Resistance and alternative against the new discourse of the right to the city: the case of the *Movimento dos Sem Teto da Bahia* (Salvador da Bahia, Brazil)

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Abstract

The right to the city, a concept previously associated with the struggle of social movements in the search of radical changes in the relations in the city, has recently been accepted and redefined by new actors, from governments or NGOs to UN agencies. It has entered a process of institutionalization in some international, national and local arenas. However, a new discourse around the concept, that has lost its original radicality, has become dominant in these spaces, concealing alternative and more transformative visions.

The paper aims to understand the contents as well as the processes of production and institutionalization of this new discourse. For this purpose, we inspire in critical discourse analysis to approach three key texts at international, national (Brazil) and local (Salvador da Bahia) level. Moreover, we will study the local case of the *Movimento dos Sem Teto da Bahia*, to analyse how this process poses significant constraints (but also new potential) for resistance and for the production of an alternative and more transformative discourse.

Résumé

Le droit à la ville, un concept antérieurement associé aux mouvements sociaux qui luttaient pour des changements radicaux des relations dans les villes, a été récemment accepté et redéfini par de nouveaux acteurs, tels que des gouvernements, des ONG ou des agences des Nations Unies. Le droit à la ville a commencé un processus d'institutionnalisation dans quelques espaces aux niveaux international, national et local. Cependant, le nouveau discours tenu, devenú dominant dans ces espaces, a perdu sa radicalité initiale, et oculte des visions alternatives et plus progressives.

L'article se concentre sur les contenus, les processus de production et d'institutionnalisation de ce nouveau discours. Pour cela, nous nous inspirons de l'annalyse critique du discours pour nous rapprocher de 3 textes clefs au niveau mondial, national (Brésil) et local (Salvador da Bahia). De plus, nous étudions le cas local du *Movimento dos Sem Teto de Bahia*, pour annalyser comment ce processus présente de limites importantes (même s'il présente aussi un nouveau potentiel) pour la résistance et la production d'un discours alternatif et plus progressif.

1. Introduction

In recent years we have witnessed how the «right to the city» has turned into a more and more fascinating slogan. A concept based on Lefebvre's work (1968, 1973, 1991) that put forward a «radical restructuring of social, political and economic relations, both in the city and beyond» (Purcell 2002, p.101) and that has inspired since the 60s the struggles of radical urban social movements, has recently been broadly accepted by new actors, as academics, UN and international aid agencies, governments or NGOs.

In has acquired authority and big resonance in some arenas in the international level (as in social forums, transnational networks of NGOs, and even in some UN agencies as UN-Habitat) and in some national and local spaces, particularly in Latin America (as governments in Brazil or Ecuador). At the same time, it has been slowly institutionalized, as it has been incorporated in and has inspired public agendas, legislation and policies.

An example of the process is the appearance, since the mid 1990s, of the «world charters» for the right to the city. Amongst the national spaces, the Brazilian process arises with the discussion and endorsement of the *Estatuto da Ciudade* (City Statute), which opens a way to institutionalisation in the local sphere by means of the *planes diretores de desenvolvimento urbano* (master plans).

Nevertheless, during this process, the original radical content of the concept has changed significantly. A certain new discourse about the right to the city, emergening from this new actors, became dominant in these arenas and spaces, while other alternative discourses about the concept have been silenced. Certain social movements have not participated, nor have their demands been included, in these processes of production of the new discourse; namely, the movements which have maintained a «lefebvrian conception» of the right to the city (Mayer 2009).

The present paper aims to understand the contents as well as the processes of production and institutionalization of the new discourse of the right to the city. This starting point allows us to deepen into the everyday struggle for the right to the city led by a social movement which stands close to the lefebvrian conception, the *Movimento dos Sem Teto da Bahia* (MSTB, Bahia Homeless Movement) in the city of Salvador da Bahia (Brazil). We intend to explain the way in which the dominant discourse and its institutionalisation pose significant constraints and, at the same time, a new potential for resistance and for the production of an alternative and more transformative discourse.

For this aim, we will discuss the broad discursive context and the processes and conditions of production, dissemination and use of key texts within the global (World Charter for the Right to the City, 2005), national (Brazil's City Statute, 2001) and local spaces (focusing on Salvador da Bahia and its Master Plan, 2008). Subsequently, we will provide an analysis of the contents of the texts. Then, we study MSTB's social struggle for the right to the city in Salvador, by providing an analysis of the movement's actions and representations in its resistance in a new context were new possibilities and limitations for transformation arise.

We will then have the elements to argue to which extent is the new discourse and its institutionalization able to trigger substantial changes in the way we understand and produce the city, as well as in the power relations in the urban context. And whether the new discourse narrows or preserves the possibility of a more radical and transformative alternative.

2. Critical discourse analysis and the «space of action» for a multiple level and multiple dimension analysis of discourse and social practice

For the aims of our work, we inspire on critical discourse analysis framework, particularly on Fairclough's (1992, 2001) conceptual and methodological approach. According to the author, «"social practice" is an articulation of diverse social elements dialectically related» in which discourse is also contained (Fairclough 2001, p.3). A basic element of his theory is that any instance of discourse is simultaneously a piece of *text* (written or spoken language), an instance of *discursive practice* (producing texts) and an instance of *social practice* (power and structural tensions) (Fairclough 1992).

As Darcy (1999, p.14) stands, an analysis from this approach must take into account «discourse practices at macro and micro levels (aspects of the production, distribution and consumption of texts and the conditions under which these occur), texts themselves and the social practice of which the discourse is part (its social and discoursive context and impact) ».

We must also refer to the shifting relations and changes produced in the social practices in the different scales of social organisation (global, regional, local),establishing «the diverse ways in which the discourse is received, appropriated and recontextualised in the different locales» (Fairclough 2001, p.8). By «recontextualize», Fairclough (2001) means how different social actors incorporate other practices in their own practice, and how they represent them differently, according to how they are positioned within the practice. According to Marston (2004, p.7), «the model illuminates social change form multiple levels of analysis, highlighting tensions between dominant and alternative discourses and highlighting power relations through an analysis of hegemony and resistance».

In order to get into the study of practices of an actor for this analysis of hegemony and resistance, we assume Safier's (2002) multidimensional approach of collective action. According to the author, actors perform within a «space of action» where they carry out and

represent initiatives oriented towards its exploration and consolidation. This space of action can be understood as the degree of freedom or «room for manoeuvre» of a particular actor to encourage certain changes. It encompasses four dimensions: the «technical/behavioural dimension», related to the technical abilities and behaviour of both the individual and the group; «institutional/interorganisational dimension», related to internal organisational methods and to the relationships with other actors; the «social mobilisation dimension», related to mobilisation forms of individuals and groups; and the «strategic response dimension», related to targets and strategic decision-making.

Fairclough's framework allows us to go into a multilevel analysis of the process of production, distribution and consumption of the dominant discourse about the right to the city. Linked with some concepts of Safier's multidimensional approach to collective action, we can also better illuminate MSTB's resistance and alternative discourse.

3. The context and the process of production and dissemination of key texts

3.1. The broad discursive context: The role of social movements in the changing paradigms

Social movements that were inspired by Lefebvre's original conception of the right to the city since the 1960s, were characterized by opposition and protest in reaction to the crisis of Fordism. They challenged capitalist relations and cultural norms of the institutions of collective consumption, and claimed for a more democratic society (Mayer 2009).

Since the 1980s, with the beginning of the neoliberal shift and the austerity politics, governments discovered the potential of social movements and community organizations to develop and legitimate their social agendas. Strategies of most movements and organizations shifted from protest to cooperation, participating in social programmes as service suppliers, from a new managerialistic approach. A big amount of them enter a professionalization and bureaucratizing process, as there is a blast in the number and importance of NGOs. However, some minority groups dissociate from these forms of cooperation and institutionalization (*id*.).

During the 1990s, neoliberal hegemony deepened and new discourses emerged, as «democratization», «governance» or «decentralization» (Stevenson and Watt 1999). These included some of the old demands of social movements, in the search for more influence in the definition of policies, so their strategy moved, trying to institutionalize their reivindications, taking part in new «participatory» spaces and process for policy-making. The prominence of NGOs and advocacy groups in this spaces process becomes more and more important. Some of them had embraced the new discourse of rights, and affirmed that they have «politized» their job, and have abandoned previous service-delivery approaches (Gready and Ensor 2004).

In the new century, globalization process advances, and neoliberal politics demonstrate to have failed. This fact sharpens social divisions and triggers new protests. However, demands

in the most visible and influential arenas were mainly led by NGOs and advocacy groups. They have gained big capacity, presence and influence in national and international, governmental and non-governmental forums. They often collaborated with the same institutions they criticise (such as the World Bank), they gave priority to negotiation and legal recognition of rights, and their demands were less radical than those of more transformative movements (Mayer 2009).

However, social mobilization led by more radical grass-roots organizations continued, although it was less visible and influential, even in some non-governmental spaces as the social forums, were NGOs have gained more and more presence and influence. They still put in the centre the questions of autonomy, the creation of rights (not just legal recognition) through social and political action, and the demand of a city organized on the basis of use values and a radical, participatory and decentralized democracy.

Within this process, a new discourse on the right to the city has gained strength and presence in different spheres but, in its new dominant version, it has substantially changed its original content: «it does not seem that Lefebvre's approach and radicality are always seriously taken into consideration and preserved» (Lopes de Souza 2010, p.315).

3.2. The «world charters» for the Right to the City

In 1995, the Brazilian *Fórum Nacional de Reforma Urbana*[1] (FNRU, National Forum of Urban Reform) presented the «Charter of Human Rights in the City», which became a major precursor of the City Statute and of the world charters. In 2001, within the framework of the first World Social Forum (WSF) and with the support of Habitat International Coalition (HIC), the process of elaboration of the World Charter for the Right to the City began. The discussion of proposals is ongoing within the frameworks of the WSF, different regional social forums and the World Urban Forum (WUF) (HIC 2010).

Since the beginning, the process has been led by big international networks, especially HIC, whose members are community-based organizations, but mainly NGOs and academic or professional institutions. The debate is essentially guided by groups of experts, whereas the proposals «come from some NGO experts in a top-down manner» (Unger 2009). NGOs, local authorities, international institutions and other public and private actors integrate progressively, reducing the influence of community- based organizations in the discussion.

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[1] The FNRU has its origins in the Movimiento Nacional pela Reforma Urbana (MNRU, National Movement for Urban Reform), created in Brazil the mid eighties during the process of elaboration of the new federal Constitution. It was born as an space of unification of reivindications around the urban question, with the aim of participate and influence in the new text. It coordinated the efforts of urban social and grass-roots movements, NGO, academics, technical advisors and another actors in the struggle for the right to the city. After the approval of the Costitution (1988), its named changed to Fórum Nacional de Reforma Urbana (FNRU, Nacional Forum of Urban Reform), but kept on agglutinating actors in order to influence new legislation and policy-making process.

The results of the debates on the elaboration of charters show «the institutionalized version of a top down agenda agreed on by some NGO networks» (Mayer 2009). However, according to Unger (2009), that puts the example of the WSF 2009, more radical discourses on the right to the city are still present in the discussion, even if they have become invisible due to the process of convergence towards a single discourse. Moreover, the main spaces of discussion and the leading actors of the process seem to have changed recently, with the new centrality of the UN agencies (mainly UN-Habitat and UNESCO) and forums (as the 2010 WUF) in the discussion of the charters.

The initiative slowly shifted its aim of creating a «political document» to intending «to build an instrument both universal and compact which may be adopted by the United Nations System, the regional human rights systems, and governments, as a legal instrument» (Ortiz 2006, p.3). That is, what originally could be understood as a document for inspiring and sharing struggles, and for creating and reinventing rights in a down-top manner through social and political action, became a document with a strictly legalistic approach, with the aspiration of becoming a new human rights instrument within the existing international and national systems -and its visions- of rights.

3.3. Brazil City Statute

Before the transition to democracy in the 1980s, «new community-based movements» appeared in Brazil. They fought for their own interests (as women, workers, homeless, unemployed, black people...) but also for social and political issues that concerned society as a whole (Fernandes *et al*. 2002). They undertook actions of pressure, criticism and frontal opposition to the military regime. Their internal organization was based on militant assotiationism, and they had a strong political-ideological character (Gohn 2004), under the principles of autonomy, horizontality and participatory democracy.

The new political situation that arose after the transition in the 1980s enabled the participation of these movements in the creation of a new institutional framework, considered capable of integrating their demands. In the case of the movements engaged in the «urban question», These demands were mainly around the production and appropiation of urban space, as well as the introduction of limitations to the right to private urban property as the only way to guarantee more just and democratic cities (Da Silva 2003). The *Movimento Nacional pela Reforma Urbana* (MNRU, National Movement for Urban Reform) emerged as an agglutinating platform of different actors in order to influence the constituent process.

The MNRU focused progressively its efforts on proposing legal initiatives (particularly new instruments for controlling urban land and housing market), neglecting social and political mobilization and popular organization (Maricato 2000). Subsequently, experts acquired more and more prominence whereas the movement lost part of its grass-root and political pressure profile. In any case, the strategy managed to introduce in the 1988 Constitution the amendment which enabled the elaboration process of the City Statute.

Box 1. Brazilian 2001 City Statute

The City Statute is «the legal framework governing urban development and management, which recognized the "right to the city" as a collective right» (Fernandes 2007, p.201) in Brazil. It affirms the central role of local governments in urban management (giving more power to them) and declares that representative democracy is to be reconciled with participatory political processes (Fernandes 1995). It is considered as an inspiriting example of how the right to the city ideas can be used to guide a new socially oriented urban-legal order.

Following Fernandes (2007), the Statute has four main dimensions. First, it provides conceptual elements for determine the principle of social function of urban property, trying to understand the city as a whole where individual interests of land-owners co-exist with other groups interests. Second, it provides new legal, urbanistic and financial instruments for a more economically efficient, social and politically fairer and environmentally sustainable cities. Third, it provides mechanisms for an effective participation (of «civil society» but also private sector) in urban planning and management. Fourth, it provides instruments to promote regularization of informal settlements.

According to Ribeiro (2003) and Bassul (2005), the Statue contains principles and instruments of distributive nature (like acquisitive prescription of property, special use of land for social housing, etc.) and of redistributive nature (instruments to interfere with speculative process or capture surplus value, new progressive taxes, etc.).

The first bill for the Statute was proposed in 1990 and was well received by the FNRU (new denomination for the MNRU), because it encompassed their main proposals (Bassul 2010). However, it was strongly rejected by the construction industry, which considered it a «socialist and confiscatory» proposal (TFP 2004, p.6) and blocked the process through different means.

The deadlock was only broken after long negotiations in a working group composed of the FNRU and the business sector. They presented in 1997 a new proposal which modified and limited the initial approach and which was accepted by the business sector: «the instruments might be profitable for urban estate activities, since they introduce innovations in the forms of collaboration between public authorities and private companies» (*Câmara dos Deputados* s/d). Despite the rejection of certain bodies within the FNRU, approval prevailed as the agreement was largely considered the best possible solution (Da Silva 2003). According to certain authors, the FNRU had to relinquish many of its proposals (Grazia 2003), as stronger limitations of the right to private urban property, or more clarity in the principles, objectives and basic concepts of the Statute. After a small number of modifications, the project was approved unanimously by the Congress on the 20th of February 2001.

It seems that the main reasons of this unanimity after a long and hard negotiation was that what at one point was regarded as a threat for the business sector, went on to be considered as an opportunity. They were aware of the fact that the previous model had not succeeded

and that the «deterioration of urban living conditions in Brazil posed an increasing risk for the market» (Bassul 2010, p.88). The new model could enable the legitimization, invigoration and expansion of the market without exposing their interests to much risk. They were very aware of this fact, since «most of the instruments the Statute wanted to introduce were already being put into practice in the municipalities and they considered the results as stimulant for real state capital» (*ibid*., p.87).

3.4. The Salvador da Bahia Master Plan

The City Statute delegated the specification and realization of its essential issues to the local sphere through the drafting of the Master Plans. The new Plan in Salvador da Bahia was developed from the beginning of 2005 to the beginning of 2008.

The process was mainly directed by technical experts of the prefecture, which prepared the proposals and restricted participation to consultation and discussion in several public hearings. These were characterized by low public involvement (Pereira do Nascimento 2008). The participants were mainly civil servants, councillor advisers, university students, professionals and, to a lower extent, environmental groups and NGOs, as well as the business sector (*Câmara Municipal de Salvador* 2007).

The process was severely criticized by the participants and the media because they had not received enough information or training for the participation process, because of the technical language used, and because the proposals approved in previous hearings had not been incorporated, whereas the amendments put forward by the real estate, construction and hotel business sectors were indeed taken into account (Pereira do Nascimento 2008).

The participation of social movements was low. The main social movements for the right to housing, black and women movements were virtually absent, and so was the MSTB. The absence of these organizations was «mainly due to the disbelief that Salvador's public authorities were really interested in encouraging an open and clear debate» (*ibid*., p.187).

Despite social opposition and the loss of support of several parties in the local Chamber, the proposal was endorsed in February 2008, in a hall with a majority of members of the civil construction business and politicians (*Correio da Bahia*; 21/2/08). The construction sector evaluated the project as «a significant advance in relation to the Plan in force» (Pereira do Nascimento 2008, p.200).

The following common features are to be found in these related processes of discursive production at international, national and local level: the commitment to institutionalization and the loss of radicalism; the gradual loss of prominence of community-based movements and organizations; the silencing of proposals coming from more radical movements (due to the impossibility of including their demands or due to the lack of participation); the strong influence and support of historically prominent actors during the production processes of the city.

4. Contents of discursive production: analysis of themes, approaches and linkages in key texts.

The present section presents the key themes offered by the referred texts, as well as certain cross issues which link them.

We base our analysis[2] on three different texts which organize the discourse according to certain «directive principles», present throughout the texts but vaguely defined. Besides these principles, the «mechanisms» to put them into practice are explained to a greater or lesser extent. In both the World Charter for the Right to the City and the City Statute these mechanisms are imprecisely described (according to its natures of declaration and framework law). Although in the Master Plan they are more precisely described, they often remain unclear, as the text focuses rather on proposals and wills than on punitive or control mechanisms to avoid the contravention of principles. We can group these «principles» and «mechanisms» in three common and recurrent themes: the *social function of the city*, *participation* and *recognition of diversity*

The social function of the city

The social function of the city is a central issue in all three documents. Particularly, the World Charter for the Right to the City considers that:

> *As its primary purpose, the city should exercise a social function, guaranteeing for all its inhabitants full usufruct of the resources offered by the city. In other words, the city must assume the realization of projects and investments to the benefit of the urban community as a whole, within criteria of distributive equity, economic complementarity, respect for culture, and ecological sustainability, to guarantee the well-being of all its inhabitants, in harmony with nature, for the present and for future generations* (World Charter for the Right to the City 2005, p.3).

And Salvador da Bahia Master Plan translates this general idea into a set of rights in the following sense:

> *The social function of the city of Salvador corresponds with the right to the city for everyone, which includes the right to urbanized land, housing, sanitation, physical and psico-social security, infrastructure and public services, urban mobility, universal access to public and for public use spaces and equipments, education, work, culture and leisure, full exercise of religion and economic production.* (*Plano Diretor de Desenvolvimento Urbano do Município do Salvador* 2008, p.2)

All the three documents provide explanations of the different situations in which the mentioned function is not being accomplished by urban property . For example, in the case

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[2] In order to analyze the world charters for the Right to the City, we focus on the version presented in the WSF 2005, which is still discussed.

of being «deserted, unused, underused or unoccupied property» (World Charter for the Right to the City 2005, p. 4). Additionally, in the City Statute it is emphasized that:

> *Urban property accomplishes its social function when meets its fundamental exigencies of urban organization of the city as expressed in the Master Plan, guaranteeing citizens' needs of quality of life, social justice and development of economic activities.* (*Estatuto da Cidade* 2001, p.9)

Salvador Master Plan establishes some more general criteria: urban property is not accomplishing its social function when it is not used used for housing, economic activities, infrastructure and public equipments and services, environmental and cultural conservation, religious activities or third sector activities.

However, all these definitions, and so the concept of «social» itself, are wide and not very innovative. They all go against the inactivity of urban land (in fact, the Master Plan considers particular mechanisms of intervention of urban property, based on the City Statute instruments), but they don't offer new conceptualizations and don't go further the « traditional» functions attributed to the city. Property is in any case considered as a commodity in the sense that it is taken for granted that it has to be managed according to its exchange value rather than its use value. It seems that all three documents consider it as an asset that must be distributed or redistributed regarding social criteria.

When referring to the «functions» of the city, beyond the social function of property, «the city and its rural surroundings» (World Charter for the Right to the City 2005, p. 2) is understood as a closed unit of analysis with well-defined characteristics and functions, where the «economic function» is very present, as well as the references to terms such as the necessary «competitiveness» of the city. The city is understood as both producer and provider of goods and services, and at the same time as a product which needs to be «competitive». Among all these functions, «efficiency» appears as a recurrent idea, as when the Salvador de Bahia Master Plan states that the first goal of the *Política Urbana do Município* (local urban policy) is:

> *Consolidate Salvador as one of the national metropolis of Brazil, a singular centre of configuration of identity and synthesis of national culture, a regional centre producing specialized services at the avant-garde of technical-cultural research and experimentation, business opportunities, enterprises and jobs in the traditional economic activities and in the new economic areas of creative, technological, information and tourism industries.* (*Plano Diretor de Desenvolvimento Urbano do Município do Salvador* 2008, p. 3)

The relation between «social function» and «economic function» is not explicitly outlined. However, it is implied that they are not incompatible but somehow complementary. The «competitiveness» of the cities is linked to the idea of their capacity of inclusion, precisely as a way of making them more attractive and competitive.

In a broader sense, the «social issue» is always considered an element «to be integrated» in the overall «management» for the competitiveness of the city, as well as (and this being a confusing relation) an issue which needs to be properly «managed».

Participation

In the texts, «participation» is linked to themes such as «consultation», «public debate», «control» of State's action and the election of representatives. For instance, the City Statute states that:

> *Institutions in charge of the management of metropolitan regions and urban agglomerations must include compulsory and relevant participation of the population, and of associations that are representative of the different community groups, so that direct control of its activities and the full exercise of citizenship is guaranteed.* (*Estatuto da Cidade* 2001, p.10)

Although all these concepts are legitimized in the texts through the idea of full exercise of citizenship, they are linked to the notion of democratic management through terms such as «efficiency», «good management«, «transparency», «sustainability» or «decentralization». At some points the texts refer to «political participation», but the idea is not explicitly linked to terms we could connect to stronger conceptions of participation were civil society organizations increase their power basis and develop empowered forms of participatory governance (Gaventa 2006).

In any case, the participation of private sector actors is considered equally important for «good management» of the city, having also a very important and unquestioned role, together with «civil society».

The idea that urban development programmes and projects should be managed by «community-based organizations» is also mentioned. However, this concept seems to be approached from an instrumental point of view, as it implicitly identifies these organizations as potential efficient managers of resources. In fact, the same is said regarding the State and private profit-making companies.

On the other hand, the relation between individual participation and collective participation is not outlined, or what kind of decisions are the responsibility of whom and how they relate among themselves and regarding a particular conception of civil society and its role.

«Participation» seems to be understood as a right contained in a series of rights within a defined and unquestioned model. It is primarily seen as a guarantee for good management and satisfaction of needs, but it is not clear, neither in the principles nor in the mechanisms stated in the texts, if it is considered as a process with the potential of reverting power relations implying a change of paradigm regarding the ways of production of the city and appropriation of the territory.

Recognition of diversity

Diversity is a recurrent issue in all the three texts. It is linked to concepts such as «discrimination», «inequitable distribution» of commodities, or «inequitable» access to city services and resources, in relation to «gender», «age», «class», «disability» or other «vulnerable» social groups. There is a direct relationship between identity and injustice. Consequently, recognizing diversity would consist in «managing» differences in order to avoid the inequity of «rights»:

> *Cities, through affirmative action policies in favour of the vulnerable groups, should suppress the political, economic, social, and cultural obstacles that limit the freedom, equity, and equality of citizens and impede the full development of the person and his or her effective political, economic, social, and cultural participation in the city.* (World Charter for the Right to the City 2005, p.4)

The discourse on «special protection to the groups» appears in all three texts and it reflects the logics of social policies addressed to defined focus groups. However, these groups are considered as having a fixed, static identity. Some groups are more precisely defined, as low income groups (the «poor», which are defined by the usual criterion of salary), while others (as «classes») are very vaguely defined —or not defined at all— in all three texts (not even in Salvador's Master Plan). In any case, identity seems to be something fixed, categorized and pre-determined by the institutional framework itself.

5. MSTB's struggle for the right to the city in Salvador da Bahia: action and the production of an alternative discourse.

We now deal with MSTB's social struggle for the right to the city in Salvador da Bahia, getting an insight into the limitations and potentials of MSTB´s activities within the different dimensions of their «room for manoeuvre», against the dominant discourse and within the new institutional framework. Simultaneously , in a context of tension and power relations, a new discourse and a new representation of those dimensions emerge within the MSTB.

5.1. Salvador and the MSTB

Historically, occupation has been the only way to have access to housing for the lower income classes of Salvador, which has strongly influenced the city's urban development. Nowadays 2,9 million inhabitants live in its metropolitan area (one of the poorest and most inequitable regions in the country), where the housing deficit is estimated at 105.000 homes.

The MSTB «is a grass-roots organization that performs in the urban space and mobilizes homeless workers to fight for their right to housing. (…) With this aim, they pressure the government through mobilization and occupation of abandoned properties which have no social function» (MSTB, 2010). Under the motto «Organize, Occupy and Resist», their principles are «Autonomy, Fighting Spirit, Horizontality and Solidarity». The movement

started in July 2003 and since then it has been growing intensively (Dos Santos Miranda 2008).

The movement is present in around 24 occupied sites in Salvador, in urban voids or in unused buildings, where more than 5.000 families live. It has also 6 *núcleos*, a kind of meeting points for previous registration and organization of families that want to occupy (36.000 families are registered) (Zibechi 2010).

5.2. The strategic response dimension.

In its discourse, MSTB´s strategy is inspired to a broader goal than achieving the end of evictions and guaranteeing the access to housing and services to all inhabitants in their occupations. Their aim is «creating a new sociability, new forms of relation, a collectivization process (…) which go beyond the market logics of the city in order to substitute them by the logics of people's needs (…). Therefore, the struggle for the right to the city is above all a strategic project, a political horizon, a particular conception of society» (interview with MSTB 2010)[3]. Ultimately, it goes beyond inclusion to achieve transformation: «we do not want to be included in their city, but to create our own» (*id.*).

This conception of the city contained in MSTB´s discourse is not shared by the State, which «proposes reforms and a model of city tied to speculation and to the logic of the city as a good (…) State intervention is carried out according to financial needs and without real participation; needs, demands and rights are only understood in terms of individuality» (*id.*).

For MSTB coordinators, social movements must preserve their autonomy, which is understood as the need to have a strategy of their own — regardless of the State, or against the State — establishing tactical alliances with the State only when necessary.

This strategy, together with their disbelief regarding State activities, have prevented the movement from participating in policy making processes (such as the Master Plan) or in other kind of forums (national or global). However, as a tactic, it does participate occasionally in certain spaces which appeared as a result of the Statute, such as the *Conselho das Cidades* (Council of the Cities) in Bahia, or the Negotiating Commission formed by the *Secretaria de Desenvolvimento Urbano da Bahia* (SEDUR, Urban Development Department of Bahia) and the MSTB.

Given all this, the scope of influence of the MSTB in all these spaces has been very reduced, but the movement understands this as necessary to avoid co-option and the legitimatization of processes they do not support or believe in.

This strategy places the MSTB at a disadvantage against other community-based movements and organizations that support collaborative strategies with the State, both in terms of scope of influence and regarding the access to resources by means of projects and

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[3] The interviews were made to MSTB coordinators.

subsidies. Nevertheless, this position brings the MSTB closer to other movements with similar political and ideological conceptions.

5.3. The social mobilization dimension.

Mobilization and social organization are at the core of MSTB´s actions. The movement has gone through a process of expansion which is understood as an action than has a political nature, that is, an action that is a continuous process of appropriation, control and re-creation of the territory – the territory defined as «a political space of dispute, in which market logics are gradually being substituted by the logics of people's needs» (interview with MSTB 2010).

The goal of the organization (on the basis of the work done in assemblies, meetings, daily struggle, popular education processes and so on) is to raise awareness in a broad sense, beyond satisfying immediate needs: «considering housing as something more than a shelter (…) People must raise awareness, become active individuals» (*id.*).

Self-managed initiatives (community centres, schools, kitchens, nurseries, school-support centres, productive undertakings, etc.) are not considered as alternative forms of service supplies or income production but as «spaces for the arising of a new sociability and also as part of the collectivization process» (*id.*).

Within the discourse, identity plays a central role in this process, not only as «recognition» and «attention» to diversity but as a transformative process: «the processes of participation aim to generate and transform group identities (blacks, women, young, workers, hip hoppers) while building at the same time common identities» (*id.*). Identities are not understood as something fixed or predetermined, but something that is permanently generated and transformed trough participation in the struggle.

The transformation of the city is carried out by starting from the identity itself: «we must assure public health, security, education, real autonomy, employment… But what kind of employment? What kind of public health? What kind of security? All these issues must be approached from the identity: another kind of public health, of employment… they must be considered in relation to gender, class... » (*id.*).

The institutionalization of the right to the city in Salvador has created new opportunities for mobilization, as well as risks. It has helped to stop several evictions and - to a lesser extent- has provided more funds for housing projects in MSTB occupations. The situation has generated expectations that have enabled mobilizations, but at the same time it has increased the risk of self-interested participation and quick demobilization.

In order to avoid evictions, the State has demanded that MSTB refrain from starting any building processes with durable materials within the occupied areas, and to wait for public intervention. Nevertheless, the number of housing projects has not increased significantly and bureaucracy has not been reduced. This has generated long waits, frustrations and a negative effect on the processes of mobilization.

Housing projects have included public spaces and equipments, which has created access to further services beyond housing. However, on the one hand, in certain cases they have weakened existing self-managed initiatives in the occupied sites. On the other hand, the projects are conceived according to the «ideology of the single owned house» (Fiori Arantes and Fix 2009). This «ideology» can be perceived in the rigid spatial design of public and private spaces (conceived for familiar and individualistic needs, not for socialization, for sharing domestic tasks as child-care, or for promoting community productive or cultural initiatives, for example) and in the individual tenure of the house(collective property of the social housing complex is not considered). Again, this leads to individual and self-interested attitudes, as well as to speculative processes of informal buying and selling.

In the planning and management of these housing projects, carried out by private companies, very few spaces of participation have been offered. When spaces of participation in the design were created, agreements were usually not respected by the companies, generating frustration in the future inhabitants.   Building companies generally ended up making the proposal for the final design, which is usually bound to criteria of minimization of costs. Moreover, building companies have been often accused of obtaining enormous benefits (beyond the limits established by the programmes) and not satisfying the building quality criteria established in the regulations and contracts — which were already at a minimum level[4]. In addition, it seems that the legal owners of the occupied land (individuals or enterprises) could also be speculating and pressing the State in order to obtain higher prizes, knowing that the State wanted the land for building houses for the people settled in it (Karruna 2009).

In any case, the times imposed by the State and the private companies (long and frustrating waits followed by a very short times for design and building), avoided participation and the introduction of community demands, generating tensions and demobilization.

5.4 The technical/behavioural dimension.

In MSTB's discourse, the «qualification» of its militants does not have to do with technical training but with political training and education, which it is considered a long and spontaneous process arising through participation and commitment to the daily struggles of the site occupations: «Vocal leaders emerge spontaneously and gradually learn and qualify for different forms of community based organization» (interview with MSTB 2010). It is a process through which «individuals also obtain legitimacy in the community» (*id.*). In addition, leaders receive methodological and political-ideological instruction of a more theoretical nature in the «political training courses»*,* supported by advisory organizations.

The formal spaces for discussion and consultation that the new institutional framework offers represent spaces of technical discussion and consultation to satisfy and sort the demands of

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[4] Among the people interviewed, several civil servants and professionals, who had worked together with private companies, as well as the coordinators of the MSTB, expressed accusations in very similar terms.

the social movements. Therefore, the State expects specific qualifications, technical knowledge and project management capacity from them. On the contrary, the MSTB considers that they are negotiating spaces of a strictly political nature. It participates just in order to maintain legitimacy, to obtain information and, eventually, «as a way to achieve specific commitments and denouncing abuses where they are perpetrated... which certainly are bound to happen» (*id.*).

This situation poses significant restrictions for MSTB´s actions. They do not prioritize technical matters and they politicize debates, which are considered technical by civil servants. Hence, the State takes this fact as a reason to justify their disregard to MSTB's demands and to give priority to the demands of other social movements and NGOs, which have «a broader technical capacity» and a less belligerent attitude.

As a representative example, a civil servant of SEDUR stated in an interview that «MSTB is not concerned with technical matters. They should put forward things like that [talking about a housing project of 54 "sustainable houses" for small farmers in a rural area, managed by a NGO]. Costs are very low and quality is optimal! But MSTB is not interested in things like this. We support them, but they continue with confrontation... They must understand that we are on their side, but they need to make proposals».

5.5 The institutional / interorganisational dimension

MSTB's internal structure is not oriented towards efficiency in terms of management capacity, but towards creating mobilization and political consciousness, taking joint decisions, building consensus and promoting participation, autonomy and self-management. It is divided in several coordination spaces (whose members are elected by consensus), assemblies and working groups at different scales (state, city, settlement, group of families). These spaces are autonomous in decision-taking, however they follow basic strategic guidelines and specific political-ideological approaches which are defined in the Congress[5].

All this seems to affect positively the movement's representativeness, democracy and horizontality. However, the slow pace of the processes to create leaders, together with the rapid expansion of the movement, has raised the problem of not having enough leaders, who are obliged to hold that position repeatedly. On the other hand, this assembly structure, at times prolongs decision-making processes. This fact can raise problems regarding the engagement with the pace of processes in the State and private companies, as well as a

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[5] The Congress is the highest organ of decission and political definition of the movement. It is celebrated each three years, accompanied by a long pre-congressual process of discussion in the assemblies. During the congress, the essencial estrategic guidelines and political-ideological alignments are discussed and defined, and State coordinators of the movement are elected, for the next three years. Guidelines and alignments must be respected as a general framework, although coordination spaces, assemblies and working groups fonction with large autonomy, given their singularitites and particular contexts.

"disadvantage" in relation to other social organizations which have more hierarchical and agile decision-making structures.

The movement's relationships with other social movements rely on common political-ideological positions, especially in regard to their conception of autonomy and horizontality. The *Frente Nacional de Movimentos de Resistência Urbana* (National Front of Urban Resistance Movements), created in 2006, embodies the main space for collaboration with other social movements: «the movements working together in the Front share a long tradition of autonomy and horizontality» (interview with MSTB 2010). Within these spaces and according to the broad conception of struggling for the right to the city and with the central aim of creating common identities, urban homeless movements work together with black or hip-hop movements: «it is a natural alliance, since all of them live in *favelas*, suffer police abuse and share rebellion against poverty and the system that marginalizes them» (*id.*).

NGOs and other kinds of non community-based organizations do not participate in the Front, nor do other big urban Brazilian movements that maintain a more collaborative attitude towards the State.

Beyond the front, the MSTB collaborates with other entities with common political-ideological convictions, such as NGOs with a militant profile, particular university collectives and also individuals, usually experts that support the movement.

The assumed positions of the movement have strictly limited the number of allies and have at times brought the MSTB to a situation of isolation, especially after directly confronting the government. Nevertheless, for MSTB these are not instrumental alliances, but strategic, and they have been tight and unproblematic due to the fact that they share a common ideological-political base. Beyond mutual support to actions, common visions discourses and strategies have emerged within these alliances, particularly within the core of the Front.

6. Conclusions

Relying on Fairclough's (1992, 2001) textually oriented discourse analysis, we have intended to explain the broad dissemination and institutionalization of the currently dominant discourse on the right to the city, with regard to the related process of progressive loss of radicality.
We showed how new actors acquired more relevance within an «agglutinating» progression that creates a broad «consensus» around the emerging dominant discourse. At the same time, some community-based organizations and movements have been losing influence, while an increasing number of them have become more and more bureaucratized and have moved away from radical demands.

Throughout the process there have been conflicts among different conceptions of the right to the city. On the one hand, the demands of particular social movements whose conceptions were close to the lefebvrian ones were silenced in favour of those actors with less radical perspectives. The concept is accepted by historically dominant actors in the city (not just governments, but even real estate and construction sectors), and becomes institutionalized,

widely assumed and introduced in discourses, legislations, plans and policies. In the end, a reformist, managerial, and commoditized perspective of the right to the city prevailed.

The present analysis allows us to bring into question the capacity of the new institutionalized discourse to encourage substantial changes within power relations, as well as to refute the hegemony of particular actors in the processes of production of the city. In addition, it is worth reflecting on the possibilities to continue creating an alternative and more transformative discourse.

The MSTB, through practices of resistance, presented an alternative discourse. First, not technical knowledge or efficiency in management but the organic performance of the movement and the political training of its members were the central issues. The mobilization of the social basis was considered to be a process of transforming individual and collective identities, of generating political awareness and a way of producing a new sociability in a new city. The creation of wide networks in collaboration with other movements had also a political meaning, as well as confrontation with the State. MSTB's discourse of the right to the city was a politicized and a transformative one which aimed at substantial changes in social, cultural and economic relations in the city and beyond.

On the one hand, the institutionalization of the dominant discourse in Salvador seemed to create some new opportunities for MSTB actions: some spaces for negotiation, more access to information, a decrease in the number of evictions and a slight increase in the access to housing projects by the inhabitants of MSTB occupied sites. Nevertheless, State practices were led by technical discussion and by the search for «efficiency», promoting the depolitization and the bureaucratization of movements. All this has caused strong limitations, isolation and a certain disadvantage in the struggle of MSTB, which is led by strong political-ideological convictions, a solid conception of autonomy and the prioritization of politicized social action. On the other hand, it seems that the institutionalization of the right to the city discourse is not promoting significant changes in power relations in Salvador: the strict bureaucratic control of processes continues, but also the strong influence (or even control) of the construction industry. The influence of the private sector might be due to the persuasion of experts and political authorities, or to the limitations of laws and regulations or because of their infringements remain unpunished.

We have tried to enter into the question of whether the institutionalization of the right to the city has meant an «advance» were this process have occurred. Throughout this paper we have also intended to clarify what «advance» may mean for the dominant discourse: we showed that it has little to do with profound transformations. In the particular case of the Brazilian context, where these «advances» have been particularly acclaimed, we have witnessed that they did not seem to have encouraged substantial changes or the subversion of power relations. Furthermore, they might be generating more limitations (though some opportunities as well) to an alternative and more transformative discourse. Nevertheless, there is always an existing space —as MSTB's action shows us—, for an alternative and more radical discourse and practice, for an alternative representation and construction of the right to the city.

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