focuses on the ways in which such dialogue might contribute to advancing new and more inclusive forms of membership and solidarity.

The terming of *insurgent regeneration* expands the notion of urban regeneration by looking at the interface between planned regeneration interventions, and insurgent, self-organised practices of urban transformation (Friedmann 2002; Holston 1998, 2008; Miraftab 2005, 2009; Sandercock 1998a, 1998b). Over the past twenty years, scholarly critiques of the discourse and practice of regeneration have emphasised the linkages between urban regeneration processes and the exclusionary effects on the communities who should benefit from them (Soja 2010; Feinstein 2011; Harvey 2012). Indeed, as Porter and Shaw (2009) summarise: "the extensive literature in this field takes urban regeneration, along with renewal, revitalisation, rejuvenation and of course renaissance, as depoliticised euphemisms for gentrification" (Porter and Shaw 2009: 5). The two authors provide a detailed account of this literature, simultaneously outlining the limits imposed by such oppositional understanding of urban regeneration. The drawback of current critical approaches to the subject, they argue, is that they do not acknowledge *other ways* of doing regeneration. And as Larner (2000) reminds us, talking about neoliberalism in New Zealand, such oppositional readings, implying something of a "programmatic coherence," are both "intellectually dissatisfactory and politically disempowering" (2000: 21). For arguably, it is in the midst of competing policies and practices of urban transformation that spaces emerge for productive dissent.

Our interest is examining these practices lies in the momentous transgressions or insurgencies of destitute urban subjects, seeking to assert their voice vis-à-vis the dominant regime of citizenship. The intersection between these moments and the remaking of inner city areas is what we define as practices of insurgent regeneration. Through this notion, the aim is to emphasize the ways in which inner city communities advance new forms of urban rehabilitation and adaptation that aim to both challenge and transform the differential political community defined by the nation-state.

Citizenship-as-practice in the regeneration of São Paulo city centre

In a discussion on as salient spaces for citizenship, the Brazilian case is particularly significant given the disjuncture between progressive urban policies that assert the right to the city[1] and the social function of property[2], and the reality of unequal urban development that produces social exclusion (Fernandes 2011; Maricato 2011). Inner city São Paulo in particular is one of the sites where such processes are most apparent. The informal occupation of vacant buildings in the city centre by housing social movements is a way of contesting exclusion and dispossession – destabilising "entrenched modes of discrimination and domination through practices that reshape urban landscapes" (Latta 2014).

Current housing policies and practices in Brazil are failing the majority of the population. Despite progressive legislative frameworks introduced since the 1990s under successive left-wing governments, housing for low-income groups is still in short supply and, critically, continues to be characterized by highly skewed social and spatial distribution (Cardoso 2013; Ferreira 2012). The peripheralisation of the poor associated with many Brazilian cities, remains a well-entrenched phenomenon, exacerbated by processes of inner-city regeneration. São Paulo is no exception. In a context marked by the lack of affordable housing opportunities[3], over the past two decades the number of low-income populations located in peripheral informal settlements and dormitory municipalities has increased disproportionately, accentuating socio-spatial inequalities across the urban region (Kohara 2013; Kowarick and Marques 2011). Meanwhile, successive attempts to regenerate the declining inner-city districts through a variety of public and privately led initiatives have reinforced this pattern. Such attempts to 'reclaim' the city centre through regeneration seemingly bring São Paulo's experience in line with prevailing international patterns where, glibly speaking, urban regeneration equates with gentrification and socio-spatial segregation (Smith 1996).

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[1] The Right to the City was formalised by the Brazilian City Statute in 2001.

[2] The Social Function of Property refers to the prioritization of use value over exchange value, and of collective interest over individual ownership rights.

[3] The total housing deficit is currently estimated by the municipality of São Paulo at 227.000 units (Secretaria Municipal de Habitação, 2011).

These dynamics reinforce the existing disjuncture between the regeneration possibilities opened up by policy and planning frameworks, and the actually existing practice of urban regeneration. Whereas the first defines urban dwellers' right to the city and the social function of property, and prioritises inclusiveness and the use value of urban space, the latter tends to privilege the exchange value of land and buildings, and privileges individual ownership rights over collective interest and the rights of those who are most in need. This disconnection confirms the regime of differential citizenship described earlier, whereby membership takes place in a selective manner, and multiple mechanisms of selection mediate citizens' capacity to access and exercise the rights sanctioned by the rule of law. As a consequence, access to entitlements promoted in inner city areas by urban regeneration programmes are largely market-driven, mostly dictated by economic transactions and linked to particular lifestyles, rather than being needs-driven focusing on addressing the city's social and spatial inequalities.

Within this context, since the mid 1990s the city centre of São Paulo has also been the scene of informal practices of appropriation and occupation of vacant buildings led by local housing movements. These occupations are understood by their proponents as a means to simultaneously draw attention to, and question, the logic of commodification of the city, and to affirm the right of the urban poor to remain in well-located urban areas (José 2010; Earle 2012; Tatagiba, Paterniani and Trindade 2012; De Carli et al. 2015). Some of these occupations have led to the rehabilitation of vacant buildings, resulting in a variety of *regeneration practices* ranging from state-led social rented to collective self-build and -managed housing provision (Miagusko 2008; Helou 2012; Moreira 2012). These informal practices of housing production in the city centre, coupled with Brazil's progressive urban policies asserting the right to the city and the social function of property, seem to offer the possibility of reimagining the meaning of urban regeneration in São Paulo and elsewhere.

Two aspects of this process are key to our discussion. Firstly, as outlined above, there is an apparent disjuncture between the regeneration possibilities opened up by the Brazilian City Statute and the official recognition of the social value of space, and a largely exclusionary practice of urban regeneration taking place in the city. Such disjuncture can be read as a form of policy failure and requires explanation in its own right, over and beyond the rationale of

neoliberal governance (Parnell and Robinson 2012; Lipietz 2008). Secondly, the informal practices of occupation and the novel forms of political community emerging through those play an important role in challenging this disjuncture. The argument that we advance is that some of these alternative practices may point not only to other ways of doing regeneration, but also to new civic arrangements – some of which bring about expansive redefinitions of membership to the political community.

Building on such reflection, in the next sections of this article we attend to leverage on the notion of insurgent regeneration to explore in greater detail on-going processes of urban change, contestation, and governance in São Paulo. The interaction between the practices of social movements occupying unused buildings in inner city São Paulo, and the conditions and responses enacted by the State, has produced processes of belonging that expand the experience and definition of urban citizenship. In the next sections of this analysis, we examine one occupation in the city centre of São Paulo. Through this site of inquiry, we probe three different ways through which the occupation facilitates the emergence of more expansive and inclusive ideas of citizenship: *encountering diversity*, *practicing solidarity*, and *fostering recognition*. We explore each of these dimensions through the story of one of the building's residents.

Ocupação Marconi

In August 2014, we conducted a four-week action-learning initiative in partnership with the Universidade Federal do ABC, focusing on the contestations taking place in the city centre of São Paulo. The main focus of our research was on a building called Edificio São Manoel in Rua Marconi, known today as Ocupação Marconi (Marconi Occupation/ Squat).

Designed as an office building in the 1930s, and situated in an area characterised by the high density of infrastructure, services and amenities, Edificio São Manoel had been emptying out since the 1980s and in 2012, the only spaces in use were the shops and bar at the ground floor. Since September 2012, the building has been squatted by a housing movement called Movimento de Moradia para Todos (MMPT). At present there are about 130 households, totalling approximately 450 inhabitants, occupying the building (Coletivo Chão 2014).

Edificio São Manoel is a thirteen-story structure (Figure 1). Each floor is divided into units of 25-30 square meters and almost all services – including toilet facilities – are shared. Additionally to the residential spaces, Ocupação Marconi has dedicated common spaces that bring together the residents in different ways. Key among these is Salão Marighella (Marighella Hall), a large meeting room used by the MMPT leadership to hold weekly residents meetings' and internal events, as well as for events open to others. This particular building is part of a larger and complex network of social movements that fit under the housing branch of the national Central de Movimentos Populares (CMP) – each of them linked to a range of civil society and technical support organisations. Within the building, Salão Marighella is the space hosting any interactions with this extensive network. No less important than Salão Marighella are the common kitchen and the nursery. There are also a number of less organised spaces for encounter, including a laundry room, the building's courtyard, and the stairway. At each floor, the shared toilets and the corridors are an obvious space of meeting and of manifestation of the building's collective management (Figure 1).

Encountering diversity

Emmanuel's personal story mirrors many of the dynamics taking place in inner city São Paulo. Emmanuel, in his early thirties, is a Haitian migrant who lives in the occupation with his partner and child. He left Haiti following the devastating earthquake that hit the island in 2010, and he arrived in Brazil after a perilous journey across Central and South America in search of better life opportunities. He is one of the thousands undocumented Haitians who every year approach Brazil through the so-called 'jungle route' across Central America, Venezuela, and Peru, and entering the country in Acre, in the Amazon region, to finally remain on the basis of a humanitarian visa. During our interview, Emmanuel provided many details about his detour across the continent and the country. At the time of our interview, he had lived in the building for over a year.

Emmanuel, like many others, did not become involved with the occupation on the grounds of his political views, but rather on the basis of his present needs and aspirations for the future. Since 2013, living in the occupation has allowed him to have a place to stay in the city; to create new

livelihoods opportunities thanks to the proximity to the city's central districts; and to raise his daughter in a safe environment. Emmanuel's sentiments when talking about the occupation echoed what many dwellers also expressed during our conversations: that the building is a landing place – an *entrance* or *arrival* to the city – as well as a platform creating the social and material conditions for a better future (Box 1). Emmanuel expressed the hope to eventually move out of the building and find a place for himself and his family, and at the same time he commented on the support and sense of stability that the occupation generates. According to Emmanuel: "*When one needs anything, people help. A foreigner, when he arrives without work ... if you know how to behave, the occupation is good. If you are quiet, no one will be able to help. But if you say: "I need a job, if you know people who are looking for workers, let me know," you will find people here who will say: 'There is a vacancy, if you want to go, I'll give you the address.' And if you have no job, no money, you end up one or two months without paying* [the monthly allowance to MMPT]*, but when you work, you pay. It's like, I tell you, the occupation is like a support.*"

Box 1. Residents expressing the reasons for arriving at Ocupação Marconi (transcribed interviews, translation from Portuguese by the Authors).

Luiza: *I was born in São Paulo in December 1952. Before here, I lived with my parents because my husband set fire to my house, which was in the north of the city. I met and became involved with the social movement in March 2014. I looked for the movement because of these family issues. I had nowhere to go, I had little money, so I found the movement and I liked it. (...) I joined the movement not just to fight for my house, but also to fight for housing for others. Living here is very cool because the city centre is where we find most opportunities to work. (...) I learned a lot here, we exchange information, and we stop saying 'me', we forget the self-centeredness, and we start to speak as a collective: 'us'. (...) After getting my apartment, I intend to continue in the movement.*

Maria: *Here in the city centre is where I want to live. I work, I have my health services, my business, everything here in the city centre. I have lived here for over 40 years. I arrived in São Paulo in 1968. I was 22 years old. (...) I was offered a place to stay* [in a social housing unit] *in the City of Tiradentes* [30 kilometres from the city centre]. *Would you go there? I wouldn't. I didn't go because I get up 5am, I'm used to working in markets, selling coffee. At five in the morning there* [City of Tiradentes] *vagabonds can get me and cut my throat. I didn't go there. I preferred to pay rent. But my salary was going all on rent. What good is there to pay a lot of money for other people's things? I have been here in the occupation for two months now. Thanks to God, I will now be able to save a little. I'm sure I'll get out from here to go to a place that is mine. I will not move anymore to an occupation or to pay for rent of R$ 500, R$ 800* [US$ 154, US$ 246].

Angela: *My mother lives here, it has been one year already. Chatting with her, I decided to come to live here as well. I was not able to continue paying rent. I ended up having to come, and it was a very opportune moment, my mother was helping with food, because it has been difficult for me in recent months. I started working here in the nursery of the occupation, I began to put things in order and little by little we are moving forward. The occupation was a very good breather. If I had stayed in the other place, the grandparents of my husband might have been able to take* [my three children] *from me. If I had continued having to pay rent, I could have ended up getting evicted, and they could have claimed that I had no place to live and they would have taken the boys from me. That was their will ... when I went to get them, the grandparents didn't want to give them to me. They don't even know I live here. When I went to take them from there, I was worried that they knew I was going to live in occupation, but now I am not any more.*

Ocupação Marconi and similarly, other occupations in the city centre, are extremely heterogeneous realities where diverse stories and experiences of exclusion and marginalisation coexist and interweave. Over the past twenty years, accommodation in the city centre of São

Paulo has been sought precisely by the most vulnerable groups of society, often composed by subjects with uncertain status, insecure forms of livelihood and under a series of hardships including drug addiction and disabilities, compromising their ability to benefit from the existing social housing programmes (Kohara 2013). In this context, buildings like Ocupação Marconi represent a practical, often temporary answer to a plurality of living circumstances, needs and aspirations, and a device for producing and pursuing a multiplicity of alternative futures.

Drawing from such multiplicity, the communal nature of life in the building embodies what Doreen Massey defined as a "coexisting heterogeneity" (2005: 12). It provides a space for contingent encounters, acting both as an open ground where residents' personal life-spheres intersect and influence one another, and as a strict cohabitation framework marked by everyday difficulties – generated by the overall state of precarity, the scarcity of resources, the conflictive proximity to neighbours, and the rigid norms governing communal life. Long- and short-term residents portray Ocupação Marconi as both a place of forced coexistence and a shared home to inhabit, and this mix of positive and negative associations generates a form of belonging and eventually, the emergence of a sense of commonality. As Emmanuel explains, *"Everyone is in the occupation is looking for a future. Even if I do not know very well all the rules, I'm here too, looking for a future with them, and when we have to go out to the streets* [making reference to demonstrations or carrying out other occupations]*, I go along with them, to participate in all activities."*

In summary on the one hand the occupation is an instrument and a personal resource. Shared life in the building is the basic infrastructure that allows for transforming one's life conditions – where the lower costs of living, the vicinity of public transport and facilities, and the availability of informal jobs, make up the material and immaterial conditions for pursuing transformations in one's self and one's experience of the city. On the other hand it is through the encounter of these diverse selves and their respective drives for change, that new political subjectivities are formed. By participating in the occupation, personal life stories gain presence and meaning vis-à-vis each other, allowing residents to acknowledge similarities and interdependencies. This simultaneity of vulnerabilities and aspirations, now put in relation to one another, becomes

visible both to the building's residents and to other social actors in the city, and eventually facilitates the emergence of new collective meanings and moments of 'political becoming'.

Practicing solidarity

In the linking of individual life trajectories, the practice of political belonging appears most evidently in the day-to-day maintenance of the material and immaterial infrastructure of the building. Life in Ocupação Marconi is structured with set rules, norms, procedures, and a strict bureaucracy often resembling that of many cohousing communities. As explained during a transect-walk across the building by Francisco, one of the coordinators of the occupation, Ocupação Marconi is entirely managed by its residents, who meet regularly and do most of the work required to maintain the building. Collective tasks focus on door-keeping and security; the routine maintenance of common areas, including waste removal and the cleaning of shared spaces such as hallways, corridors, stairs, and toilet facilities; the shared management of the communal kitchen and the building's nursery; and routine repairs to all hydraulic and electrical installations. In the first year of the occupation, the building's leadership also organised a series of seminars on citizenship education, aimed at developing residents' capacity to navigate their rights and responsibilities, particularly in relation to questions of human rights, housing, and the legal frameworks governing urban development and management in Brazil.

Francisco emphasised that the management of communal spaces and activities is based on principles of general interest and collective self-governance. Residents are organised through a floor-based structure, where each floor is administered as a semi-independent unit and coordinated by a floor representative, like himself. This allows for a detailed management of the communal toilets and of other self-started services such as garbage collection and cleaning. Francisco illustrated how at each floor, dedicated signboards – often translated in several languages – mediate the communication among residents and with the floor representative (Figures 2 to 7).

This floor-based system is networked through weekly assemblies including all residents, and is coordinated by a building representative. This representative is in turn the interface between the building and the leadership of MMPT. The relations between the building and other housing

movements in São Paulo are also governed and mediated through a similar structure of nested forms of representation.

It is important to highlight that notwithstanding the open and communal nature of decision-making in Ocupação Marconi, its representative system faces threats and limitations. The leadership structure is centralised and hierarchical, and based on a number of vertical control mechanisms that aim to ensure safety and security in the building by compelling observance of the rules of cohabitation, and by centrally coordinating action against external threats such as evictions, invasions, and criminal infiltrations. During the interviews, some of the residents underlined the challenges of living within this strict framework of a shared set of norms that govern many aspects of personal everyday life. Francisco, while recognising those challenges, also argued that these norms are "*necessary for the common good.*" For instance, they guarantee safety by prohibiting the consumption of alcohol and drugs in the building; or they distribute costs and burdens, by establishing the need for everyone to financially contribute to the maintenance of the communal infrastructure. As he explained in his own words: "*Here, as anywhere, there are rules. Our own statute describes them. Once there are rules, we need to accept them for the common good of all. Imagine if in an occupation like this, we allowed inside people who are high or drunk, or people that disrespect their families: this place would turn into chaos … Here we try to get people to understand that we depend on each other. Here it is not possible for people to only focus on their self-interest, because it will not work. So there is no point for people to be isolated and try to solve their problems by themselves, we need to solve them together.*" In Box 2, Angela articulates a similar point.

Box 2: Angela discusses the needs and implications of collective norms (transcribed interview, translation from Portuguese by the Authors).

Angela: *I moved here in May* [2014]. *Before that, I lived on rental and this was my first contact with social movements. I always thought I knew how to live in a community and together with others. I came here and I realised that I didn't. The notion that we have to live together when*

> *one is outside is very different, because at any given time you can go to your home and shut the door. Not here. If you go to your home and shut the door and people knock at 10, 11 in the evening, you have to open. You have to collaborate in some way, which is not only to live here and pay your share. Here, if people do not do their part to help a little bit, it does not work. For example, there was a lot of garbage left from the market* [referring to a food donation from the market to the communitarian kitchen]. *Everyone has to come downstairs to help and clean it up. If they do not come, who else will do it? Everyone has responsibilities and there are rules that must be followed strictly. And then we see what is the reality of living in a community. You look on television and see that it's all very cute, that's all too easy ... it is not. It is not bad, but also not easy. For those who were used to be independent, like me, adapting can be complicated. For example, in relation to frictions, you have to know that people have different personalities, and I learned to be more patient and to handle different types of people.*

Across the building, practices of belonging and cooperation are continuously re-invented through the definition of these norms and the negotiation of daily interactions – be it through the sharing of cooking facilities or childcare responsibilities, or the participation to housing rights demonstrations, or the engagement with the judicial system to avoid eviction. Despite the obvious difficulties of nurturing principles of horizontality and self-governance under the circumstances of extreme vulnerability that mark the occupation, throughout our interviews residents mostly acknowledged the significance of these norms and interactions for the construction of a collective sphere within the building (Box 2). It is through these activities and the participation to the building's assembly that residents, establishing links beyond their personal preoccupations, eventually generate novel forms of political membership and solidarity, and shape practices of communal living that directly and indirectly challenge the structures of power and differential citizenship that promote exclusion in São Paulo.

Fostering recognition

One of the initiators of the occupation and former building coordinator, Raquel, emphasized two key roles that Ocupação Marconi plays in challenging and reshaping the relationship between housing movements and external actors. In her view, firstly, occupations like Marconi challenge the on-going stigmatization and criminalisation of social movements in the city of São Paulo. The criminalisation of social protest, and of building and land occupations specifically, is perceived by social movements as one of their main priorities at a citywide level, as it hinders their capacity to mobilise participation and solidarity across the city, and it limits their room for manoeuvre in negotiations with both State actors and the private sector. Secondly, occupations demonstrate the existing disjuncture between, on the one hand, existing progressive policies and planning frameworks that define the right to the city and the social function of property, and on the other, São Paulo's low-income housing deficit and the presence of vacant buildings in the city. By squatting underused buildings, MMPT highlights this disjuncture and illustrates the possibility to create affordable housing for vulnerable groups in the city's most central areas. Figure 8 shows the occupations taking place in the inner city area of São Paulo since 1997, and demonstrates the significant scale of this practice (Figure 8).

Raquel described in details the numerous initiatives started by the building's leadership to change the public perception of the occupation. One such example focused on the efforts undertaken by residents to contrast an eviction lawsuit started by the building's owner a few months after the building had been occupied. On this occasion, residents took pictures of all households living in the building, each in their home. Photographs were included as supporting documents in the submission to the court, in order to make judges aware of the profile of residents, and to highlight the vulnerability of occupant households and the role of the occupation in providing shelter to many elderly, single mothers, children. On a later occasion, the building's leadership organised a collective Sunday breakfast in the street in front of the building, with the objective to introduce residents to their neighbours and to passers by. The event was filmed by a supporting collective of designers and filmmakers, MUDA_coletivo, and the output of this collaboration was made publicly available on a video-sharing website later in

2013[4]. Similarly, in 2014 the occupation was included into the international couch-surfing network[5], under the slogan: "*We offer more than a sofa: a room and a life experience!*" These narratives were carefully curated by the leadership and captured by a number of newspapers and websites, allowing residents to reframe their presence in the city as a driver of sustainability and social innovation (Zanchetta 2013).

Meanwhile, Raquel emphasized that instead of focusing on antagonistic relations to the state, Ocupação Marconi and MMPT, together with other housing movements involved in the network of social movements Central de Movimentos Populares, strategically populate and re-interpret the formal frameworks defining urban rights in Brazil – thus challenging exclusionary patterns of urban development. When we interviewed Raquel and other key protagonists of MMPT, the focus of their attention was on operationalizing the 'social function of property' as defined by the 2011 City Statute, and on the production of alternative modes of housing in inner São Paulo through the action of social movements. Box 3 includes an excerpt from an interview with Raquel during a housing demonstration that took place in the city centre of São Paulo in August 2014.

Box 3: Raquel discusses the strategic function of housing social movements in relation to agenda setting and influence on policy and planning.

This demonstration today was organised by social movements that are active in the inner city area of São Paulo (...) Today we intend to walk to the door of the Courthouse, and our idea is to ask for a hearing to present the agenda of social movements. What we see are judges who think we are criminals. But no, we want to remind them that we are low-income working

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[4] The video is available online at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_FwQDtJYDd0 (accessed 1 June 2016)

[5] A video describing the initiative is available online at: http://www.mmpt.com.br/couch-surfing-na-ocupa-marconi/ (accessed 1 June 2016)

families, and we are fighting for a constitutional right.

We intend to go to the doors of the Town Hall as well, because we want the buildings pledged by the government to be finally expropriated and used for social interest. Our concern now is that our achievements in the city centre might end up in the hands of the middle classes that can afford them, and this is what the government has told us. But no, we want housing in the city centre to be intended for social interest.

When people go to the street, we show these institutions that our issues are pressing. A family today has to choose: either pay rent, or eat. We will show the government and the judiciary powers that our families need homes now, temporarily in an occupation or as permanent housing. The important issue is that families should live with dignity. (…) The people have to mobilize to make the government govern for all, and not only for a minority.

Through a realistic, detailed understanding of the wider legal and policy environment within which they operate, the claims of housing movements aim to reveal vacant buildings as unlawful practices and transgressions of the City Statute (Earle 2012), while also producing models of housing that better respond to the existing formal definition of citizens' rights and responsibilities. Over the past few years, this process has led to a series of openings from public authorities, which in some cases have recognised occupations and their residents as key agents in the debate around affordable housing in São Paulo. To provide an example of this involvement, until the recent political crisis representatives from housing movements have been key actors in the Conselho da Cidade – a working group involving civil society and state actors on issues of urban development. Their engagement has resulted in the introduction of important norms in the strategic plan of the city, including the designation of five occupied building as areas for *habitação de interesse social* or housing for social interest. Such advances represent significant successes for the recognition of the need for social housing in well-located sites, however not necessarily recognising the model of housing production underpinning the movements' practices.

Learnings

This text is based on the assumption that a redefinition of the meanings and geographies of citizenship is on-going (Isin and Turner 2002; 2007), and that cities are emerging are key sites for this redefinition (Holston and Appadurai 1999; Holston 1998, 2008; Purcell 2003). At the same time, the article assumes that a critical understanding of the new forms of citizenship being constructed in cities can only emerge from an analysis that works from the *edges* of membership in the modern political community (Sassen 2014). In order to investigate these edges, we define the concept of differential citizenship, and turn to the notion of insurgency to highlight the transformative capacity of dwellers' informal practices vis-à-vis specific processes of exclusion and marginalization that take place in inner city areas. In so doing, with many others we argue that contemporary theories of citizenship must consider the multiple roles played by the production of urban space in the constitution of new political communities, as well as in shaping the political subjects who are involved in these communities (Merrifield 2013; Miraftab 2005; Purcell 2003).

The case of Ocupação Marconi illustrates how the social production of the building is part of a process of producing new forms and practices of political belonging in São Paulo. Firstly, through the experience of the occupation, personal life trajectories acquire collective meaning, and thus become political. Secondly, the negotiation of daily relations contributes to deepening bonds of solidarity and mutual-help, producing shared sense of responsibility. Thirdly, the occupation has been articulated as a catalyst, changing public perceptions and relations with the state. Altogether, these practices are enabling a personal and collective *experience of membership* in society, enhancing access of services and opportunities. Meanwhile, they are also making evidence of the *differentiated distribution of rights* in the city. Finally, they demonstrate the *possibility of new ways* of creating societal belonging in São Paulo.

Thus, drawing on the case of Ocupação Marconi case, we interpret these citizenship practices as a process of insurgent regeneration. We argue that regeneration is insurgent when collective self-managed strategies enable the encounter of social diversity and the practice of solidarity while fostering recognition from the state. As a consequence, the notion contributes to on-going debates about urban regeneration by opening up avenues to redefine its meaning through the

social-spatial practices of collective occupations of vacant buildings in inner city areas. The concept hopes to instigate new, more diverse, responsive, and distributive strategies for the spatial transformation of inner city areas. For example, it leads us to recognise that regeneration is not yet to come, but an on-going struggle led by collectives in the re-making of the city. Simultaneously, this discussion reveals that this conflictive process of city making is intertwined with negotiations over citizenship rights. Therefore *insurgent regeneration* is proposed as a means through which the notion and practice of citizenship can be re-scaled and re-territorialized in the context of inner city transformations. By doing so, this work calls for the engagement with every-day spatial practices not as a strategy for the integration within predefined norms and frameworks of citizenship, but as a mechanism of contesting while reconfiguring the notion of belonging.

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Captions

Figure 1 – Edificio São Manoel / Ocupação Marconi. Photo: Authors.

Figure 2 – "*Attention: budget for a full toilet flush. Total cost of R$ 40.85* [US$ 12.60]*, cost for each R$ 4.55* [US$ 1.40]." The poster also includes the receipt, and a list of the residents of the floor, outlining those that have already paid. Photo: Authors.

Figure 3 – "*Dear residents, from 22/07 to 10/08 in the building we are collecting R$ 10.00* [US$ 3.08] *from each unit, which should be given to Ines or Marcio to: 1) buy wires to repair the electrical part of the shower; 2) buy a meter for the shower; 3) buy a new flush. For any query, speak to the floor representative Marcio 811.*" The poster outlines the units that have already paid (circled in blue). Photo: Authors.

Figure 4 – "*What should be cleaned? All the floor*s*, toilet, kitchen, stairs. Take away the rubbish.*" Photo: Authors.

Figure 5 – "*Attention: days for washing clothes. Even days (Monday, Wednesday and Friday): rooms 902, 904, 906, 908, 910, 912, and 914. Odd days (Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday): 901, 903, 905, 907, 909, 911, 913, 915.*" Following shortage of water in Sao Pãulo, the occupation had to rationalise the use of water to make sure that all residents would continue having access to water. Photo: Authors.

Figure 6 – August 2014, cleaning rota for the 9th floor, outlining the day in which each unit should be cleaning the common areas. It also says: "*Non-compliance will lead to a fine of R$ 15.00* [US$ 4.62]". Photo: Authors.

Figure 7 – "*Artisan bread-making course. Subscriptions are open. Ask at the office*." Ad for a vocational course organised by the social movement targeting residents of the occupation. Photo: Authors.

Figure 8 – Occupations in São Paulo's city centre. Image: Authors with Brunna Bianco Dourado.