

Performing Housing Activism: The Right to the City, longing for Intersectional Social Justice

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Dissertation submitted as partial requirement for the conferral of
Master in Urban Studies

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“If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. If you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let’s work together” – Lilla Watson & Aboriginal Rights group in Queensland

“You know I work for the liberation of people because when I’m liberating myself, I’m liberating other people...her [the white women’s] freedom is shackled in chains to mine and she realizes for the first time that she is not free until I am free” – Fanny Lou Hamer (1971 in Deborah King (1988)

Agradecimiento

First, I want to thank my supervisors Guya Accornero and Simone Tulumello for their expertise, time and support in my academic trajectory. You make me feel seen and that my perspective matters. I appreciate your assistance and guiding which helps me to develop and believe in the insights I'm giving. Thank you! In this sense I also want to thank the research team of HOPES for their important contributions about housing movements in Lisbon and for letting me collaborate.

Further I want to thank my colleagues from HABITA!, for their energy and for carrying on in this emotional field. I want to thank the people seeking support in HABITA! for sharing their stories with me and for taking action to change their situation. I wish you all the best from the centre of my heart and hope that conditions will change.

I want to thank the Sindicat de Llogaters in Barcelona for giving me an insight into their organization, receiving me in the assemblies and sharing with me at the open door.

I want to express my gratitude for the effort and work Social Movement Organizations are doing, to change oppressing structures and practicing Solidarity, for the commitment to change the system and structures and addressing central issues for a more social and just society. To struggle for justice can be exhausting but for me, it is a central inspiration, as I believe in human action and that Mutual Aid, Consideration and Caring will bring change.

Last but not least, I want to thank all my interviewees for sharing their trajectory and path with me.

A big thank you goes as well to all my friends and family that were supporting and motivating me through all my life and my scientific career until today

Resumo

Esta tese oferece uma visão sobre como se mostra solidariedade e o apoio mútuo em ambientes sociais e culturais, como redes de ativismo em torno do direito à habitação. Portanto, a pesquisa segue a ideia de que as pessoas estão agindo e reivindicando o seu direito à cidade (e à moradia).

O ativismo habitacional pode ser entendido como uma manifestação da luta pelo direito à cidade, apresentada por Lefebvre (1968). Esta pesquisa é inspirada na observação de pesquisas anteriores, de que as práticas de cuidado coletivo e ajuda mútua são marcos de valores cruciais nas organizações de direito à cidade e habitação. Essas práticas de cuidado são essenciais para a reivindicação dos direitos sociais. Portanto, esta pesquisa defende que as práticas de cuidado são específicas para esses movimentos. Segue uma lógica de compreensão coletiva e relacional.

A parte empírica mostra como as micropráticas de cuidado mútuo se parecem quando personas aproximam-se a uma organização de movimento social, muitas vezes como último recurso. Focar-se principalmente na prática da assembleia e mostrará quais os valores que são transmitidos e repetidos. Este trabalho fornece uma perspectiva interna mediado pela etnografia ativista.

Palavras chave: direito a cidade, movimentos sociais, cidadania ativa, governança, participação, apoio mútuo

Abstract

A look at the right to housing movements shows that a large part of the urban resistance refers to a right to live in the city that is threatened by the commodification of housing. I argue that housing activism can be seen as an expression of the right to the city claim, as introduced by Lefebvre (1968) to challenge the different problems brought by city change. These further connect with the micro level of activist resources and practices for right to the city.

This research is inspired by the observation of previous research, that practices of Collective Care and Mutual Aid are crucial value frameworks in housing organizations for the Right to the City. Being involved with the social movement organization HABITA since a while, gives me a very particular position and insight into this movement. In the last years I observed that Mutual Aid (Dean 2020) was gaining more importance and is having a particular role in housing movements. According to Dean Mutual Aid and Solidarity is a tool to meet “each other’s needs based in shared commitments to dignity, care, and justice” (Dean 2020). These care practices are essential to claim the social rights which society cuts back. Therefore, this research argues, that care practices are specific for these movements. It follows a logic of collectively and relational understanding. This work provides an inner perspective to housing activism mediated through the activist ethnography.

Keywords: right to the city, social movements, active citizenship, governance, participation, mutual aid, care

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CHAPTER 1 Introduction

This thesis gives an insight into the interactions within an activism environment, what emotion and feelings are expressed and what values are guiding. This work contributes to grounded knowledge about how solidarity and mutual aid within social and cultural environments, like housing network associations, is taking place. Therefore, this research follows the idea that people are taking action and claiming their right to the city (and housing). I am introducing the context, background, concepts and ideas framing this work as it is where further analysis will derive from. This is crucial to understanding how the macro level of the housing crisis is interlinked with the meso level of mobilization and Social Movement Organizations as well as the micro level of practices, sense-making and everyday life of activist practice and performance. Micro dynamics of everyday life are interlinked to macro structures and processes, and reflect in everyday life of personal activist careers. A look at the protest movements shows that a large part of the urban resistance refers to a right to live in the city that is threatened by the commodification of housing, austerity consequences, the attraction of global investments, and gentrification. It will be shown that housing activism can be all seen as an expression of the right to the city struggle, as introduced by Lefebvre (1968) and expanded by Harvey (2008) to challenge the different problems brought by city change. These further connect with the micro level of activist resources, values and practices sustaining and struggling for the idea that all residents of the city have a right to the city. This is manifested in everyday practices of mutual aid, which give, according to Dean, the tools to meet “each other’s needs based in shared commitments to dignity, care, and justice” (Dean 2020).

I am part of the grassroots organization HABITA!¹, which is based in the metropolitan area of Lisbon. Already in the title of the movement, it is said: “HABITA!– Associacao pelo direito a habitacao e o direito a cidade,” which means association for the right to housing and the right to the city. HABITA! was founded in 2005 to support people in housing struggles, from residents in informal settlements to residents in the private renting market, people squatting, and homeless people (Di Giovanni 2017). I moved to Portugal in the Summer of 2017 and started my BA thesis within the research group exPERTs² in Spring 2018. That was when I started to get involved with HABITA!. I met members of HABITA! for the first time in the summer of 2017 on a mobilization of a street with various households in danger of eviction where the *Caravana pelo direito a habitacao* (a mobilization connecting and visiting various self-build settlements) presented. In this previous ethnography I accompanied women squatting municipal apartments, from which some were supported by HABITA!. After this very intense period, I

¹ <https://habita.info>

² <https://expertsproject.org>

took some distance from HABITA! and came back at the end of 2019 as the housing crisis proceeded, and I felt again the need, but also strength to engage. This first year with HABITA!, was marked by very intense actions, many women received eviction notes with just 3 days to leave the area, without alternative options and being confronted to live on the streets. Moreover, several women were suffering from domestic violence. I found myself often being called for emergencies in the middle of the night, blurring in between activist, academic and Anthropological Support Worker. On the one side this time was marked by very fruitful and strong mobilization and people with less activist experience gained political experience and started to articulate their claims. Learning took place on both sides. At the same time, it was emotionally very exhausting and demanding, I developed insomnia and felt guilty for my privilege. So, I then left the movement for about a year and took some distance, to organize my research, rethink on my position and finish the thesis. At this time, I was able to hold a debate in a cultural space, after which I wrote an article in *Le Monde Diplomatique* to make these marginalized women visible.

I came back to HABITA! at the end of 2019 during the summer of 2020 I took part in funding the network “Mulheres Pelo direito a Habitação” (women for the right to housing) emerging out of HABITA! and other organizations, as academics and activists observed that women are particularly affected by the housing crisis. Within HABITA!’s Assembly (a weekly meeting which will be explained further), practices of Mutual Aid occur. The people who come and look for help are affected by various intersectional matters. They come often from the outskirts and HABITA! is their very last resort (Hernandez 2019). Exposing their situation and working together on next steps is already a practice of caring (Santos 2019, 2020). It’s a meeting with very heterogeneous actors, who come together, and, in order to meet the needs of the individuals, certain practices are employed, taking into account the needs of the people approaching. This creates a basis to transit from the personal emergency, often understood as personal failure, towards political revindication framed as political problems.

This current thesis is carried out within the research group HOPES³ and aims to give an understanding of the values sustaining activist practice, like Mutual Aid within housing movements, as this topic was already touched in previous research. My background is from Cultural Anthropology, so I’m interested in all aspects of culture. “Culture is a set of beliefs, practices and symbols that are shared and socially learned. Together, they form an all-encompassing, integrated whole that binds people together and shapes their worldview and lifeways.” (Brown, et al., 2020 p.6). Understanding culture tells a lot about how our society works. Activist practices are not limited to protests in the street, but

³ Research Project HOPES: HOUsing PERSpectives and Struggles. Futures of housing movements, policies and dynamics in Lisbon and beyond. (PTDC/GES-URB/28826/2017.) Funded by the Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia.
<https://cies.iscte.pt/np4EN/projectos/?pj=929>

also daily activities, like direct action, prefigurative actions, or what social movements do in periods of latency.

Cities where the right to the city and housing became an expression of different discourses of power, Social Movement Organisations become alternative actors with integral practices, where mutual learning and caring are essential. That's why I'm arguing that urban social movements for the right to housing act for Lefebvre's Right to the City, as they take power back to engage in the urban space and offer alternatives. So, following Lefebvre, not only those who are legally involved in the production of urban space have citizens status, but all residents of the city who engage in meaningful practice or everyday life. Those who engage against this commodification, evictions and people affected by the housing crisis are organizing through solidarity and its idealism and empathy leading to action. Mutual Aid and to care in a capitalist and neo-liberal city challenge the principle of individualism, efficiency and that each person is responsible for their own actions. These care practices are essential to claim the social rights which society cuts back. Therefore, care practices are intrinsic to the constitution of housing movements. It follows a logic of collectivism and relational understanding. It will be shown how everyday life practice of Social Movement Organisations for the right to housing switches in between long-term political goals and revindications and urgent short-term solutions to support particular cases. When people approach a Social Movement Organisation, it is often because they are in need of support, meeting their needs through mutual aid, sets the basis that these people can then take responsibility and struggle to meet their housing needs. It's needed to empower people so that they can take ownership of their struggle and mobilize. This thesis narrates how practices of mutual aid and collective care are embedded in the framework of the right to the city.

Chapter 1 presents the Aim of this research and introduces guiding concepts and approaches. It continues with the macro dimension of the housing crisis in chapter 2, the right to the city (2.2) and the right to housing (2.3), to the meso dimensions with a brief introduction to urban social movements and specifically Portuguese mobilizations (2.4 & 2.4.1). The theoretical part ends with the introduction of cultural concepts in social movement research (2.5) such as everyday resistance (2.5.1), activist career (2.5.2.), direct social action (2.5.1) and collective care and mutual aid (2.5.4). These concepts are important for understanding the micro dimension of practices and values. Chapter 3 discusses the methods and my position in the field. Data was collected in an activist ethnography to provide insight into the practices and sense-making. I took an exploratory approach and followed the traces of collective care that were previously discovered. Chapter 4 is the empirical part, showing how the micro practices of mutual care relate to the macro processes. I will focus mainly on the assembly practice and show what values are transmitted and repeated and support the activists' practice. The empirical section is strongly descriptive in order to present as authentically as possible how I got involved in these movements and how, following the traces in the field, I came across very different areas of

conflict involving different compositions of living arrangements, processes of sense making, as well as dichotomies and contradictions in these practices themselves. Through this approach, I aim to provide an inner perspective to housing activism mediated through the ethnography of activists “from the inside”. The micro perspective is presented through the use of narratives of activists and the description of my perception of these trajectories as a young, privileged, north European, socialized woman myself. Sense-making is brought together with the “agency to shape the city”, relating to what Lefebvre said: “to habitat and to inhabit”. This is filled with empirical and narrative data in the chapter “Lisbon 27th of March”. Following the topics and questions of urban social conflict which arose in the assembly practice have shown that within the right to the city movement practice, other topics embed in the social justice discourse arose. Topics varying from violence and racial discrimination, the need for holistic answers, and gender-based violence are on the margins. The chapter “women for the right to housing” ‘touches many of them. Following these conflicts, an image of cities is shown, where parts of the population are marginalized and pushed to the periphery. A city with people who can no longer afford rising rents and who move out of their apartments from the city centre to the outskirts.

The most significant and interesting patterns identified in the process are recapped in the conclusions. I focus on Lisbon on HABITA!, but additionally I went to Barcelona to think the phenomena of Collective Care in Urban Housing Movements “through elsewhere” (Robinson, 2016). The thesis puts the performances and the practices of Social Movement Organizations into focus, with the aim to get a wider understanding of the sense-making and the values created within these performances. It is about the momentum and the articulation of organized support and discussing the role of Social Movements in the politization of personal trajectories. It shows how Social Movement Organizations support and empower very vulnerable populations and helps them to confront their struggle through expressing solidarity (Santos 2019). Therefore, this work will give an understanding into processes of mobilization. This thesis provides an empirical-based and ethnographical understanding of the current phenomenon of housing movements as it is, happening in the metropolitan area of Lisbon (and Barcelona). Through this, I aim to give insight into the various intersectional discourses and experiences and how they are bundled in the demand of the right to the city. I do not claim my findings to be generalizable or representative of the phenomenon of housing movements, but to show that some practices and values are shared. This, in my opinion, is an important endeavour of contemporary history telling, which will also record and document a certain spirit of the time for studies in the future.

CHAPTER 2 Aim of Research

The city, against which grassroots organizations take action, shows itself to be two-faced, on the one hand exclusionary, systematically economized, gendered, racialized, i.e., the city as currently experienced, historically, a developed order. On the other hand, there is an utopia of the city in which the residents are reclaiming and recreating their city, organizing in movements and supporting and caring for each other. The different types of grassroots activism, when it comes to evictions and acting against a housing crisis, are manifestations of the right to the city (Lefebvre 1968), more specifically, a manifestation of the right to housing. I see the city and the urban space, in the case of Lisbon and Barcelona, as both the arena of the struggle but also as the subject of mobilization itself. Accornero describes Chabrol's perspective for "adopting a 'pluralistic view, able to include the large varieties of causes, actors, phenomena under the label of gentrification'" (Accornero 2021). Accornero's approach focuses on the intersection of influences between micro level activist trajectories, meso level networks and macro level structural change provoked by gentrification (Accornero, 2021), which is an approach this thesis is highly inspired by.

This research follows my observation of previous research, that practices of Collective Care and Mutual Aid are crucial value frameworks in the housing organizations for the Right to the City and are a part of a repertoire of Direct Social Action (Bosi & Zamponi 2020). Being involved with HABITA! for a long time, gives me a very particular position and insight into this movement. I observed in the last years that mutual aid (Dean, 2020) was gaining more importance and is having a particular role in housing movements and the activists involved in this field. "Mutual aid is collective coordination to meet each other's needs, usually from an awareness that the systems we have in place are not going to meet them. Those systems, in fact, have often created the crisis, or are making things worse. We see examples of mutual aid in every single social movement" (Dean, 2020 p.15). Yates argues that "the ways in which political action is performed and everyday life in social movements is lived are highly significant not just because they shape how effective struggles for social change can be, but also because they help to explain the formation and composition of movements, groupings and structures of solidarity themselves. Prefiguration involves combining the imaginative construction of 'alternatives', within either mobilization-related or everyday activities, with some strategic attempt to ensure their future political relevance" (Yates, 2015b p.19).

In HABITA!, the Right to the City is even in the name, but how does it come into play in activist practice, what value is attributed to it and what practices sustain it and how is it connected to mutual aid? To understand this better, I conducted this research from the perspective of an activist researcher, diving deeper into the association HABITA! and their alliances. I aim to have an impact as I'm taking an action research perspective. So, by giving light to Mutual Aid I want to boost the work of care in housing

organizations. It aims to understand the practices of mutual aid for the collectivization of the struggle, as a response to the violence of the housing crisis.

The underlying research question is: **What values sustain activist practice for the right to the city and housing and how are these interrelated to collective care?**

My casestudy is Lisbon, but additionally I went to collect data in Barcelona with the Sindicato de Llogateres, a tenant's union, for two reasons: first, as an activist, to learn useful practices for HABITA!, and as an academic, to have a case in some "exemplary" way as a comparison, for example where HABITA! could improve. Moreover, focusing on another movement helps to further reflect on practices on value attribution, this should lead to develop a deeper understanding of the role of practices. Robinson argues for "thinking cities through elsewhere" and for more experimentation in comparing, because of a "certain specificity in relation to the particular spatiality of the urban, notably the strongly interconnected nature of many urban phenomena" (Robinson, 2016 p.19-20). Special attention is given to the "Assembly practice", as it is for many people the first contact with a movement, where they are experiencing collective care, what sets the basis for further engagement and helps to transform the perceived personal failure of housing problems into a structural one. In this sense, this research follows recently developed approaches of everyday life in social movements developed by Grazioli (2018), Wilde (2020), Santos (2019,2020) and Yates (2015). These everyday practices create a common ground and the mutual support is crucial for further actions in social movement organizations. In this case it aims giving a deeper insight to how meaning, knowledge and alternative forms of organization are cultivated and interlinked and what functions they take when actors claim their right to the city.

As an anthropologist in urban studies, I'm interested in everyday experiences and how they mirror and reflect wider contexts. Many people were already evicted several times and move from an insecure housing situation to the next uncertain situation. The threat of an eviction is omni present for the "urban poor" (Greenop 2017). People often find themselves in a situation of uncertainty and affected by a variety of intersectional experiences. This research will also follow careers of different activists in Lisbon and understand their career and trajectory in the field of activism and explores how involvement with the movement starts because of collective care. Drawing on personal narratives gives light to embodied activist experience and to the diverse interpretation of activist practice, making also visible how fragile and emotional characters are. That's why I also gave an insight into my personal narrative in HABITA, serving not just to introduce the field, but also situating me in the field.

Giving light to the trajectories of peoples housing journey within a movement, connects the micro, meso and macro level of the housing crisis. In this way, I would like to consider all levels and show how they are interconnected. It is about the macro level of housing commodification and financialization, and in this dimension about the right to the city and housing. This is correlated and influenced by the

meso level of mobilization and social movement organizations for the right to the city and housing, acting against evictions and commodification of the urban, which is connected to the micro dimension about the activist resources, meaning emotions and practices. So, I shine a light on the “everyday forms of resistance” (Scott 1985), practices and achievements and to document contributions by a movement within my research time.

Following Accornero, this thesis “analyses the impact, in housing conflicts, of urban changes provoked by gentrification (...)” and should therefore also “contribute to strengthening a relational and interactionist approach both for the study of social movements and of gentrification and to putting into dialogue the two fields” (Accornero & Carvalho, 2020). It raised my interest to think about connecting how the macro level produces a housing crisis which produces subjects in crisis without right to the city on the macro level, but which gain their right to the city through the Mutual Aid and caring, and how this reflects in the Subjects acting in this field. Accornero argues for a perspective that is “able to interlink – at empirical, analytical and theoretical levels – the role developed by structural change and by the actors involved in them, at the crossroad of social movements and gentrification studies” (Accornero, 2021 p.14). Therefore, the research follows the idea that people are taking action and claiming their right to the city (and housing) and that there is a wider understanding that the city is not just in the hand of experts and policymakers but that there is an agency of ordinary people in transforming the city. It is in the everyday life where through hopes, visions, values and sense-making different spheres are connected. To learn how people’s worldviews, visions and practices fit into a wider social and political context is important for understanding and learning today’s cities.

The research’s purpose it is embedded with my larger goal in research to empower and to see how vulnerable populations and women can gain more political power and representation, explore forms of participation in decision making, and future wise see how ethnographic research can be brought together with supportive community policymaking as I’m arguing that it offers to identify the real needs of communities.

2.1 Housing Crisis as an overarching social issue

In the last decades, many European Cities have been marked by rapid urban transformation facing various geographic, socioeconomic and political fronts. These changes have been analysed by scholars for several decades, with the focus on socio-economic patterns and spatial and social justice issues like the quality of urban life and the access to housing or the city. Influential voices have been Levebre, Harvey, Marcuse, among others. The social question encompassed a diverse set of problems that is embedded in housing and materialized in the urban dimension and can be understood as an overarching social issue. Dealing with the excesses of industrialization and urbanization, with speculation and gentrification and the overpriced and overcrowded tenements and the precarious conditions of the urban poor (Greenop 2015). The rise of inequalities and negative social processes become the clearest “in urban areas where enclaves for the rich often coexist alongside ghettos of the disempowered poor” (Domaradzka, 2018 p.608).

Ruth Glass introduced the original term "gentrification" back in 1964. At the time, she described the social change in a London working-class district, because of the influx of members of the middle class. In doing so, she made use of an analogy to the 18th century, when members of the landed gentry moved to their properties in the city centres. Gentrification presents a tension field between: “arguments and public policies that promote and recognize gentrification as a positive process for neighbourhoods contrast with those which view it as a socio-spatial phenomenon that has harmful effects on the social environment of these urban areas.” (Mendes, 2013 p.150). Smith writes according to supply and the role of investments: ‘Gentrification is a back to the city movement all right, but of capital rather than people’ (Smith, 1979: 547(IN: Accornero, 2021)). Mendes writes that “in short, the theories that uphold the primacy of production derive the process of gentrification from the flow and circulation of capital in urban areas, seeking to explain this process by the devaluation of urban land and the generation of returns by new investment”(Mendes, 2013 p.149). Whereby on the demand site “the theories that focus on consumption see gentrification as a direct consequence of changes in the demographic and social structure of populations, the lifestyle of certain sectors of the middle class and the values and patterns of consumption associated with this”(Mendes, 2013 p. 149). In the housing market nowadays, being able to choose one's living environment is a privilege of those who can afford it financially. Conversely, the compulsion to leave an apartment against one's own will because others have made their choice is always a problematic consequence of inequality and often goes hand in hand with more intersectional discourses. Against this, broad protests are directed under the slogan “right to the city” (Grazioli, 2018). Mendes citing Peck (2005) writes about the effect which “is to reinvent cities as growth machines and places for the accumulation of capital, and to focus on attracting the new middle classes as the key factor in more competitive urban economies, embracing the culture of

the new capitalism (Mendes 2013 p.154). The conflict brought by this lay in a deep-rooted housing crisis is for example the concentration of poverty in the housing stocks and neighbourhoods that are then still available is increasing and informal solutions are found. It adds more disadvantages to the already precarious social situation. Like in many places in Europe, this crisis came with huge privatization, which changed relations of property, private and public ownership. The shift of housing as a function towards housing as storage for capital, like gold used to be, shaped totally the relations in the housing market. It's not any more regular landlords, but globally acting, big players, with the only interest in increasing the value and shares in the stock market (Kadi & Musterd, 2015). These corporate landlords changed the game, as their clients aren't the tenants but the investors. In this process, they became effective in pushing the market up. To tackle this housing crisis rooted in the financialization of the housing market the relation of the privatization of housing needs to be reverted. It is in the urban sphere where many civil and moral problems are challenged to be resolved (Domaradzka, 2018) like, "unaffordable housing within those rapidly growing cities and global financial markets influencing both city shapes and land values"(Greenop, 2017). Saegert argues that vulnerability can be reduced by a stable and permanently affordable housing stock, whereby speculation, gentrification and market crisis are threatening households and communities.

2.1.1 Lisbon, Portugal

Even if the right to housing is in the right/commodity spectrum in Portugal (art. 65) and in Spain (art. 47), it's not equally guaranteed to all citizens (Tulumello 2021). The crisis in Portugal and Spain regarding housing is facing not just economic issues but can be seen as a multiplicity of crisis. Though the economic crisis brought increased unemployment, a higher risk of poverty and goes hand in hand with a social and political crisis. Bosi and Zamponi argue that today's situation is rooted in the change of the relations of capital and labour and in the conflicts of post-industrial society, that it's "accurate to speak of the economic, social, and political multidimensionality of the concept of crisis" (Bosi & Zamponi 2016). While other European cities are facing gentrification, Lisbon experienced comparatively late this kind of urban transformation. Seixas argues that: "Until quite recently, the city was not experiencing excessive real estate pressures – due to very particular historical reasons. This reality, both delicate and resentful, based on distorted rent schemes and low annual price increase changed dramatically with the political consequences of the 2008/11 financial crises. In the ensuing period, average real estate prices rose considerably, and at a much faster pace than the average rise in family incomes"(Seixas 2020 p.60). Allegra & Tulumello argue that "the recent cycle of economic crisis, austerity and recovery was reflected in many of the structural contradictions that characterize the housing issue in Portugal: housing was at the centre of the economic crisis due to its preponderant

weight on private debt; and it became the object of profound reforms in the austerity years” (Allegra & Tulumello 2019).

The last years have been marked by urban transformation traced back to financialization and commodification due to weak regulatory policies, which triggered new urban mobilizations and pressure. Seixas argues that this also has been reflected in research fields such as “housing financialization, touristification and gentrification,” which can according to the author be seen as a proof that these topics gain relevance (Seixas, 2020.p.59). Tulumello and Allegretti observe, “that tourism-induced change (above all, the flipping of residential into short-term rental units) often had a greater role than the substitution of lower for higher classes, some Southern European scholars have stretched the concept, suggesting that tourism is a new ‘battle-ground’ or a stage for ‘symbolic violence’ (Mansilla, 2018) of gentrification” (Tulumello & Allegretti, 2020 p.5). Touristification stays in direct relation to gentrification which led to the expulsion of people of central areas and caused numerous evictions (Silva & Mendes, 2018 p.232ff). That’s why critical scholars use the concepts of “tourism gentrification” (Mendes, 2017). Tulumello writes, that it was “growth, more than the economic crisis, to trigger a deep housing crisis in Lisbon. At the same time, key reforms passed during the years of austerity – including those that have had a deep impact on the housing market by favouring accumulation over the right to housing” (Tulumello, 2019 p.21). According to Tulumello, mainstream media started to cover stories of eviction and expulsion in 2017. Housing also became the central issue for the municipal elections. From then on “a panoply of policies – some announced, some approved – were discussed: First Right (Primeiro Direito), a new programme for the rehousing of householders living in precarious conditions; schemes for subsidised rental; and a provision that allows municipalities to regulate short-term rent” (Tulumello, 2019 p.68). In 2017 it “became clear that rapid economic growth was accompanied by new housing crises. The housing crisis finally reached common sense status with the publication of the report on the visit to Portugal of the UN Special Rapporteur for the Right to Adequate Housing (Fahra, 2017)” (Silva & Mendes, 2018 p.230).

The current urban landscape is marked by extreme inequality, manifested in housing access and condition. Silva and Mendes highlight this trend as quite worrying, as old problems of access to housing still persist in Portugal. An example of this is the situation on the outskirts of Lisbon, where informal housing solutions still exist, with terrible health conditions for its inhabitants, even if on a small scale compared to the beginning of the 1990s. Whereby housing is a key problem in the lives of these most vulnerable communities, not only because of its significance in terms of quality of life but also because it is one of the most visible elements of degradation (Silva & Mendes, 2018 p.235). Antunes writes according to it: “Whenever public housing was built, the tradition was to do it to rehouse, in a very urgent situation. The entire housing park was built practically with this objective”. The policies which have shaped Portugal’s housing market and enforced the already existing pattern of social inequality

and segregation. In the policy brief “um novo PER” new policy recommendations are presented, and critique is formulated. What is criticized here is that the last decades were shaped by an underestimation of housing conditions; it is said that the concern for access to housing raised recently, even if the right to housing appeared already in the Democratic Constitution of 1976 (Allegra et al. 2017). The main points of critique of the policy brief “um novo PER” are: Structural problems such as “the existence of informal urban and suburban agglomerations, whose institutional response has been mainly demolition; Impacts of the global financial crisis and the austerity measures adopted since 2010, the effects of which were particularly felt by the most fragile sectors of society; Increase in the value of rents and sales due to the increase in demand in the real estate market, mainly from foreign investors, in the context of regulatory changes approved during the years of the Troika, whose effects have been felt over the past few years “(Allegra et al. 2017, translated by myself). Another claim has to do with the execution of social housing programs, as these should involve the provision of land or public buildings with access to public services and infrastructure. A critique mentioned it is “the context of the persistence of precarious housing situations, which we consider inconceivable in a democratic country like Portugal, we cannot fail to point to the urgency of implementing political and legal measures that resolve dramatic issues (such as those that persist in the case of self-built neighbourhoods in the 6 de Maio, Torre and Jamaica) (translated by myself, Allegra et al., 2017). Portugal is still one of the most unequal countries in Europe with a large sector of society continuing to experience poverty. Consequently, Accornero and Carvalho argue that the social costs of the “Portuguese miracle” after the crisis still bear on the poorest parts of the society, who continue to suffer from austerity-era cuts (Accornero & Carvalho 2020).

2.1.2 Barcelona, Spain

For many decades Spain followed a speculative economic model that was based on the construction industry and relied on easy, fast, short-term growth. However, this overproduction in no way meant that housing became affordable for the population. On the contrary, prices continued to rise until Spain was one of the countries in the European Union where housing was most expensive. On the one hand, before the crisis interest rates were low, and credit and loans were liberalized; on the other hand, this development made it possible for millions of apartments to be left vacant and to use them as objects of speculation. This model encouraged a mix of ideas “between the right to housing and the right to credit”, home ownership was boosted beyond any reasonable limit at the cost of over-indebtedness for much of the population (Castellví 2016). For a long time, the population heard the same message from real estate agents, financial institutions, public administration and the media: real estate prices never fall. Housing ministers repeated the same mantra year after year: “Now is the best time to buy” (Castellví 2016).

Di Felicianantonio argues that “the housing policies of the last 50 years have turned the property market into the only way to have a roof over one’s head for most of the population” (Di Felicianantonio, 2017). The two main tools used by the state to promote “homeownership were to make renting unattractive and to privatize social housing, although it should be noted that social-rented housing never amounted to more than 3% in Spain” (Palomera 2014 p.221). The global financial crisis exposed the contradictions of the Spanish system, which built upon massive indebtedness. When the cycle burst, the housing sector collapsed as the prices declined, producing a massive amount of unsold and vacant housing units. Over 400,000 households have been evicted in Spain since 2008, as they were not able to pay their mortgages. Di Felicianantonio shows that Catalonia represents the most “affected community by the current housing crisis: from 2008 to the third quarter of 2012, Catalonia registered 112,514 evictions – 79,043 of them were mortgage executions – corresponding to 31% of the entire country” (Di Felicianantonio, 2017). Further, it is argued that: the housing crisis impacted more the low/middle-class neighbourhoods. This was further promoted by a tax policy that gave tax breaks for the mere purchase of a property and a settlement policy that fuelled speculation by liberalizing the rental housing market, so that rental apartments are not a real alternative to homeownership, as well as an insufficient stock of social housing. Despite an express mandate in Article 47 of the Spanish Constitution, Spain did not translate the right to housing into appropriate political guidelines but limited itself to developing an economic policy that commodified housing as a source of income for certain parts of the private sector (Castellví 2016). Bubbles burst, and with the onset of the crisis, the problem of access to housing was exacerbated by the loss of homes by thousands of people who, up to that moment, had supposedly solved their housing issue (Castellví 2016). It must be taken into account that Spain is a country where private home ownership has been practically the only form of housing that has been promoted for many years. In the rental housing the bursting of the housing bubble lead sector to a dramatic increase in the number of evictions and homeless people, as well as an increasing number of people who are finding it harder and harder to find a roof over their heads, because of soaring costs. This is especially true for the younger generation, who as a result, fail to break the cord from their parents, and for many older people who, due to increasing market pressure, must leave the apartments in which they have lived all their lives. In Barcelona, real estate is also a very attractive object for speculation, especially in the areas popular with tourists. In view of this overall picture, civil society became active. In 2006, when the banks, real estate agents and the media denied the existence of a real estate bubble and threatening crisis, thousands of people mobilized and protested in the streets. This led to the birth of the “V de Vivienda” movement (Castellví 2016). The Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca (PAH), was also founded in Barcelona in February 2009 and devoted itself to the problems of mortgage debtors and took a pioneer role in making the housing crisis visible (Santos, 2019; Castellví 2016). The Occupy movement and the Indignados emerged in

2011. Research shows that for example, the “indignados” are not just young people affected by the economic crisis, that it's not just anti-system marginal people, but that it is an “Intergenerational and highly educated movement” (Nez 2018 p.174). According to Flesher Fominaya “the PAH and 15-M have been offering the public an alternative reading of the crisis and austerity”. Further she argues that the “the PAH has ended up playing a key role, not only in redefining the crisis but also in redefining Spanish democracy and reshaping Spain’s political landscape.” (Flesher Fominaya, 2015). From a very general movement with abstract and big aspirations, by coming back to the neighbourhoods, 15-M assemblies re-connected with everyday problems and difficulties (Portos & Carvalho 2019). They argue that they “connected and created synergies with different grassroots movements that were working in specific target-oriented areas, such as the movement for decent-housing and against evictions led by the Platform of those affected by the Mortgages (Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca, PAH). These allowed anti-austerity movement milieus to set and pursue more specifically goal-oriented actions, with rewards (i.e. victories, concessions) that were more immediately attainable and with strong popular legitimacy” (Portos & Carvalho 2019).

The current government of Barcelona is provided by a “political association made up of left-wing forces and social movements, some of which have been very active in the fight against evictions and for social housing” (Castellví 2016). Therefore, housing policy is one of the main concerns of current municipal policy and has brought about new imperatives; first and foremost, the avoidance and resolve of acute emergencies for various vulnerable groups who urgently need shelter. The structure in the municipality in Barcelona has changed dramatically since 2015 with Alda Calau, a former activist. Calau, along with Gente Comu, other activists, NGO’s and citizens form part of the decision-making of the city through assemblies and consultancy processes.

A special unit called SIPHO has been set up that is dedicated to avoiding evictions and exclusion from the housing market. Among the measures taken are: discussions and negotiations with the owners of the properties in order to find the best solution in each individual case and an coordination with the other municipal services involved in order to prevent the loss of housing and improve the effectiveness of the intervention; and finally, find solutions in cases where the loss of an apartment could not be prevented (Castellví 2016). In the research time in Barcelona an Interview with this unit could be carried out, but as the research focus switched, wasn’t included in the empirical part.

2.2 The Right to the City

In 1968, Lefebvre published the book: “The right to the city,” which calls on city dwellers to use public urban space. In 1989 Lefebvre published an essay in *Le Monde Diplomatique* and claimed that “the right to the city implies nothing less than a revolutionary conception of citizenship”(Lefebvre 1989). Whereby revolutionary citizenship is not seen as a right that is just uniformly, but must be taken,

recreated, struggled for, as it's not rubber-stamped. He suggests a revolutionary conception of citizenship while using the term citizenship to the city not to the nation-state. This asks the citizen to appropriate as well as participate in the city. This participation in the city can be applied to decision-making processes, the management of the city but also the occupation and use of the public and urban space. Lefebvre does not give a concrete example of what the "right to the city" consists of but different approaches integrating diverse uses, policies and interests of the city.

In the most direct sense, the right to the city is a right to configure the urban space in all the manifestations (Purcell, 2002 p.564). It is a form of empowerment of urban inhabitants, which were defined by Lefebvre as "citadins" (Lefebvre 1996. p.34), to take the decision making in the urban space in the simple way of "living out the routines of everyday life in the space of the city." (Purcell 2002.p.102). It is also a call for a more participatory and democratic city life. The importance of Lefebvre's work is also highlighted by Harvey, who argues for understanding the right to the city as the question of "who commands the necessary connection between urbanization and surplus production and use" (Harvey 2008 p. 40). Blokland argues that "claims for a right through the city could be expressed in many of the occupations of public squares and streets during the recent wave of global protests. In this context, the city is used as a stage for a political project " (Blockland et. al. 2015, p.657). "A right to remake the city and transform it through hope, resistance, and solidarity," with these words, Alex Vasudevan describes his notion and idea about the right to the city. In the right to the city, he sees the re-claim and the re-make of the urban and to challenge what it means to live in the urban space. He brings it together with the performance of squatting houses as a reaction to "housing insecurity, oppressive property speculation and the effects of urban regeneration". Besides, he argues that "squatting and other forms of urban informality play an important role in sustaining an alternative and fragile city in times of intense inequality". Vasudevan describes it as a right to affordable housing and the "agency to shape the city" (Vasudevan 2017. p.7) and understands this as a right to a place to make a living, as well as to make a place one's own, therefore, to have the right to be and to use one's own agency to produce the city. Though the right to the city might seem easily understandable and relatable, it's a complex theory and concept that needs to be framed. Continuing the thoughts of Harvey (2008) I see it as access and the right of access to urban resources and to collectively shape the processes of urbanization. The Right to the City in the most direct sense is seen in the notion to mention it as a right to configure the urban space in all the manifestations. (Purcell 2003. p.564). That's why Purcell empowers the urban inhabitants, which were defined by Lefebvre as "citadins" (Lefebvre 1996. p.34), to take decision making in the urban space in the simple way of "living out the routines of everyday life in the space of the city." (Purcell 2002.p.102). On the other hand, Plyushteva gives a concrete critique to Purcell's view of the right to the City with an active urban citizenship. She sees it as a right to express one's opinion about urban issues and spaces and how they bring life into the city.

She envisions it as a right to actively participate in these processes and spaces. Marcuse (2009) understands the cry and demand for the right to the city, in the sense that it expresses both the protest of excluded groups, like homeless people, and general lower-paid working-class people. I will follow the trace he presents in “in defence of housing”, being a battlefield of macroeconomic players and the everyday life of citizens happening in the urban sphere. Bringing the right to housing together with the right to the city is interlinked, as I argue, as they are interdependent. If the right to housing is not given, there is also no right to the city, as it is where citizen life started. If people don’t have access to housing, they don’t have space to carry out basic social life. Domaradzka observes “convergence of numerous local groups into coalitions and alliances around a shared set of objectives, which see current urban practices as the common problem and the right to the city as a common cause.” (Domaradzka 2018 p.614). Following Marcuse, I will see the right to the city as values which a city should embody like “justice, the rule of law, democracy, capacity development as well as balance and diversity.” (Marcuse 2009 p.193). This presents a connection point to the claims of right to housing movement organizations, which will be further shown in the research. HABITA has the right to the city and housing in its name. If the right to the city is seen as a right to social justice, it highlights how interrelated it is with the right to housing.

2.3 The Right to Housing

In the debate about a right to the city, a new process has been observed for some time: the right to the city is increasingly being taken up and negotiated in formal and institutionalized contexts and then connected to the right to housing. Social movements, neighbourhood associations and the like are also involved in this process - calls for a legal right to the city to be institutionalized. International organizations, such as the World Urban Forum, non-governmental organizations, such as Habitat International and city governments define in this context what is meant by a right to the city. For example, at the World Urban Forum 2004, “the right to the city” was defined as a right to housing and clean water. In the 11 Sustainable Development Goals from the United Nations, it states, “make cities and human settlements, inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.” Among others it is to ensure by 2030 access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing, basic services and upgrades from slums (UN Sustainability Goals). Even if a clear right to adequate and affable housing is not mentioned, at least the specific reference to access to adequate housing is providing a link to a justice framework regarding existing human right obligations.

Most of the authors mentioned in the past chapter refer critically to the dominance of neo-liberal practices and point out that there are mechanisms excluding part of the citizens (Domaradzka, 2018 p. 613). This is why many authors claim for the ideal of a “city for people not for profit” (Harvey 2008)

and reject the logic of profit to create solutions for a decent life and supportive environments. Domaradzka writes that the version of Lefebvre which incorporates a more revolutionary view on the right to the city is nowadays represented by “the actions of Right to the City Alliance in the USA and similar networks in countries around the world (Derecho a la Ciudad movements in Latin America or Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca in Catalonia).” (Domaradzka, 2018 p. 613). These oppose the allocation of basic resources and the market dominance in areas of housing social services and employment. That’s also how the right to the city and to housing are interlinked.

The question of whether housing is a fundamental social right and, if so, how the provision of housing should be organized is hotly debated in urban areas. Different from the right to the city, Madden and Marcuse introduce the term: “radical right to housing,” referring to a decommodification and financialization of housing. In their book on “Defense of Housing” (Madden & Marcuse, 2016), the sociologist Madden and the urban planner Marcuse advocate the implementation of radical measures to overcome the housing crises in large cities and the social inequalities associated with them. They propose treating housing as a human right, withdrawing housing from market processes and distributing it independently of income levels or wealth. Such appeals are not new: since urbanization in the 19th century under a liberal auspice, critics have referred to housing policy as a key point for building a better, more just society. Oliveira refers on the right to housing and home and how it is manifested in the Portuguese constitution and explains that it is “much more than the right to have one roof and four walls: as far as the respect for the dignity of the human person is concerned, all citizens should be able to enjoy a place in which they feel they be-long and a physical space that can be formed as a home to live safely” (Oliveira, 2020 p. 20). It is more than the right to housing, it is about the right to have decent and adequate housing conditions. It is about “the right to affordable housing, a school for the kids, accessible services or access to public transport. The right to have your urban horizon as wide or as narrow as you want. This might mean allegiance to the neighbourhood, to your street, to your building but also to what lies beyond” (Merrifield, 2017). It is here where the right to the city and housing intersect.

In the document: HABITAT III and the right to housing, 47 paragraphs are mentioned referring and documenting problems and needs regarding the right to housing as a standard for adequate living conditions. In this sense, in paragraph 8 it is said that “Systemic patterns of inequality, exclusion and lack of adequate housing for large numbers of city inhabitants are human rights problems that need to be addressed through a human rights framework. The right to adequate housing, in its full scope, and the right to non-discrimination in this context, must be at the centre of a new urban agenda” (Habitat III 8). Moreover, it is said in paragraph 12: “Housing is a cornerstone right, indivisible from all other rights and fundamental to an approach that begins with the dignity, equality and security of the human person. Narrow interpretations which focus on housing as a commodity or housing that

provides a roof over one's head have been rejected under international human rights law. Rather, the right to housing has long been understood as the right to live somewhere in peace, security and dignity. The right to adequate housing and non-discrimination are themselves transformational, creating not only goals for which to strive but also a framework of action and accountability through which the goals can be realized" (Habitat III 12). Oliveira writes regarding this that the "right to adequate housing requires non-discrimination and prioritization of vulnerable groups. Adequate housing should be accessible to vulnerable groups in society (...) This also entails cultural fit (e.g. how houses are built, and the materials used, should express both identity and cultural diversity of the residents" (Oliveira, 2020 p. 22).

2.4 Urban Social Movements

This chapter is about the landscape of urban mobilization operating within the framework of the right to the city. In the recent decades, interest in urban activism has grown within civil society and social movements. This is a consequence of new waves of activism across the globe.

To define what constitutes a social movement, an approach by Snow is followed. Snow defines that Social Movements are "change-oriented in the sense that they seek or oppose change; [...] challengers to or defenders of existing institutional structures or systems of authority; [...] collective rather than individual enterprises; [...] act outside of existing institutional or organizational arrangements; [...] operate with some degree of organization; [...] and typically display some degree of temporal continuity" (Snow, 2013, p. 1201).

The form of these mobilizations varies from civil society organizations like grassroots neighbourhood organizations, housing associations, local interest groups to protest and emergency initiatives or movements for environmental or social justice. The "right to the city" movements that have emerged in several cities around the world over the last decade pick up on local causes and connect existing protests on-site with one another. They are most likely to represent (also) urban political movements. Urban protests are therefore often not about urban politics but are staged within cities and use the city as a stage for national or global struggles. Urban political protests, in the narrower sense, on the other hand, deal with precisely those struggles related to the city, like its development, shape or leadership. The concept of social movement also enables protests to be connected with other attractive forms of engagement like self-help projects, citizens' cooperatives, food sharing initiatives and guerrilla gardening. Movements are perceived by Castells as "agents of change of the urban system" (Castells 1972). Prujit follows this approach and defines: "urban movements are social movements through which citizens attempt to achieve some control over their urban environment. The urban environment comprises the built environment, the social fabric of the

city, and the local political process” (Pruijt 2007 p.1). Lewicka (2011) shows through interviews that “my home is my castle” is replaced by “my neighbourhood is my business.” This is also what feeds Lefebvre’s idea of the Right to the City and the idea of engaging and transforming urban space for collective life. Many of the social mobilizations across Europe emerged as a response to austerity policies after the 2008 financial crisis. This is reflected in housing activism bringing back the idea of housing as a universal basic right.

Often the first impulse for forming an urban movement initiative is to organize a protest against the existing policies that might cause mass evictions etc. In the development and learning phase, grassroot groups may have learned that introducing social consulting mechanisms and participatory planning tools to influence the decision making can have a real impact. That the political elites take advantage of the activities of citizen groups while branding the city as creative, rebellious, and diverse, it intends to attract tourists and companies looking for alternative locations. Domaradzka argues that activities from urban movements range from “advocacy and service provision to political representation, as well as down-to-earth problem-solving at the neighbourhood level.” (Domaradzka, p.608. 2018).

Grazioli argues that, “whereas the citadins gain their entitlement to producing the urban space through the experience of its daily routines, they materialize it in acts of re-appropriation, the emphasis on day-to-day interactions, and regardless of their formal enfranchisement.”(Grazioli, 2018, p.12). I see importance in giving light to everyday life struggles of cities which become the stage of globalization and transformation, of people coming together, defining common goals and a shared agenda and act collectively to achieve change.

2.5 Social Mobilization in Portugal

After the coup of the 25th of April 1974, broad and popular mobilization followed, called, “the Processo Revolucionário em Curso (PREC—Revolutionary Process Underway)” this was marked by strong conflicts of opposite political forces, big social mobilizations, occupation of factories, houses and led also at the institutional level to radical measures, such as the nationalization of private enterprises and a minimum wage for civil servants, among others (Accornero, 2019b). Many scholars are interested in these mobilizations, as it is often referred to the PREC, as one of the biggest mobilizations in post war Europe (Accornero, 2019b). What seems paradoxical is that on the one hand the PREC has remained the greatest social mobilisation in post-war Europe, and is also referred to as having a “mild-mannered” tradition regarding mobilization and political and social demands (Accornero, 2019b). Accornero states, that even if this assumption is quoted by other studies it “seems impossible to find the original empirical study demonstrating the ‘mild-mannered hypothesis’” (Accornero, 2019b). Also,

struggles for the right to housing are not new in Portugal; in the revolutionary period, the housing movement was one of the most intense mobilizations (Ramos Pinto, 2013).

It is a “common vision of Portuguese civil society as one that was sleeping until awakened during the revolution thanks to the miracle of the opening of the political opportunity structures.” (Accornero, 2019b). The dictator Salazar “characterized the Portuguese a ‘mild-mannered’ people ‘averse to political radicalization, violence and political mobilization.’” (Ramos Pinto, In Accornero 2019b) and it was key part of his propaganda narrative and demobilization strategy’ (Ramos Pinto 2012 p.3) in Accornero). Accornero contrasts this theory, by also referring to a visit of Prof. James Scott with Portuguese and Spanish scholars constituting a “sort of history of the contentious performances in modern Portugal, from the institutionalization of the liberal state up to the end of the Estado”. Accornero argues to “recognise the actual role of the various and often hidden forms of resistance adopted by Portuguese society throughout its history” (Accornero 2019b).

What is referred to a next wave of mobilization are the anti-austerity movements. Carvalho points out, that in 2011 major events of protest took place, “Portugal experienced its largest non-trade union or political party led demonstration against the negative prospect of a precarious generation in March 2011 – the so-called Desperate Generation (Geração à Rasca, GàR)” (Baumgarten, 2013 IN Portos & Carvalho, 2019)). It is argued by several scholars that “2017 has also been the year of appearance and consolidation of a number of activist groups and platforms concerned with the right to housing and the city”, whereby HABITA played an important role (Tulumello, 2019 p.71). Through HABITA!, new networks of solidarity also emerged, such as Stop Despejos, Acao pela Habitacao and Mulheres pelo direito a Habitacao⁴. Gathering various struggles around the right to housing and to the city, with actions like occupying public squares, painting walls and resisting to emergencies and stopping evictions at the door. Tulumello also refers to the bridge of academia and housing struggles with the two project exPERTs and HOPES, whereby HOPES also carries out a formal action research partnership with HABITA. This is important for providing alternative data regarding housing, as it is the only data provided that comes from the census and is only happening every 10 years and does not include more micro and qualitative data about the housing crisis and market (Tulumello, 2019 p.72). Accornero also writes about strategies of gaining media visibility about ongoing struggle, which helps to shape the political discourse (Accornero & Carvalho 2020). According to Tulumello: “HABITA! played a crucial role in getting the Special Rapporteur to visit Portugal and Farha’s report (2017), released after a few months, has had a massive media impact, constituting a crucial moment in the politicisation of housing in Portugal” (Tulumello, 2019 p.75). Besides Tulumello writes that: “the prevalence of homeownership had long contributed to social pacification in this field, housing crises and the progressive

⁴ <https://stopdespejos.wordpress.com>; <https://www.facebook.com/habitacao/>;

entrenchment of austerity seem to be opening up to the possibility that different groups start realising what they have in common, the political-economic dimension of housing in times of late capitalism(...) This context has provided a fertile ground for the birth of a new generation of activist groups and platforms concerned with the right to the city and the right to housing” (Tulumello, 2019 p.75). In fact, there has been an increase of “urban civic movements advocating new types of housing policies in urban areas” (Seixas 2020.p.59). Besides Tulumello argues that the housing movements in Lisbon and Portugal are constituted by the fight against the commodification housing, which “can be understood as a fight against low-intensity austerity as the transference of economic vulnerability to the social fabric”(Tulumello, 2019 p.76). Therefore, housing movements needs to be connected with the recent transformation Portugal has passed through.

2.6 (Everyday life) Concepts of Social Movement Research

This chapter will explain some of the micro concepts of Social Movement research, to further understand how these are used in the ongoing of the thesis. In 1996, Melucci argues that social movements are “actions that imply conflict, solidarity and a breaching of the system limits”(Melucci, 1996). Polletta and Jasper define collective identity as “an individual’s cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice, or institution” (Poletta & Jasper 2001, p. 85). They refer to the collective identity of a group being expressed through the group’s practices and traditions. An approach followed for a long time was about the Political Opportunity Structure (POS). According to Sidney Tarrow’s definition, “political opportunities are consistent – but not necessarily formal, permanent or national – dimensions of the political environment which either encourage or discourage people from using collective action” (Tarrow, 1998 p.18). This approach has been criticised and a more relational and interactionist approach has been considered. Olivier Fillieule considers opportunities not as “structurally insensitive stocks that exist prior to action”, but as elements which are “continuously updated through the relationship with the movements” (Fillieule, 1997 p.97). This focuses on the agency and the active role of actors creating mobilization and gives a more relational understanding of social movements and their action (Accornero, 2019a, Accornero, 2020). Yates argues that: “Notions of abeyance, latency and social movement community built on new social movement theories and other contemporaneous developments, to clarify the type of relations existing between cultural and political processes in movements, and those between movements and wider society.” (Yates, 2015a).

Abeyance refers to what happens when movements are not mobilizing; yet activist practices are sustained and happen with affective bonds, cultural activities and organizational or writing time. Yates refers to Staggenborg, emphasizing, “the diffuse boundaries between subcultural expression and

activism,” giving light to “how communities provide a primary context for opportunities and constraints for mobilization which maps onto the wider political context” (Yates, 2015 p.4). This also implies that activity and visibility are not always connected. Besides focussing on organizational structure, social movement scholars have given attention to resources. Still, this attention has “nevertheless, outweighed other important features, such as the external political environment or the activists agency”(Malamidis, 2021 p.49),. It is further argued, that: “Shifting the focus from single organizations, groups or associations, to networks, boundaries may prevent or enhance the diffusion and exchange of practices and knowledge. (...) These may include the ‘circulation of symbols, the expression of emotions, or the sharing of militancy and friendship” (Malamidis, 2021 p.32 f). Jaster states that: “these activists embody their actions, sometimes in a prefigurative manner, other times more practically.” According to Jaster” these are a new form of resistance: focusing on practical realities instead of attempting to transform broader society. These do-it-yourself attempts patch together solutions, partially in response to the insight that standard market and state-oriented actions are insufficient at best, harmful at worst” (Jaster, 2021).

Regarding the everyday life of movements many studies have been made regarding direct action, prefigurative daily practices by anthropologists, environmental psychologists and geographers. With regards to connecting housing (struggle) and emotions, an interesting contribution has been made by Felipe Santos, taking a closer look into care practices developed by the PAH.

To speak about the values sustaining activism, the motivation and connect it to practices, these terms must be unpacked. “‘practices’ can be understood as the variety of short-term and mostly realisable activities that any movement group do together. They range in scale and in how they directly relate to mobilisation” (Yates, 2015b p.19). Whereby practices can range widely, and are orientated on an anthropological approach, highlighting the agency of activists in their practices, which are various and diverse and can be more specialized like meetings, fundraising, maintaining infrastructure, but also include the mobilisation itself or tasks of preparing an action (Yates, 2015b p.19-20). Focusing on the practices and on the attributed meaning allows a better and deeper understanding on the political ideas and practices inherent to the problems the movements are facing. Moreover, focusing on practices allows to understand the meaning attributed to actions, it situates actions and shows how actions, identities are continuously processual, hybrid, adoptable in human form and organization. Identities are constant in the move, in the making, are being produced, reproduced disrupted and redefined (J. Jasper & Duyvendak, 2015). I don’t take them as fixed, but under constant construction, being shown in different momentums. Focusing on doing and practice is the epistemological resource for analysing everyday political processes in movements. “Practices are performed in certain ways, and the selection of practices and their performances is important for distinguishing movements and organisations from others” (Yates, 2015a p.16). Performances refer to a shared and learned system,

where interactions are culturally coded. Griffith & Marion write that “cultural performances are typically the most recognizable within a community. Their importance is highlighted by taking place at specific times and in specific places, with a clear beginning and end” (Miller Griffith & Marion. IN: Brown et al., 2020 p.384). It is argued, that performance has consequences on the social reality as these are often “used to reinforce the status quo” but that these also means that counter performances can reinvent the status quo (Miller Griffith & Marion. IN: Brown et al., 2020 p.384). The weekly assembly meeting can be seen as a performance in which practices are happening. Griffith and Marion determined that “In other words, (1) cultural performances are an ideal unit of study because they reference and encapsulate a great deal of information about the culture that gave rise to them, and (2) such cultural messages become more accessible with multiple samples of these performances, i.e. as the researcher can compare and contrast the specifics between repeated performances of the same “performance” (Miller Griffith & Marion. IN: Brown, et al., 2020 p.403). Anthropologists are interested in how subjects are performing culture and how these practices are carried out. It’s “about everyday words and actions that reflect cultural ideas and can be studied as a means of understanding culture” (Miller Griffith & Marion. IN: Brown, et al., 2020 p.403) . Agency is another important and continuously appearing term and means “an individual’s ability to make independent choices and act upon his/her will” (Miller Griffith & Marion. IN: Brown, et.al 2020 p.403). Another term is Hegemony which means that “Power is so pervasive that it is rarely acknowledged or even noted, yet It has effects on everyday actions”(Miller Griffith & Marion IN: Brown, et.al 2020 p.403).

2.6.1 Everyday Resistance

When looking at these patterns of everyday performance, a lot can be learned about culture and a particular group: how people behave, how they present themselves to others or make claims. It is interesting how a group incorporates new members and what practices support the performance. Everyday life consists of quotidian practices of subjects (Iñiguez de Heredia, 2018). Speaking about everyday resistance, the work of James Scott. Scott’s book *Weapons of the weak: everyday forms of resistance* (1985) is crucial in this regard. He introduces the idea that oppression and resistance are hybrid, and that if looking just on historic events such as organized collective action, subtle but powerful forms of ‘every day resistance’ can be easily missed. Scott looks at peasant and slave societies and how they answer to repression, looking not on acts of rebellion, but on cultural resistance or practices of non-corporation. He states, that peasant rebellion is uncommon and not having much impact, that’s why he looks at the less visible and everyday forms of resistance (Scott, 1986). By focusing on everyday practices of resistance, actions and their relationship to power dynamics can be understood. Resistance is herein reference to its object and practices and not as a result. These more hidden forms of resistance are requiring less coordination and planning and often do not directly

challenge or confront elite norms. Hegemony is seen by Scott as subconscious and internalized. “Most of the political life of subordinate groups is to be found neither in the overt collective defiance of powerholders nor in complete hegemonic compliance, but in the vast territory between these two polar opposites” (Scott, 1985 p.136). He highlights how resistance, and the idea of hidden and invisible power are interconnected and how relatively “powerless groups” carry out practices of resistance when hiding their actions from the powerful while using for example certain codes. Scott’s conceptualization is therefore “standing in tradition of E.P. Thompson, Clifford Geertz and Eric Wolf, and in particular the concepts of class, hegemony, moral economy, culture and lived experience in these authors” (Iñiguez de Heredia, 2018 p.51). For Scott resistance emerges as the conflict from the “lived experience of subordination, when it is fought or negotiated and under dispute with elites to gain and maintain dignity and autonomy” (Iñiguez de Heredia, 2018 p.51).

For Foucault, resistance is a means to conceptualize power, because it brings power relations to light. Iñiguez de Heredia argues that looking at everyday resistance offers a “clear delimitation of what resistance is, who the subjects of resistance are, what their object is and what means they use”. It can provide an understanding about “the intentions, motivations, acts and actors that resist in a relation of domination. The everyday framework of resistance does that by establishing the pattern of acts of individuals and collectives in a position of subordination against the everyday experience of domination as defining elements.” Thus, according to Iñiguez de Heredia it is not possible to consider resistance outside of power relations. “The relations take place within materially and symbolically unequal actors, so that (...) everyday resistance is located in the actions of subordinate actors. (...) This is the result, especially within the Scottian version, of a greater emphasis on the relationship between actors and their goals than on the actual actions.” (Iñiguez de Heredia, 2018 p.51). These works underline that: “resistance is rooted in the daily individual and collective covert acts of opposition and self-help against domination(...)” (Iñiguez de Heredia, 2018 p.53).

2.6.2 Career

The Anthropologist Wilde is tracking the career of a “precarious tenant” to examine how the struggle to keep a home, a shelter is experienced. How being housed precariously is a series of advice, support and how low-income tenants, state institutions and activist are linked together. According to Wilde, these encounters express the deep underlying struggle of the state of housing; it’s about the tension between housing as a home and housing as a market commodity (Wilde 2020 p.2). Through tracing trajectories and giving light to the everyday life practices of movements these interconnections on the meso level can be explained. Fillieu argues that: “the sociology of activism has been revitalized by the conception of activism as a long-lasting social activity articulated by phases of joining, commitment, and defection. This has given rise to the notion of ‘activist career’”. According to him

“career allows us to focus on the process and permanent dialectic between individual history, social institutions and, more generally, context. The outcome is less a case of predicting a state (activism, disengagement, and so on) than of rebuilding” (Fillieule, 2010). Tracing activist careers helps to understand phenomena better, understand engagement as a process and understand behaviour in a context. Moreover, the micro level of biographical trajectories offers to understand “how, at each biographical stage, the attitudes and behaviours of activists are determined by past attitudes and behaviours, which in turn condition the range of future possibilities, thus, resituating commitment across the entire life cycle. The concept of career therefore enables us to combine questions of the predisposition to and operationalization of activism, of differentiated and variable forms of engagement over time, of the multiplicity of engagements across the life cycle, and of the withdrawal and extension of commitment” (Fillieule, 2010 p.11). Giving light to careers, I can also situate the current into previous experiences and previous activism, highlight how this shapes a group history and reflects in organizational structure and how actions and campaign might stay in relation to past actions. It frames the biographies into the housing question and the political engagement.

Careers give us a better understanding of intersectional experience and patterns. It can show how different forms of discrimination overlap in a person, which cannot be viewed separately from one another. Kimberlé Crenshaw describes intersectionality as follows: " Intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes from and collides, where it meshes and overlaps. Reconstructing the trajectories of biographies, provide further context on why decisions were/are made, as it is processual, and this explains how engagement works. Accornero followed the trajectory of political engagement of former Portuguese activist and sees “the result of the intersection of the micro level of individual experience, the meso-level of relations inside the groups and the macro level of institutional change.” She shows how these levels are interlinked and influence each other and stay in relation to cognitive and emotional aspects which are shaping the political engagement (Accornero, 2019b).

2.6.3 Direct Social Action

Bosi and Zamponi underline that, the measures that different actors of Social Movement Organisations choose, will depend on what they believe to be the most effective and legitimate to certain contexts and situations (Bosi & Zamponi 2020). Therefore, the organizational structure of a social movement organization is important, as it models the view of collective actors and on “what actions they deem most effective, while identity tends to establish the guidelines that actors use to assess the legitimacy of particular forms of action.” Therefore it is important to say that the forms of collective action are never neutral, but they are connected with specific organizations and identities (Bosi & Zamponi, 2020 p.4-5). Bosi and Zamponi define direct social action, as a “form of collective action that does not

primarily focus upon claiming something from the state but instead focuses upon directly transforming some specific aspects of society.”(Bosi & Zamponi, 2020), whereas direct social action is part of their repertoire of social movement organizations. Following James Jasper (2015) it can be assumed that actions carried out by social movements are broadly strategic. Bosi and Zamponi refer to this when they wrote: “Strategy is explicable by context, emotions, identity, culture, core beliefs, and background as well as cognitive reasoning about interests In this sense, strategy is understood as part of a process through which actors define how the social world works and how they can position themselves in comparison and interaction with other actors” (Bosi & Zamponi, 2020 p.4).

2.7 Collective Care, Mutual Aid, Solidarity and Assembly Practice

From here on in I will be introducing the concept of Mutual Aid and Solidarity in Social Movements. Whereby Collective Care is also different from Self Care, which focuses on putting yourself first and working on your own well-being. This leads to us isolating ourselves, dealing with our problems alone and losing sight of the well-being of our people. Through self-care in capitalism, responsibility for social problems is “individualized”. Instead of looking for the fault in the system, e.g. in poverty, inadequate social benefits, inadequate health care or exploitative work relationships, responsibility is passed on to the individual. The capitalist system leads to constant pressure not only to have to realize and optimize oneself individually, but also to be responsible for one's own well-being. As a counter-concept to self-care, marginalized groups gave rise to the idea of Collective Care. Through joint support and collective work, collective care aims to improve people's individual wellbeing (Michaeli 2017). Furthermore, “the provision of social services as part of social movements’ repertoires is in no way new. Similar efforts, such as the organization of mutual-aid funds, can be traced throughout the history of the labour movement” (Malamidis 2021 p.38). The concept of Collective Care exists outside the market and cannot be capitalistically co-opted - it is free and for everyone. The difference to self-care is that there is no fighting alone, but as a collective and against capitalist individualization. So as long as the conditions are not given to guarantee the good of all, the community should work on structures that care. Collective care is political as it is where a common ground is built for formulating political claims and changes and work for more structural change (Michaeli 2017, Dockray 2019).

Felipe Santos analysed in depth how Movements Care within the PAH (Plataforma afectados por la Hipoteca). Santos refers to the work of Tronto (1993) who provides a conceptualization to understand mobilization. Santos writes according to it: “Any caring relationship starts with a person or collective caring about another. During this first step, attentiveness is key to noticing the unmet needs of another person or group. Second, it is necessary to take responsibility to address the identified need,

caring for the other individual or group. Third, one needs to be competent to address the need and give care. Finally, the collective or person receives the care and responds to it” (Santos, 2019).

In the book “Mutual Aid: Building Solidarity During This Crisis (and the Next)”, Dean Spade, a professor at the Seattle University School of Law offers a guide for Social Movements to combat injustice, while also meeting the immediate needs of the people affected by poverty, racism, violence, transphobia, and ableism. According to Dean “Mutual aid projects emerge because public services are exclusive, punitive, and criminalizing. Neoliberals take aim at public services in order to further concentrate wealth and, in doing so, exacerbate material inequality and violence” (Dean, 2020 p.60). In this context which according to him is defined by social isolation Dean offers the concept of mutual aid, which gives us the tools to meet “each other’s needs based on shared commitments to dignity, care, and justice” (Dean, 2020 p.46). Mutual aid focuses on a shared understanding that the crises we are facing are caused by the system that we’re living under and goes to the root causes of these problems. „Mutual aid gives people a way to plug into movements based on their immediate concerns, and it produces social spaces where people grow new solidarities “(Dean, 2020 p.12). Mutual Aid is also according to him also always based on the premise, that the conditions we are living are unjust. He argues that the system of capitalism and colonialism and the structures it created, have disrupted communities. Being pressed in the system of labour, private property and neoliberal individualism the way we care for each other have become tenuous. That’s why. He argues that the act of sharing, of putting time and resources into caring for the most vulnerable is a revolutionary as this mutual aid breaks with social isolation and the dependency on hostile systems. Similarly, Santos states that, “when somebody is paralyzed by a grievance, this person is unavailable because she faces structural, biographical, and/or cultural needs that hamper her mobilization. In order to participate in social movement activities, people often need to be connected to activism opportunities through networks” (Santos 2019).

Dean presents in his book charts and lists that can be brought into group meetings to stimulate conversation and shared analysis and helps to imagine how to coordinate to take collective care. In HABITA this book takes an important role in the production of a toolkit “Saude e habitacao”, which is still in the making and was funded through Fundaction⁵, with the aim to give tools to marginalized communities in identifying their needs. Dean defines three key elements of mutual aid in social movement, making reference to the Black Panthers who offered in the 1960 and 70 a survival program, including breakfast, a health program and school support. Core Element of mutual aid is according to the author, that “these projects are exposing the reality that people’s needs are not fulfilled and the mutual working on a proposition to address this injustice. “What is done is that mutual aid created

⁵ <https://fundaction.eu>

spaces, where basic needs can be met and a shared analysis about in just conditions can occur.” His analysis of the black panthers shows that these breakfast program for black people, gave people the fulfilled basic need of food and created the space for the shared analysis of black poverty. It was breaking stigma and isolation while meeting material need and get the people fired up. The Black Panthers analysis provides a vision of liberation, taking as a base that Black People need to defend themselves against a racist and violent government (Dean, 2020 p.14-19). He also analysed the young Lords, who took similar steps regarding the Puerto Rican Liberation, meeting everyday needs of Puerto Rican impoverished neighbourhoods. Also, they implemented their own vision for decolonizing Puerto Rico and liberate the Puerto Ricans living in the US from racism and Police violence through Mutual Aid.

Dean shows that in the 70’ many left movements undertook mutual aid, just like feminist movement offering abortion, gay health clinics, childcare collectives and tenant unions, whereby mutual aid was always crucial for the transformative change. Exclusion is addressed by creating independent alternatives (Dean, 2020 p.21). According to Dean it shows how people come together to care and share when the government is not there. The second point Dean mentions it that Mutual Aid projects are essential to build a social movement, as a” basic reason why people address social movements is often because they need something, such as eviction defence, immigration status, disability right and so on, but as it is difficult to organize and be politically active when you’re struggling to survive, mutual aid provides a powerful tool” (Dean, 2020 p.21). People don’t just get support, but also politically analyse the conditions that produces these crises, which according to Dean challenge stigma and isolation (Dean 2020. p.22). That is exemplified with stating that: „An initial goal of serving people impacted by homelessness quickly reveals that racism, colonialism, immigration enforcement, ableism, police violence, the foster care system, the health care system, transphobia, and more are all causes of homelessness or causes of further harm to homeless people. Solidarity and an ever-expanding commitment to justice emerge from contact with the complex realities of injustice“ (Dean, 2020 p.28).

The third important point he mentions, is that Mutual aid projects are participatory and solving problems through collective action and not waiting for saviours. This means for example, that people help each other in a court proceeding and will learn what harms people and how to fight back. But additional they will also learn about „meeting facilitation, working across differences, retaining volunteers, addressing conflict, giving and receiving feedback, following through, and coordinating schedules and transportation“ (Dean, 2020 p.28). Dean argues further that „collective spaces, like mutual aid organizing, can give us opportunities to unlearn conditioning and build new skills and capacities” (Dean, 2020 p.28).

An additional point important to mention when referring to Dean, is that he clearly differentiated between charity and social services and Mutual Aid and Solidarity, stating that the latter is what truly supports people in crisis. As the former refer usually to the government or the rich making decisions over the poor and are as he argues, not designed to address the main causes of poverty and exclusion. It follows and supports a model of hierarchy what classifies into the deserving and the undeserving and promotes the idea that most poverty is a result of being lazy or of immorality; it defines who is poor and who needs help. And often promote racist and sexist tropes reproducing that „immigrant women have too many children, or that Black families are dysfunctional, or that Indigenous children are better off separated from their families and communities, or that people are poor because of drug use“. Another important aspect discussed by Dean is that these charity institutions are producing stigmas related to receiving help. He states that “Carrying out mutual aid everybody makes collaborative decisions, whereby in charity the decisions are made by the ones in power and with capital. (...) Charity makes rich people and corporations look generous while upholding and legitimizing the systems that concentrate wealth “(Dean, 2020 p.31) . Therefore, he argues vulnerable people are placed to look even more vulnerable.

Ecofeminist have argued for the development of more “womanly” engagements with the nonhuman world, because they are more egalitarian and participatory (Plumwood 1986 IN: Ferry et al. p. 22). Mutual Aid happens also in the assembly practice which is carried out by many social movements and it’s often the first contact point of people approaching a Social Movement Organisation. The People Movement Assembly writes that it is a “gathering of people of the social movements seeking to practice power through participatory governance and to determine action plans for systemic change. The assembly is not the act of gathering people. The assembly represents the essence of the people who have gathered and the synthesis of their knowledge and commitments.” (PeoplesMovementAssembly)⁶. Whereby it is also important to mention that the decision making occurs consensually and is based on the idea that everyone should have a say in decisions that affect their lives. Before an assembly there is usually a planning team, which determines the goals and the agenda for the meeting. They then invite the people who are affected (in this case by housing issues), and who are interested and want to contribute. During the assembly the members are welcomed, and the context is explained, as well as the purpose of the gathering and the goals of the assembly. Often it followed a similar structure and is adopted to the context where it takes place. Usually one of the activists, with a “moderator-role”, presents him/herself first, and tells then something about the background of the Social Movement Organisation and refers to that in the assembly tradition to make

⁶ <http://www.peoplesmovementassembly.org/what-is-an-assembly/>

clear commitments to actions. The goals and further steps are documented, as well as the synthesized information of the assembly, which is sent to the attendees afterwards.

CHAPTER 3 **Ethnography in the Context of Activist Research**

From here on, I am introducing the methodology of activist ethnography as the data collection method of this dissertation. I will present my ideas and assumptions and reflect on my position as an activist academic. I will explore the method of activist ethnography and further explain why this approach is so fruitful to collect data with the questions I'm asking. Accornero & Filleule highlight Ethnographic Research as a useful tool to highlight trajectories and give light to repression of certain groups. They argue that: "Interdisciplinary and plural points of view, questions, theoretical frameworks and methodologies have converged into a harmonious, albeit hybrid, perspective, rather than a restrictive school of thought" (Accornero & Filleuele 2016 p.9). Through participative observation and in my position as an academic and activist, I am examining people's experiences seeking their right to the city in a broader sense and more concrete, the support in their right to housing while tracing the path in the encounter with social movement organizations.

This research is inductive: based on everyday observations. Whereby the subjects actively take part in the research process, helping me to ask better questions and understand different worldviews (Brown et al., 2020). Due to lack of resources, the initial idea was to dive deeper in Barcelona and bring more innovation to Lisbon's movements. I could not realize the research like it was planned in the beginning. Due to the pandemic, a lot of time of the research was not possible to go the library, neither to hold the interviews in person, that's why several interviews were recorded via Skype, and the research question was several times adopted. Going to Barcelona (10 days) helped me to outline a general picture of these practices, to see that they are shared and understand this performance in the housing activism field. Robinson suggest seeing the urban "through elsewhere", as this will lead to better understanding of outcomes and "contribute to broader conceptualizations and conversations about aspects of the urban" and shared (or distinctive) processes shaping a certain urban outcome. She argues for new grounds of comparability, which enable all kinds of comparison, and which can therefore also result in stretching theoretical concepts, to "the breaking point required for the reinvention of urban studies for global analysis" (Robinson, 2016 p.6).

Robinson argues for seeing out observations as particular cases of wider phenomena. We can "compare and analyse the intervening processes in each place which affect the specific outcome" and learn about the wider process. This also supports the argument, that "neoliberalization shapes each locality, only instantiated differently in each case" (...) "we can explore the trajectories of a phenomena, their assemblage and co-ordination (..) it should be possible to name and trace the production and the effect" (Robinson, 2016 p.12).

This dissertation contributes to the historical moment in which the movement for the right to housing are while introducing their practices of Care. Connecting the data produced in ethnographic

Observation to establish a dialogue between data, theory and practice. Moreover, to produce data which is relevant for the movement. This research also draws on Matthew Desmond's advantages of 'relational ethnography', which 'gives ontological primacy, not to groups or places, but to configurations of relations' (Desmond, 2014 p.554). It is about conducting fieldwork with human subjects, that's why I rely more on narratives and interpretations of meaning.

3.1 Participatory Action Research – academic activist

Debates on the connection of social science to "real-world concerns" have been essential for developing the disciplines and the reflexivity about the own study. In late 1960, academics started to "bring theories and politics which are rooted in anarchism, Marxism, and other critical movements into the debate for solving social problems" (Chatterton et al. 2007 p.4). Since 1990 there have been new calls for "politically committed research" that requires a high level of reflexivity in recognition of differential power relations within the research process, in, for example, understanding the intersubjectivity of activist academics and the researched (Staeheli & Lawson 1994). This gained "significance across the social sciences in 'public' and/or 'participatory' variants of sociologies, geographies, anthropologies" (Chatterton et al. 2007 p.2). I'm following Chatterton et. al, who are relating action and activism and consider themselves as "academic activists" as they consciously take part and research in actions with social movement groups that aim radical social change (Chatterton et al. 2007 p.4).

Me, as an activist, academic, anthropologist, I'm interested in practices of political action, in claims of everyday life, in mobilization and progressive social agendas, and how to bring theory and empiry together. I position myself as an insider-outside inhabiting 'an inherently unstable space of betweenness' (Katz, 1994, p. 67). In "academy theories of action are acceptable. Theories that argue that writing itself is a form of political action are acceptable (in fact, they are greatly appreciated)" (Shukaitis, Graeber, 2007 p.16). They understand social movements as incubators of new knowledge (Shukaitis, Graeber, 2007 p.16). In this sense, the following ethnography brings the approximation between the academy and its objects of study, contributing with a presentation of the results of the fieldwork from the perspective of the research activist and valuing what knowledge is produced by practices in the Social Movements Organisations from the inside. Therefore, the closeness to the field of study offers to be "thick descriptive" (Geertz), bringing to light context, emotions, and practices. Arguing for a dynamic, hybrid understanding of culture, which tries to connect local subjects in their diverse relationships with the world system and to embed them in its structures. Considering the contemporary global interconnectedness, I'm arguing for perspectives through which "social research creates new possibilities for political action" (Shukaitis & Graeber, 2007, pp. 30–31).

Moreover, the claims made by movements towards a more participatory, more socially just, and accessible city are discourses which are embedded with my everyday life, with increasing global, social, economic injustice. According to Albert, “the social engagement of the ethnographer can no longer be seen as a personal political or ethical choice, optional and foreign to his scientific project. It clearly becomes an explicit and constituent element of the ethnographic relationship” (Albert, 1997, pp. 57–58). Matthew Desmond defines “relational ethnography” which “gives ontological primacy, not to groups or places, but to configurations of relations” (Desmond, 2014 p.554). This interactionist approach to mobilization dynamics is helpful to understand processes, emotions and develop an understanding on how actors take decisions. “This interactionist approach explores the strategic action which players engage in and considers what goals these players have in mind demonstrate how players and preferences shift, realign and contradict in the process of interaction and negotiate values, norms, discourses, ideas, ideology, resources, arguments, rules, identities and principles.” (McGarry, Davidson, Accornero, Jasper, & Duyvendak, 2016). Jaster writes that if “activists’ voices and perspectives are foregrounded: they recognize ideological and/or practical problems and the challenges of using standard solutions. They are agents, not manifestations of alienating structural processes” (Jaster, 2021).

3.2 A double Identity

Harrison writes regarding this double identity of anthropologist and academic: “anthropologist with multiple consciousness and vision have a strategic role to play in the struggle for a decolonized science of humankind. Anthropologist with dual or multiple vision may be uniquely able to concert their extra eyes into useful research tools and effective political weapons” (Harrison 1991 p.90). Cheryl R. Rodrigues argues that this double identity does not give “only a multiple vision but also distinctive consciousness to (..) anthropology. This consciousness is influenced by our own lived experiences with struggles against race, gender, and class oppression (...)” (Rodrigues 2016 p.2439). Studying in our environment challenges us to deconstruct, reflect and distance from what we know as familiar. We can claim insider status and don’t need to construct to “get native”. I’m arguing for an attempt is to tell the stories of struggles communities and represent them in a way that is empowering. Cheryl R. Rodrigues raises questions on feminist scholarship, in where we always “struggle with the complexity to expressing ourselves as intellectual and naming ourselves as feminist, we must remain aware that our engagement in these particular struggles signifies a certain privileged status”. Our realities also being activist and academic, differ from the reality of the affected, who “often remain illiterate, under-educated, or perpetually disempowered by poverty” (Rodrigues 2016 p.146). This imbalance can be

found in-between researcher and affected, but also to be found in-between Soc. Movements Activists and affected transforming into activist.

Moreover, that Activist Research should be empowered to be a vehicle for change because the problems presented should be taken into account as the results come out of intellectual activism, working with communities to identify real needs. Chatterton et al. are arguing for the challenge “of delivering transformative social change.” They outline their lessons as activist academics which can be used for exploring how participatory action research can be a “vehicle for liberation, radical social transformation and the promotion of solidarity with resisting or struggling `others’” (Chatterton et al 2007 p.3). The first point highlighted is a commitment to social transformation, asking for what research is needed. The second point introduced by Chatterton et al. is about the how? And about developing solidarity. This referred according to the authors in identifying needs and “using research encounters to promote solidarity and direct forms of democracy not based on hierarchy or domination (...)” (Chatterton et al. 2007 p.4). A point made here is that support in the development of a radical critique can inspire groups. Chatterton et al. understanding of putting solidarity into practice means to co-produce relevant knowledge for the contexts which are useful and accessible to groups. It is further argued that: “Transformative encounters based on solidarity often come from our deep emotional responses to the world. These emotions rarely come from academic books or classroom experiences but direct experiences, intuition, or a sense of injustice” (Chatterton et al. 2007 p.6).

In this sense, the close activist ethnography of HABITA and the insights I got in the movements in Barcelona are serving to name injustices inherent to the socio-political condition experienced in the Metropolitan Area of Lisbon and in Barcelona and to conceptualize how citizens are organizing their struggle and developed practices and methods to collectivize their right to the city and housing. The approach used in this dissertation is an attempt to combine ethnography in the metropolis and an activist environment with the concerns about the conditions of ethnographic production. The advantage that the militant and engaged investigation approach brings to the activist ethnography is that it allows proximity to activists and intimate and individualized themes. In methodological terms, to solve the question of how to approach the variety of simultaneous practices, the situational analysis was used focusing mainly on the assemblies, as it’s where people come the first time in touch with the movement and where “first Care” is carried out, and a further strategy is planned. Moreover, as the housing precarity tends to blame the individual, the assemblies are a momentum in which, through sharing practices, the right to housing is collectivized. I’m looking at the common points from the set of events of collectivized struggle. That’s. why also the analysis of the published material such as articles and open letters, blog articles on the website and video material are also part of the analysed discourse and from importance.

3.3 Data Collection

The practices are presented with a closer inner view via Participatory Action Research in Lisbon with the movement HABITA. To learn about shared practices, I also conducted research in housing movements in Barcelona. I choose Barcelona and the Sindicat de Llogaters because some members of HABITA went to their Activist Summerschool and because action research aims to give something back and create value on both sides, the insight in Barcelona offered the possibility to bring “good practices” and ideas on how to manage resources better to find solutions and how to bond people to the movement, from Barcelona to Lisbon. HABITA is comparably small, even if doing immense work in housing support in Lisbon and much responsibility lays on a few, whereby the Sindicato de Llogateres can be considered a relatively big movement with even local subgroups. That’s also the reason why a strict comparison was not in my interest but focusing on the function of the practices of collective action.

In the following, the dataset will be shortly described. The interviews were just structured, through topics I wanted to bring the attention to, it was important to not force the interviewee into pre-defined categories but leave it open what topics come up and to produce the own narratives. At the beginning of the interview I presented myself, the interest of my study as well as my approach, and also highlighted that if afterwards question come up, or they want to know about the outcome of the study, that I’m available and pleased about further questions. I asked about mission, ideals, understanding of the right to the city, initiatives, choices for action, leading processes and defunctions of actions. More Data was collected through participant observation in assemblies and in actions and events and the organizational meetings. The analysis was actor centred and context centres, what means that I focus on their integrity and heterogeneity, resources, previous experiences and ideologies.

Lisbon: All the time in collecting data I was involved in the movement in Lisbon and could therefore also observe the decision making the work of assemblies and the preparation of open letters. In all this time extensive fieldnotes where taking in the field note diary, another very useful tool was for me the memo function in my phone. Often, I drove by car to the mobilizations and could afterwards speak unfiltered all my assumptions, ideas and reflections into my phone. Also, some testimonials were recorded by phone not in the sense of a proper interview, but in order to record the perspective on what happened on the side of affected. The data is composed of narrative interviews, focus group conversations, and data collected while participating in actions. The collected data is about:

- HABITA weekly organizational meetings at Sirigaita from end of 2019; in Lockdown online
- Monthly Assembly from June to November 2020; then break due to Lockdown from Mai on every Monday from 18:00 to 20:30
- Visits to support community of “Barrack” neighbourhoods in danger of demolition by the municipality, open letters

- First street assembly after the second lockdown with an open mic for the affected
- Photo documentation, see appendix
- Part in the meetings to write an open letter about the particular situation of women in homelessness by the new group formed out of HABITA – MuDHa
- Monthly meeting with assembly with MuDHa. Bringing affected women there
- Helping to form the toolkit for vulnerable neighborhoods “Saúde e habitação”
- 2 Interviews with activist “colleagues” in HABITA
- Actions (Stopping) evictions, not always resulting
- Participation in conferences/seminars about Social Movements and Housing Crisis
- Meeting of the Municipality of Loures with the residents of “Bairro Talude” to clarify the next steps
- Participation in women march and bringing affected women from the neighbourhoods
- Actions against demolitions on the 21. June, machines couldn’t be stopped
- Neighbourhood assemblies in Catujal, in Talude and in Montemor

Barcelona: In Barcelona, as mentioned before, not the same close, thick descriptive insight can be provided as in Lisbon as due to the Pandemic year I just could go for 8 days to Barcelona. But I could attend two assemblies of the “Sindicato dos loggoaters” and joined the “ponto de ajuda” and could carry out informal interviews in further informal meetings with some activists. Moreover, I could visit the organization SIPHO and realize an interview. Also, one interview was carried out with a policy Advisor from the Municipality of Barcelona, giving an insight into Catalunya's particular position as a fertile ground for new participatory mobilizations.

- Fieldnotes of two assemblies from the Sindicat de Llogateres
- Interview with one activist (not allowed to be recorded)
- Several informal conversations
- Participatory Observation in the “Ponto de Ajuda” (twice)
- One Interview with a policy Advisor in Barcelona
- One interview with a Social Worker from the SIPHO

Even if I did not carry out focus group interviews properly, the “assambleias familiares” are analysed as something similar to a focus group setting. In Lisbon, it’s approximately 30 participants (1- 2 hours), and in Barcelona, around 60 (3 hours). These assemblies facilitate an exchange of experiences, debates on the ongoing process and situation of some families, and to show “newcomers” that they do not suffer alone. My position at these assemblies can be illustrated in an in-between of participant observation, focus group analysis, and action research. This because I helped in the organization behind these meetings. I informed about my research and my position as an activist and academic. This setting helps to study how community organizations are carried out and through what processes communities and decisions pass (Barbour, 2014, p. 135). Moreover, it is important to take into account the composition of the group in the way that it influences the content and tone of the conversation (Barbour, 2014, p. 19); these meetings are also an excellent place to explore the role of the

transformation of being desperate to take action. And the appropriation and growing understanding that subject have a right to a decent life in the city.

Moreover, I took photos on some actions in Lisbon, these are also used as a spatial analysis of mobilization practices and the importance of certain settings. The ethnographic perspective allows to describe and show the principles and values that sustain the practices and to give an understanding what happens in autonomous practice when there is no action.

To have an inner view of two movements helps also to understand better the claims, repertoire of action and the actors. This offers the possibility to conceptualize practices against housing precarity. Tarrow writes according to it: "The moment we go from one case to two, I would argue, we are in the realm of hypothesis-generating comparative study, while also enabling ourselves to examine how common mechanisms are influenced by the particular features of each case"(Tarrow, 2010). I'm interested in the common mechanisms and structures that are followed. This shows that these mobilizations are rooted in circumstances capitalism brings. Where "the political is no longer autonomous from the economic" (Nez 22018 p.180) moreover that the growing inequalities are emerging in protest.

3.4 Analysing Data

Fieldwork diary notes were analysed by looking for emerged codes and from there I clustered categories. This categorization is helpful to think about all the data together and emphasizes the process of research and data analysis. This helped to see that there is a way to reduce the volume of data to a more manageable level and deliver more succinct concepts and themes. The first framework of topics lead to what was already noticed in the beginning – the role of practices of Care in the struggle for the right to housing. With an interpretative analysis of narratives, looking to what is how referred, like key events, relations, practices and how they connect it to their narrative or to key protagonists. Moreover, I found different codes focusing on and expressing the disadvantaged and precarious situation, touching various intersectional variables. Even that I was able to collect different data, it seems important to me to mention that this is just an approach and that the material offers possibilities for further analysis, together with other approaches concentrating on other verbalized topics, as there is yet a broad field of further research. Also, this kind of coding was beneficial when asking the following question "Are there common themes repeated throughout the transcripts?" (Barbour, 2014, pp. 272–273). And to recognize common elements that will permit to conceptualize empirical results. Afterward, it was helpful to look if there are interrelations between the codes or topics coming up more often. Analysing codes is orientated on the Grounded Theory of Glaser and Strauss (1967), as

they provide a method including the epistemological perspective, meaning here that it is inductive, not hypothesis orientated, but lead by what the field offers. It includes a broad continuum of different qualitative social research methods of data collection: Connecting theory, empirical data, and analysis to understand a social phenomenon. I am focusing on making sense of the practices of support carried out by the movements, as this is leading to specific patterns and specific functions. Something that similarly must be taken into account is to reflect on one's perspective, as all that we write is produced by our thought. What I am presenting is more concentrated on narrative and eventful analysis.

In the interviews, individual scripts were used that aimed to recall past situations which touched on themes from the field diary. All interviews were recorded and transcribed or at least scripted. I organize the data using keywords, including here the field diary. This organization helped me to identify themes and categories to guide writing to create dialogues between theory and ethnographic data.

CHAPTER 4 On Performing Housing Activism

The following chapter constitutes the empirical part and builds a bridge with the theoretical part. The theoretical consideration started on the macro dimensions of the Right to the City and moved then towards micro practices of activism. In the following these micro perspectives are filled with narratives and connected to the meso and macro levels. Selected events are drawn on to give insight into these micro practices by movements struggling for the right to housing, while tracing the encounters of “activists” and “affected” in an array of different situations of support, advice, and struggle. The practices in this analysis are connected and interlinked with the other factors, this gives it an explanatory capacity. A big part of the work of “Right to housing” organisations consists of accompanying families through a large process of their housing trajectory (Desmond 2016, Wilde 2020). For that reason, the Right to the City is seen in this research as a value responding to macro dimensions, whereby these practices highlighted in the microsphere are filled with values of everyday life, like participation, equality, and social justice. First, the different movement organizations will be shortly presented; afterwards, the practices and values that sustain the activist practice are further developed through detailing certain events and groups. It will also show how a variety of goals are managed and approached simultaneously, whereby priorities are overlapping and always depending on who is there and who is not, bringing different insights into the activist practice.

Melucci (1996) examines the understanding of everyday life practices to figure out how latent processes are taking place in social movements. According to some authors, everyday life is what holds movements together between protest cycles and “as activities during periods of abeyance” (Yates, 2015 p. 3). I argue and show that the practices happening in the microsphere of the movement are, at a closer look, specific to answering the diversity and complexity of different cases brought to the Social Movement Organisations, and therefore, crucial and elemental for the Right to the City.

4.1 HABITA

HABITA! is a grassroots organization based in the metropolitan area of Lisbon. Already in the title of the movement, it is stated: “HABITA! – Associação pelo direito a habitação e o direito a cidade,” which means: “Association for the right to housing and the right to the city”. The support HABITA provides varies from residents in informal settlements to residents in the private renting market, people squatting, and homeless people. “The city belongs to those who live in it, the home of those who inhabit it!” – is a main slogan of HABITA. HABITA’S headquarters is the cultural association named “Sirigaita” in the neighbourhood Intendente, where meetings and assemblies take place. It is important as it is a base for protest and cultural happenings and where activists and participants of the cultural milieu in Lisbon engage. Besides HABITA!, other alternative cultural meetups are hosted in the

cultural space Sirigaita. The space is very connected with the neighbourhood, where many non-profit cultural organizations open up spaces promoting different activities from debates to exhibitions, activist cinema or bar events (Rego et al. 2021). Nowadays the neighbourhood, located in the city centre of Lisbon, is under strong pressure because many places becoming tourist accommodation and former neighbourhood leisure spaces became restaurants targeting tourists (Accornero & Carvalho 2020).

The “core group” of HABITA, that meets regularly, is a group of around 6-10 people, with a previous activist backgrounds and notions of militant action of more Anarchy, feminist, and environmentalist groups. I came, as mentioned before to HABITA in 2018 but took a short pause and came back at the end of 2019. Since then, I would consider myself as part of the “core group”. We meet once per week to organize the actions, discuss strategies for ongoing cases or the articulation with other movements. Moreover, it’s about organizational tasks, such as emailing, writing a blog on the website and the organization of the weekly assembly. Many of us are young researchers. Through my observations during my years in HABITA I could see that mainly women seek help. That’s why also apart from HABITA, the movement, MuDHa, Mulheres pelo direito a Habitação (women for the right to housing) emerged. This movement will be explained later on. For these women approaching HABITA, the location of the headquarter becomes a spatial experience, as many of them come from the outskirts of the city, to the city centre, where many of them usually are not spending their time.

HABITA emerged in 2005 out of the Organization Solidaridade migrante, which supported homeless families whose houses were demolished. The practices of protest vary from demonstrations, to street festivals, up to conferences and discussion rounds like the monthly happening “DEBATE HABITA”. Moreover, concrete law proposals are developed and there is an active engagement with commenting on processes of urban development at official events or through press releases. Also, practices of civil disobedience happen when preventing evictions or demolitions, this is often also supported by the sibling movement StopDespejos. Likewise, more creative actions like film screenings or painting walls in the city or talking about biographies and trajectories on posters to make demands more visible. There are also various ways in which the information about the ongoing engagement of HABITA is shared. One channel is via the website with blog functions, where articles about the ongoing struggles are published. Moreover, other important tools include publishing open letters and writing cards to the municipality. These various ways of political practice are discussed within HABITA’s ‘inner cycle’. On the website in the self-presentation of the movement, daily life practices are highlighted: it says: “We are activists and we develop our strategies from daily practice with all directly affected people who are willing to fight for their rights. This struggle is a daily activity that leads us to live a more complete and dignified life: getting a house, resisting an eviction or saving a square from privatization or other important equipment for the community's life” (HABITA.info). Moreover, HABITA

supports other struggles and during the last year was very connected to the environmental movement CLIMAXIMO, with some members participating in the activist camp and hold discussions. Furthermore, it is important to highlight the active engagement of a lawyer in and with HABITA to make proposals for the basic law, the “Primer Direito de Habitação”, which entered into force on October 1, 2019.

These practices are producing meaning and having a performative character. These practices problematise the macro dynamics producing a housing crisis and the discourse produced among political elites. I locate these practices in Levebre’s (1968) right to the city in transforming and claiming the urban space, it can also be seen as a “counter knowledge” (Tiedemann, 2017), when producing alternatives in policies or laws. Additional to that there are more tasks carried out by the core team, like preparing toolkits, support residents in writing cards and letters and providing support in the neighbourhoods, like organizing local assemblies. Moreover, there is also active engagement with law by some members of the core group and therefore, also meetings with political parties and representatives. Additionally, to the organizational meeting, weekly assembly finds a place where people at risk can come to expose their situation and collectively discuss a strategy to implement. At this moment, tactics are being discussed and planned. The aim is to present collective solutions and practical knowledge to (often) low-income city dwellers for the realization of their right to the city and housing through shared collective action.

4.2 Sindicat de Llogaters

Sindicat de Llogaters is a tenant’s union in Catalunya and became one of the main actors in the housing struggle due to the big financial players in the renting market. The tenant’s union also brought propositions for new legislations. For establishing good working routines, they paid two people four years ago to work on organizational matters (Interview Sindicat). Unlike HABITA, which attends to all the people seeking help, this organisation solely focusses on the people in the renting sector in Catalunya. To become part of the organisation, a monthly or annual fee is payed. Like this, it is possible to have some paid positions, to better organize and structure the political work and propositions. Besides that, a rent regulation was developed and proposed by this union and further accepted by the local and regional government. This proposal was developed from the Sindicat dos Llogaters, together with the Department of Justice of the “Generalitat of Catalonia” and is intended to give a response to the rise of the rents that have particularly affected Barcelona, since the city has experienced an enormous rise in the price of renting. Among the main characteristics encompassed by the law proposition, all new contracts are governed by this regulation and old contracts can be diminished. It is established as a general rule that new contracts for houses that have been settled cannot exceed the price agreed in the previous contract. In the case that the rented property will have a price above

the average for its area, the new contract should have a maximum value that would establish the price index of the Generalitat de Catalunya. This regulation enabled inhabitants to check their street/neighbourhood and look for the rental index for an apartment of similar size online. If the rent paid is above, it can be lowered. Also, the contract of the person renting before can be accessed, so if the tenants before paid less, they have the right to pay the same amount. Moreover, in Barcelona, there are different regulations for so called “big” or “small” landlords. A landlord becomes a big landlord with a minimum of ten properties. Nevertheless, a Problem faced in Catalunya is that these laws are always established on a regional level and put down by the Spanish national government. This also happened with eviction legislation and at the same time, offered a lot of space for innovation in policy and law practice, which is often stopped, readopted, or changed (Interview with M. Policy Advisor Barcelona, Mai 2021).

The Sindicat de Llogaters worked out well established and good working passes to follow for the organization of local micro-groups, starting at the building level, which helps to convert a movement into a mass movement. The Sindicat de Llogaters holds a weekly assembly for the discussion of ongoing cases and has added to this a helping point/open door, where people can come if they need help to write a card, don’t have a computer or need support for the applications for social service. As explained before, I’ll just draw some lines to practices in the Sindicato de Llogaters, but it is not aimed to claim to provide a full picture of comparison.

The following graphic presents “common points” (in the middle) that were being raised in the data through interviews and participant observation Some of the issues mentioned, are explored deeper in the following section.

4.3 Proposition of Collective Struggle

The following brings together practices carried out by the Sindicat de Llogaters and HABITA, focussing on their shared practices during the assemblies. The following two chapters will focus on Lisbon, HABITA. The assemblies are seen as a performance, they have a certain structure and function and similar process in including new members. Collective identities are reinforced and built, and a common ground is created. This chapter will speak about the values attributed, providing the sense making of the movement, in what this cultural performance consists of. The analysed groups pursue a plurality of political activities. I conceptualize these practices following Yates as “politicizing,” “as the organization of social events initiates collective practice performances, and the sharing of associated knowledge and competence among participants relating to the pursuit of social change” (Yates, 2015 p.3). Politicizing includes, on a semantic level, the processual character of the political action, showing the development and highlights the processual character of political involvement.

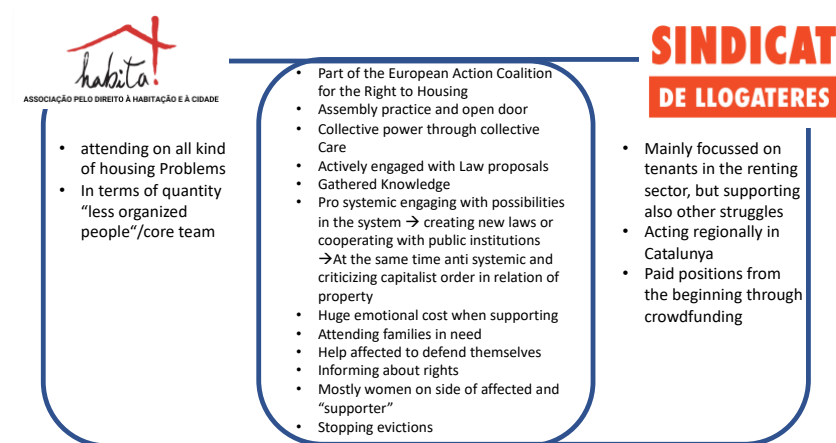


Figure 1 Practices HABITA & Sindicat; Elena Hernández

4.3.1 Assembly practice in Lisbon

In Lisbon, it is always tried in the assembly practice to follow a certain structure, which should also help to make this practice adaptable, so that people could take this structure in order to self organize. The specialization of tasks and knowledge of how to engage has grown over time in the form of gathered collective experience in the housing struggle. The assemblies of resistance took place during the past years in HABITA, usually once per month, with up to 30 attendees, additionally to the open door "helping point," which is no longer available. The program of the Assembly is usually prepared by some of the more active members. Since May 2021, the assembly of resistance in HABITA happens once per week. Due to Covid-19, after the second lockdown, only the possibility of holding the assembly with up to 10 cases, not 10 persons, but household or family members or also presenting the same "case" of the housing problem they are facing was permitted.

The assemblies follow a well-defined methodology with a script with well-defined tasks for each assembly-mediator. In practice, there is someone who records the decisions, such as the defined next steps and someone who stops the time and registers on a speaking list the people who want to contribute and say something. This is, on the one hand, important to make this adoptable, but also to bind members with the movement. Fillieule writes according to it: "Beyond selection mechanisms, organizations also do a lot of work in socializing their members, understood as role taking, which allows individuals to identify the different roles they face and correctly fulfil their customary tasks. This secondary socialization can, at times, assume the form of explicit inculcations, the goal of which is to homogenize activists' categories of thought and their way of acting within and in the name of the organization." (Fillieule, 2010).

Usually, the assembly starts with an initial speech to welcome everybody. The movement is presented whilst explaining that it is a collective struggle that could bring change. The politicization of

the struggle is reinforced, same as the solidarity within the group, and the importance of human action. Lately, there has also been an integration of people who are not affected by housing problems but want to join the struggle, for example, accompanying assemblies, joining workgroup, content production or coming for research reasons. Ethically it's important to identify the role and intentions you bring. So, in this momentum, I identified as both an activist contributing to the right to housing and an academic/anthropologist, observing the movement and its claims. The space is prepared in a circle, facilitating the discussion for everybody to see who is participating and joining. After the presentation of the Association HABITA, the people are asked to present themselves and explain what brought them to come to the assembly. The participants are reminded to wrap up the housing problem quickly, as many cases will be presented. Moreover, participants describe what they like to do and how they'd like to contribute to the movement, for example, if they like cooking, drawing, babysitting or singing. The people are also asked how they heard about HABITA and why they decided to come to the assembly meeting. Many people know about HABITA because other people in the neighbourhood, friends or families have received support. This is followed by the presentation and discussion of the cases. Sometimes due to the urgency of some cases, or because there are not so many people present, this order can also change. It is considered that the ones who are there for the first time need more time to release the anger. For some time now, there has been a concern of how to make these housing assemblies more adoptable for other local groups. Therefore, specific tool kits, like the "Anti Despejos,"⁷ "Saude e Habitacão,"⁸ or "Kit Assambleas,"⁹ were created within the last year to tackle imbalances of knowledge and to make practices adoptable for other communities. Working groups were built up with the "sibling movement" and "Stop Despejos". I personally was engaged in the group preparing the assembly toolkit and the toolkit "Saude e Habitacão"; That's how I could also bring, "good practices" from the Sindicato de Llogateres to Lisbon.

The people coming to the assemblies are often very vulnerable, racialized families, often single parents with kids, living in the outskirts of Lisbon. Some participate more regularly and follow the processes and the support and appear in actions. An interview an activist colleague said:

"Here, those who mobilize and who come to the assemblies you see and participate and animate in Habita are actually the poorest layers of the population, or almost. We rarely see a middle class, we see some guys, but here the middle class has no tradition." (interview activist colleague, June 2021, translated by myself).

He refers to the political culture in Portugal and would probably confirm the "mild mannered theory", I would argue differently, as also we, the more organized people in HABITA, also have a

⁷ <https://habita.info/guia-de-defesa-coletiva-pelo-direito-a-casa-e-a-cidade/>

⁸ Forthcoming October 2021

⁹ Not published yet. Forthcoming Dezember 2021

different background. The coming together of different people with different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds is particularly interesting also from an interactionist and spatial perspective (Accornero & Carvalho 2020). The people looking for help, come often from marginal areas. When they come to look for support in their housing situation they come into contact with very diverse people, with often similar problems.

The moderation part of the organization team explains that people should try to speak succinctly so that others can speak as well. When their time is over, sometimes they have to start cutting people off so that others can talk. People who already came a few times to the assemblies usually become, with time, more trained to refer to their housing trajectory and to the steps they took regarding resolving their case and where they are standing now. The assemblies are a point of coming together of many young, often unemployed, intersectional affected people.

A recurring sentence is heard in the assemblies in Lisbon; when people start presenting themselves, it is often the same. It goes more or less like this: *"Hello, my name is..., I'm at home with 1/2/3 kids, and I receive the minimum wage (around 630 EURO). I'm about to be evicted from my flat, and I don't have savings. How should I pay a rent of 800 euros? And how should I ever be able to pay a caution of 3 months? How is that possible? I've been on the list for municipal housing for xy years, but no answer yet."*(Fieldnotes, Mai 2021)

Hearing this, often in between the already longer engaged activist, eye contact is made, or whispered, "oh we know this so well/ so often the same story we are hearing/that's not new to us". The lists for municipal flats are long and some people who are with HABITA! Are waiting for 10 years to get a flat attributed and stay meanwhile in temporary uncertain situations. That's why in municipal social housing neighbourhoods, squatting became quite a common phenomenon, and it's mainly single mothers squatting with their kids to provide shelter. Many women lived before with their kids at their parents in overcrowded situations. In the last year with the pandemic situation, it has been noticed that the squatting of municipal housing has risen, also in municipal neighbourhoods where previously HABITA! had not heard of this. People come from the whole metropolitan area of Lisbon to the assembly of HABITA!, including the Municipalities of Amadora, Almada and Loures, which react differently on the practices of squatting: whereby Lisbon's municipality stated through the work of HABITA! to tolerate them (Hernández 2018). People who came to the assemblies refer that it became so usual in some neighbourhoods, that if people moved out of their (municipal) apartments they gave the key to other families of the house, as otherwise somebody else will move in and squat, so they anticipate this, like this citation shows

"I have to do this; I know it's maybe not right, but I cannot sleep with my kids on the street and at my parents' house, we are many. Also, I know others do it, so if it were not me, it would be someone else. What should I do? If he gives me the keys, I'm not breaking in." (Fieldnotes, Assembly June 2021).

The people seek absolution and security in HABITA! to hear it's the right thing to do that. An answer here could look like confirming the support if it's needed, but also making the people aware that the struggle can be hard and it's still uncertain and that in order to protect yourself, you need to engage with the struggle. The sharing of the informal knowledge, such as how to get water and electricity in a squatted apartment, or how to perform an application and where to find which information, is part of these assembly practices without being formally planned, but something that happens. Afterwards, in the discussion of the cases, usually, a strategy is developed, proposed and everybody can ask questions to understand the situation of the affected person better. Often, questions asked by the public refer to whether the people are inscribed in supported municipal housing or need help with this procedure. Often, the next steps could look like writing a letter to the landlord or the municipality asking for time and negotiation. These letters in Lisbon recall that the Basic Housing Law determines that "the State, autonomous regions, and local authorities cannot promote the administrative eviction of vulnerable individuals or families without first guaranteeing resettlement solutions, under the terms defined in the law"(Basic Housing Law art.13.4). It is communicated in the name of the association to reconsider the eviction of this family as the pandemic's advances.

Moreover, the discourse of the individual story is changed, and everybody is reminded that the government has an obligation to promote an alternative for those who have no effective solutions, to avoid exposing women and children to double violence. To that, Jasper writes that a, "common element in the norms of most, if not all, movements is the conviction that existing conditions are unjust." To elaborate an "injustice frame, a way of viewing a situation or condition that expresses indignation or outrage over a perceived injustice, as well as finding some human agency to blame for the transgression" helps mobilization (J. M. Jasper, 1998 p.410). It is about what happens when the stigma relation is changed, that is, a parallel infrastructure of Care and Mutual principles is created, which determinates the community action plan. People don't act alone anymore, but in a group.

The objective is that through the collective discussion, a strategy to follow for each individual is found with the next steps clearly defined. Everybody has the right to speak and give ideas and proposals on how the next steps could look like and give support. Everyone can ask questions and make suggestions. The incentives given by the more experienced activist go in the direction to remember to think about the desired result, who is going to be addressed if public action is appropriate and could lead to success. If there are situations that require fast action, like an eviction noticed within some days it is collectively thought about how to support this person and who can participate. A more demanding action could be, for example, to occupy an institution responsible for the situation like the Social Security and to plan an action in front of this institution. Like this, people also transform their failure into a political one and start to address it. Therefore, strategies that previously yielded results

are also presented. Also, there is space for people to discuss in groups the solutions to the problems presented, whereby they take care not to "lead" these solutions hastily or impose solutions. It creates a sense of community and solidarity, which emerges in relations of cooperation and help.

Something else that leads from time to time is the misunderstanding as people coming, thinking that HABITA! will resolve their case, that's why the moments of politization are taken seriously and continuously repeated. For example, in an interview an activist colleague said:

"our reformist proposals include an increase in social housing, an end to incentives for speculation, an increase and reconstruction of a cooperative dimension of housing, a moratorium on evictions, the regulation of rents, I think these are proposals that came from a political work of analysis that existed and exists and is strong. Now how revolutionary proposals, there we still have to work a lot, and we return to the discourse from before, I think it will be a terrain to be deepened in the near future."
(Interview after Assembly June 2021, translated by me)

It is reminded that to gain these goals, collective action of each one is needed. Besides, it works as an entry point into political action and opens space for learning and forming political ideas. This implication of care and mutuality in the movement everyday practice, gives room for connection and empathy. Victories are crucial to motivate, as these lines express:

"I think about the biggest conflicts we had, for example, when we had to occupy the councillor's office, creating a very strong housing conflict with the city council. Creating a certain panic within the council, as we were in a very firm way inside, and we managed to get the family that was evicted on the same day to re-enter the house they had been evicted from" (Interview after Assembly June 2021, translated by me)

It is within the core group still referred to the mobilizations in this time, as even if it was intense, many small victories were accomplished what was perceived as empowering was reflected within HABITA! that the mobilizations by these women and their development as a politicized subject was stronger in 2018. In that time, the families followed actively the other cases and were more active in the mobilization. This became rarer due to COVID 19, but also due to an eviction of a squatted house that couldn't be stopped. Many women afterwards slowly disappeared from the movement. Poma et al. writes according to this, "When we shift analysis to the subjective experience of ordinary women, it reveals 'a complex relationship between everyday life and the larger structures of public power. It reveals the potential for human agency'" (Poma & Gravante, 2018 p.62).

The strategies are nonviolent and consist, often in entering negotiations to win time. Moreover, public pressure is created by sharing on social media about the ongoing evictions and violations of housing rights. Often, it is aimed to win time, look for alternative accommodations and define the next steps. When negotiating, it's often about the morality of evictions, on how to sleep at night knowing that the kids of the family will come home from school and have no house anymore, making a family

homeless and hopeless. Furthermore, it is reinforced that these people have no living alternative. Often small victories are not long-term solutions, but it provides some time. In the following months, the next steps need to be defined since the struggle is not over (Santos, 2020).

It is said that it is important to come every week, or at least when something in the case changes and that the movement is not a service to get a house but gain power through collective action. Therefore, everyone has knowledge to share and can learn from their own case and the cases of others; it is referred to as “the way we create power.” To be a collective that solves each other's problems with solidarity and support – because, through collective victories, a movement is created that will change the system. It follows the fundamental, basic idea that the only way to solve collective problems is to work together. To enforce this, it is repeated that *“there are no people here working for you to have a house because unfortunately, it doesn't work that way. We don't have houses to offer, nor does anyone else. We have to conquer them. Many are stronger than each for himself.”* (Fieldnotes, Mai 2021). It is said, *“Today is collective action for Maria, tomorrow for Manuel. We want to win Maria a house with Manuel's help and that Manuel wins with Maria's participation.”* (Fieldnotes, Mai 2021). A problem often faced is that the people affected just come in order to solve their own problem. There are some people involved and interested in building a mass movement. On the other hand, there are people who come with the intention to solve their case and then never appear again. This kind of behaviour breaks some people with the idea of collective struggle, and other activists feel betrayed. This dissatisfaction is felt by the ones investing a lot of energy.

The repeated aim is to change the housing system - to gain housing for all and build a mass movement. There is as well the support of the lawyer, who will be at the meeting, who will be overseeing the discussion in legal terms and framing that the conditions are also often barely legal. It contributes to the mutual learning of legislative knowledge. With time, there is a growing knowledge of the people coming to the assemblies. The main decisions of the assembly are registered in order to provide an overview of what steps to follow. The sharing of experiences and past victories and their strategies is therefore crucial. In the beginning and at the end, ongoing campaigns and actions are told, and the people are invited to join and asked if they want to help and support. The assemblies are an alternative space for resistance, advice and support for people struggling with evictions, debts, bullying and homelessness in the housing crisis. It can be said that it is about “demanding alternatives to neoliberal austerity through universalist claims for housing and welfare” (Gutiérrez Garza, 2020).

Many forms and practices aim to act horizontally and in the form of deliberative democracy in the decision-making whereby consensus is greatly valued. This interwinds with the organization of space and distribution of resources, which also implies a recognition of what each one can contribute. It's also about the division of labour and preparation time, taking into account each one's part of the activism. These practices are attributed with value, politicized, and contribute to a mutual

understanding of the collective. Still, at the core, organizational members have more influence in a certain way, as they organize the assemblies, the actions and the print information. The sharing of resources, establishing and debating about democratization in decision making might not be visible, as the main discussions about this occur within the core group. Whereby democratisation does not mean a political system, but rather the possibility of participation for everyone in the assembly frame. For many people, it's the moment of becoming a political subject recognizing that their own voice counts. The decision to take mutual responsibility and appear when someone else struggles and to care about the well-being of others becomes an act of militancy. It reshapes the co-habiting in the city in the moment of assembly.

That the cases are discussed collectively and next steps in the struggle are defined is also a tool to give an insight into a "scheme" of political organization and how decision-making can look like. It gives an insight into the importance of speaking less so that not everybody talks. Bringing always back the focus on the collective power and collective struggle builds over time collective identity and reinforcing the common understanding of the struggle and the compatible type of actions as a strategy to follow.

4.3.2 Notes on the assembly practice in Spain

In Spain, in the Sindicat de Llogateres, the assemblies in Barcelona, reach around 60 people or more and take place on a weekly basis. They separate the group into two, whereby one group is constituted by the people who come the first time to the movement. The other "more experienced" group stays in the main room and continues to discuss ongoing cases. Like this, they also give space for the people coming the first time to release anger and give them the time they need to expose their case. Additionally they can highlight and enforce in the circle with the people coming the first time, that the goals the movement achieved so far, were also possible as they have paid positions and highlight how important it is to contribute to make possible what they gained so far, such as the rent regulation. Additional to this, they can dedicate more time into presenting the movement, how they work as a syndicate and also how each one can contribute to the movement.

This discussions in the other groups in Barcelona, as there are so many, require a microphone and a stage. Also, in here, everybody can raise the arm, speak and give suggestions. That knowledge is concentrated in some individuals, is tackled in Barcelona by involving newcomers from the beginning. So, if someone exposes their ongoing case and reports that a letter was written in the name of the movement, but no answer was given, the next action would be to call the landlord and ask why there was no response. Here new members are already included while asking them if they could do this task whilst getting a short briefing on what to say if they speak in name of the Sindicat (Interview Activist member of the Sindicat, April 2021). Another idea to involve them, is if they take a "shift" on the open door, where people can come to get help, such as writing a card or giving help for the application for

social housing or supported rent. I brought the practice of involving the newcomers directly through easy tasks like phone calls, from the Sindicat de Llogaters to HABITIA. It bonds people more to the movement and also takes the pressure and work away from a few individuals.

What was observed in the assemblies in Lisbon and Barcelona is the idea to decide commonly on a strategy for each case, which will evolve, if follows the premise of mutual aid and goals of an assembly. What could be observed is that many people come with the main intention to solve their individual case, and afterward, it is always the same people engaging. Moreover, many people disappear after their case is resolved. This is a point that leads to a kind of dissatisfaction within both movements. Therefore, several practices have been designed where the intention for people contribute to the cases of others, as the actions require the involvement of many people.

For example, in Barcelona, everyone who can and wants is invited to join after the assembly for some beers to continue discussing in a plaza. Even COVID-19, we were around 30 people. Debates about property and distribution are held there, as well as weekend plans. It stimulates identifying with the movement and the quotidian socializing and sharing creates more equal perception. This happens equally in more direct action and more everyday life courses.

The Assemblies by HABITA or the Sindicat de Llogaters discuss similar issues: people not having access to (rental) housing and falling out of social service help. There is a lack of genuinely affordable housing in the city and citizens are being displaced, finding themselves in very vulnerable situations. To articulate the needs, this problem, which is often firstly perceived as a personal failure, needs to be transformed into a political failure, which happens through practices of sharing. A common way through which newcomers reach these housing organizations is through desperation and, ultimately, a last resort. In this context these assemblies and organizations becomes their safe space where they are seen, heard and meet people, who are in similar situations, and to hear about them in the assembly. Practices like consensual decision making, distributing food, occupying public space are all practices of resistance many people before being in a Social Movement Organization have never done. Solidarity, Collective Care and having a voice is often experienced for the first time in these spaces. Peoples Movement Assambly writes that the assembly practice is a decolonizing process, that: "The assembly, in essence and operationality, is a decolonizing process. The assembly is an 'open space' and an open door for people to come into the social movement and become active participants and players. The open space can be considered a jet propulsion that pulls-in all the social movements to the assembly and allows equal/equitable participation (without rank or hierarchy) in a horizontal and direct participatory democracy" (Peoples Movement Assambly).¹⁰

¹⁰ <http://www.peoplesmovementassembly.org/what-is-an-assembly/>

There are a variety of practices in the assembly's practices in Lisbon and Barcelona, which consider giving time for releasing anger, for the group to hold the fear and anger and collectivize this after. They overlap and are central in these movements of political solidarity, as they take the stigma away from the individual and transform it into empowerment and capacity building for a strategic base for the struggle. Usually, there is also always coffee/tea/biscuits/water, making people feel more comfortable within the new environment of activist practice. For collectivizing the struggle, involvement is important. That it is important to regularly come to the assemblies, is repeated like a mantra, in the assembly in Barcelona in the Sindicat de Llogaters and HABITA!.

4.4 An Emotional Field

Much of the everyday life tasks carried out by activists in these fields involve supporting individuals and families experiencing housing-related violence. This stimulated a lot of emotions on several fronts. Jasper, who studied the emotions of protest, highlights that "Emotions pervade all social life, social movements included. The most prosaic daily routines, seemingly neutral, can provoke violent emotional responses when interrupted. Unusual actions probably involve even more and more complex feelings. Not only emotions are part of our responses to events, but they as well—in the form of deep affective attachments—shape the goals of our actions. There are positive emotions and negative ones, admirable and despicable ones, public and hidden ones" (J. M. Jasper, 1998). Jasper states that "without them, there might be no social action at all". (J. M. Jasper, 1998 p.398).

As it was previously revealed, there are certain practices that consider the emotional state of people seeking help important to explore as well is what happens on the side of the organised militants, who also give a big part of their emotions into the movement. This chapter will refer to the double-sided coin of emotional work and care work. Poma at all: "discuss which emotions are generated by empowerment (i.e., happiness, confidence, pride, moral anger) and what effects they have on the collective action, such as strengthening the group, self-organisation or commitment" (Poma & Gravante, 2018). Furthermore, Wilde writes: "political contention around housing has an ephemeral quality; it surfaces in moments of acute crisis and then recedes as individuals and communities either resolve their problems or pass into different phases of precarity" (Wilde, 2020 p.17). Dean writes that "In the face of crisis, ordinary people are feeling called to respond in their communities and create innovative ways to support and share" (Dean 2020 p.10). Santos states that, "For instance, an eviction blockade is an act of care in which activists engage in civil resistance to address the need of a family for a roof to live under. This act of care cannot be divided into individual relationships, as the involvement of each individual alone would have a negligible effect outside the group and care would not be successful." (Santos PhD thesis, 2019).

Usually, people coming for the first time need a lot of time for the articulation of their problems. To tell their “housing trajectory,” they often start quite long ago, with already before perceived discrimination. Moreover, many socio-economic factors are included, like their working situation, if they take care of family members and where they often experience more intersectional experience. It is referred for example like this:

“Nobody in Portugal can live on the minimum wage. I cannot earn €665 and pay €600 rent. How do I feed the children? How do I pay for water? The light? The gas? The television? A social house for me is not a whim, it is an URGENT need.” (Assembly June 20201).

This was said by a woman, a descendent from Sao Tome, who has 5 kids to take care of, from which 2 are not her own. She rented in the private sector, in terrible conditions in the municipality of Loures. She didn’t have a contract, nor a fixed rent. She was evicted and, from then on, was living in shelters and temporary shelters. These lines express that she has a clear notion what would help her, that she doesn’t have the means to rent on the private market, that she needs social housing. Something that is also often referred to, often by people from the former colonies, is that they have a NIF (Portuguese Tax number), that they pay taxes, work but still are not full citizens with their right to housing have been accomplished. What is done in the assemblies in Lisbon is to change the narrative, so instead of seeing something as a personal failure, it is addressed as a political one. “The ability to focus blame is crucial to protest, and it differs according to the perceived ultimate causes and the direct embodiments of each threat or outrage” (J. M. Jasper, 1998). Dean writes according to it: „Mutual aid projects work to meet survival needs and build shared understanding about why people do not have what they need“(Dean, 2020 p.8).

4.5 Mutual Care

Emotions are also used to constituting efforts, politicizing and collectivizing problems that people bring to the assembly practice. These problems are often, at first, experienced and suffered on an individual level. Through sharing and mutual support, alternatives to the status quo are presented. While encouraging and focusing on the care and the emotions, it’s a recognition of different lifestyles in the city and therefore also carried out by activists in the way of manifesting and realizing the right to the city. It is discussed with the residents and repeated that they have the basic right to housing and that they have the right to the city, supporting this with practices of empowerment, like street actions. In Barcelona, at the Sindicat, a woman told me that before coming to the Sindicat, she was alone, fearful and certain that she would lose her house. With the Sindicat, she got the support she needed and could enter into a negotiation, where she could gain 6 months and received a flat with subsidised rent. Now she is helping people open doors and write cards in name of the Sindicat de Llogaters to

landlords or banks (fieldnotes, Barcelona open door, April 2021). She revealed that it makes a difference writing a card in the name of an organization or an individual and by recalling to the Sindicat gives her power, as they are recognized and already have won so many cases. Pome writes according to this, “empowerment is an outcome of collective action, if and when such action serves to realize participants’ social identity.” (Poma & Gravante, 2018 p.62). Jasper writes regarding Solidarity and Loyalty, that these, “Positive feelings toward others can lead to action on behalf of that group or category “ (J. M. Jasper, 1998).

In the assembly practice in Lisbon in HABITA, mutual aid is hereby a guiding principle for this infrastructure of mutual care. The discourses negotiated are around inequality, segregation, single motherhood and racism. The frame of the Right to the City and housing is used to release and speak about other intersectional topics that arise, in relation to accessing housing and city life. The people seeking help are embodying the fails of the system. One woman said,

“I don't know how to deal with my kids' tears because they don't know when they're going home. I don't know how to deal with this uncertainty in life, this one goes there and comes here and because I don't know how to deal with any of this anymore, I sometimes feel powerless to continue fighting.

I just want to give my children a decent life. I just want to live worthily. My children cannot continue to live like this. They are children, who at this moment are practically without any of their rights. They can't play, they can't socialize, they can't be children.” (Interview after Assembly June 2021, translated by me)

An answer to this is that people are not alone in this, that now they are involved in a Social Movement Organization and will be supported. Yet again, it is reminded that the solution will not be a house, but that an organized struggle might bring about change. A next step would probably look like writing a letter to the landlord, bank or Social Services to ask for negotiation. Also, the letter could be addressed to some state institutions asking for help and highlighting that this person doesn’t have an alternative option for housing and cannot be left alone on the street. It is asked to the people that they write the cards themselves, exposing their situation and case and what they have done so far. Afterwards someone from the “core team” corrects and adopts it. This takes into account a deliberating process, and empowerment, as the people should own their situation and become more prepared to act. Here also a line to Lefebvre and Marcuse can be made, who argue and state for the right to the city as a right to a decent life. It’s where macro context of a housing crisis which produces subjects “without civic rights” to mobilize in social Movement Organizations and collectivize their struggle.

Care also comes to play when thinking about how to support the ones who are affected by the consequences of gentrification and commodification through flyers and toolkits. To make them emancipatory often a language and text is chosen which is widely accessible. Attention is paid in order

to pick the people up from where they are. That's also why sometimes assemblies are held in the neighbourhoods in the outskirts of the city in a sense of small-scale community organizing. It aims to support them in their everyday resistance, which is part of the movements' aim to challenge broader neoliberal and capitalist structures. Sharing stories and eating together was already recognized as important for the collectivization and identification with the movement. That's why much of the activist work involves supporting families or individuals who feel left alone and are struggling with the (welfare) system that is making them believe that there is no solution for them on the market. The function of sharing the stories is kind of a ritual that takes the sense of failure away from the individual and creates an atmosphere of empathy, common phenomena and shared struggle that transforms into collective identity (Santos 2020). On this, Jasper writes, "Recently, collective identity has become a popular term among both protestors and those who study them. It sometimes refers to a sense of solidarity among members of a social movement itself, and sometimes to an underlying social categorization in whose name a movement claims to speak. Collective identity is seen as a spur to action because one values the potential gain to the group, so that identity thereby helps to define one's 'interests'" (J. M. Jasper, 1998). It also gives people their agency back and instead of just being objects in these macro dynamics, people become again subjects with a voice to be heard and actions that can be carried out.

Bringing different backgrounds and socio-economic conditions together also creates a space of mutual recognition. There was, for example, a woman in her 60s, wealthier, white, educated, living in a house in the city centre for 61 years and is now in danger of eviction, as the building got sold. She has a different background than the other people coming to the assemblies, but in the assembly, time, resources and advice are shared equally. The practices are embedded and grounded in the beliefs of a sense of shared responsibility and mutual care. It guides the decision-making in everyday life and creates a sensitivity, as it also opens horizons, since the housing crisis affects so many differently. When accompanying longer trajectories, you see how people remain through the years in precarious contexts. Santos writes, "Emotional care contributes to the development of collective identities and to changes in the self-concept of activists. Vice versa, collective identities foster solidarity with newcomers and facilitate unconscious interactions of emotional caring" (Santos, 2019 p.50). This is also particularly interesting in this research, as racism or "anti gypsism" is a topic continuously coming up. People shared their anger and believed that migrants and "gypsy" people (in Portugal self-calling *etnia cigana*) are easily getting a flat while others have to wait for up to 10 years. It's a crucial part of the everyday practice in the assemblies to dislodge these beliefs and inform the people that there are many cases coming to HABITA from these people in much more segregated situations and that the struggle will be successful as a mass movement, where it's needed to stand together. Also, it is remembered that we act in solidarity against the oppressing system, and that "they" want "us" to act

against each other, but that to solve the housing crisis, one should avoid segregation and instead, stand together. Like this, the assemblies become a place to promote contact between people of different backgrounds who might not meet otherwise. In this moment, everybody is a victim of the housing crisis where the state fails to care for its citizens and produces that crisis. Through this realization people construct as new political subjects, part in a movement where they are equal. Poma et al. writes according to this, "Participation in protests and social movements creates the conditions for a process of reflexive self-construction from which participants become new political subjects. By collectively reframing their reality and feelings, they emancipate themselves" (Poma & Gravante, 2018 p.62). Coming together in the assembly's challenges stereotypes, whilst working together and participating, and by getting politically informed, they learn about shared experiences and build solidarity across differences. Dean sees that during big and powerful movements, solidarity across issues and populations arises (Dean, 2020 p.24). Therefore, it could be argued that to make movements powerful an intersectional perspective into account, acknowledging and framing different experiences is required. Dean further states, "Groups doing mutual aid to directly address real problems in real people's lives tend to develop a multiuse and solidarity-based approach because their members' lives are crosscut by many different experiences of vulnerability" (Dean, 2020 p.24).

The role of care and listening is crucial as a reaction to the politics of isolation and personal failure. It contrasts with mutual support and presents an alternative within the framework of coldness. It collectivizes and problematizes the housing struggle as an institutional and structural failure, and therefore, presents a counter-discourse and counter imagination of a solidarity city. In our capitalist society, social problems arise from exploitation and the bad distribution of resources, to struggle in this system, is often understood by ordinary people as individual failings, not as a systemic problem. Receiving support and understanding whilst seeing the system and not the people affected as the problem, "helps people to move from shame to anger" (Dean, 2020 p.21). In Assemblies it is then asked rhetorically:

"Why are we not asking Medina why you let this woman on the street? Why do we ask what kind of mother that is?" (Fieldnotes, June 2021). It changes the narrative and creates Solidarity and understanding. People who seek support in HABITA are asked to participate also in the organization and become part to work on the conditions that brought them to HABITA.

People who are moved between state advice, pressuring social service workers, militants and families are subjects in this crisis with a planned limitation to truly act (Wilde, 2020 p.17). It's about mutual support and collective action, about helping to confront fears and taking the shame away through solidarity. People become active political subjects capable of defending their cases and supporting others.

This socio-affective methodology can be found in the culture of peace (UNESCO), practices of mutual Aid (Dean, 2020) and Solidarity and recognize emotions as important for the struggle and designs therefore Collective Action with care practices inherent. These are used to lay the foundations in a group environment to achieve the skills needed to confront conflicts. It starts with getting to know each other, which follows a welcome and presentation dynamic. Here the recognition, appreciation and affirmation build the group in a dynamic and participatory way that favours recognizing the exchanging of experiences and creates an environment of acceptance. This acceptance is also reflected in appreciating differences and connotating them with positive values that create trust, which enriches individually and the group. Communication in the assembly is used as an active and enriching process that builds the basis for decision making and is an instrument for building consensus. It is based on solidarity, justice and the willingness to resolve conflicts collectively, while exploring them from different angles and collectivizing them into action. The solutions which are proposed in an assembly for collective action should be constructive and nonviolent to turn them into a fertile ground for becoming an activist and for transformation.

Santos explains that, “The reason why people endure long assemblies, commission meetings, frustrations and defeats, that are common to any social movement endeavour, is the emotions they experience, the identities they develop, learn, and the networks of support that are created” (Santos & Santos, 2019). These care ethics of relations of trust, mutuality, and consideration stay in contrast to the neo-liberal fabric, which is evicting, demolishing and destructing livelihood” (Santos, 2019). These movements realize through solidarity and mutuality their right to the city.

4.6 On an Individual Level

In addition to the collective support given, much emotional work also happens on a personal level. An activist colleague highlighted in an interview that he sometimes felt like giving psychological support when attending to people at the office or by phone. Further he states, “*HABITA! has always acted in emergency situations, namely when there are evictions. We need to have a more organized action, to have a deep role, not just in SOS. For that, we need more people and more alliances. Lately we all felt the need to discuss the issue of horizontality in associative movements and, in particular, in our association*” (interview activist colleague, 2021, translated by myself).

An eviction or a demolition is still traumatic, not just for the ones evicted but also for the others on the activist side. Still, to be put in the situation of staying calm and mediating to make informed decisions is quite demanding. Sometimes the only thing that can be done by activists is documenting, caring and, afterwards, denounce, which makes you suddenly feel powerless.

"It's something to do in terms of emotions. I think that whoever is a militant has this humanity, and it's normal that when you're in front of demolition or eviction, you feel upset. I personally feel deep anger. It's the strongest emotion I have and also empathy and compassion for people. I struggled a lot to free myself from the feeling of guilt that a strong Catholic upbringing had given me. I manage quite well, and I learned not to feel responsible in the struggle process. I think a bit of self-care. It's not that I've become colder, but I can't think that if I'm not doing something or that I'm guilty of not making a difference there. Not that. And I think it's something that I should actually talk about in the assembly." (interview activist colleague, June 2021, translated by myself).

The emotions in this setting can be quite hard, which sometimes also leads to disengagement in HABITA!. Dean writes according to this, "One downside to the urgency that we bring to our mutual aid work can be that we dive right into the work, very concerned about how many people our project is helping, but fail to create good internal practices for our group to be strong and sustainable." (Dean 2020). In HABITA the activist taking more organizational parts often state that they feel like activists, social workers, psychologists and a last resort for the people. This creates a big burden on the activist and let roles become blurred and engagement perceived exhausting, which leads regularly to disengagement. Fillieu wrote about disengagement processes of activists and refers to Mirrors and Masks (1959), in where Levi Strauss, "analyses the manner in which identities are liable to change permanently, as a function of modifications of the social structure and actors' successive positions in this structure, with all that this means for different stages of actor biography in terms of the subjective interpretation of the changes experienced." (Fillieule, 2010 p.10).

It's also why I took a break during the very active time in 2018, as it was emotional very demanding, and I could not take the burden anymore. I got anxious as I became the last resort for several women. They called me during the night as they got beaten up by their partners, or they needed help with something or just someone to talk. I looked for organized support for them and tried to connect them to other organizations, but as they didn't leave their partners I could not help further, but the anxiety stayed. Relationships were blurring and I needed a break. It came to a point where I observed post-colonial and racist structural patterns everywhere in Lisbon's life, which made me more pessimistic then I used to be and could not stand anymore my friends who were just doing their ERASMUS and not socially or politically caring. Still, being politically engaged is something what draws throughout all my life, having a parent with migrant background, antiracist mobilization was a call. That's why after the break of around one year I came back, but with the intention to be more present in the organizational tasks, for example helping with the toolkits, rather than the personal, individual support. To this an activist colleague told me,

"I think that also because of a certain need to respond to the emergencies that the housing issue causes, it prevents a particular reflection and design of the development of the right to the city as such."

This is not cynical, we have to think of a struggle that goes beyond us, even if we think we are supermen and superwomen, and we are not. We have to think that we are building a political organization that goes beyond us. A political organization that goes beyond us thinks about self-care and how to defend itself in these types of situations and tries to make up for the lack of numbers of people.”

(interview activist colleague, June 2021, translated by myself).

Before, HABITA! also gave more personal support at the “Porta de atendimento” (open door). People could come on Tuesdays in between 18:00 and 20:00 and look for support in their housing question through the Social Movement Organization. This bound some people to the movement, and you could dive deeper into each case, but the pressure was also higher and concentrated on the one person attending. It is exhausting and takes a lot of personal energy. HABITA!’s experience showed that there are (often racialized) people falling out of services because they don’t have the literacy to make an appointment at Social Services, so the open door was without appointment to make it as accessible as possible. This led to long queues and many hours attending. It came to a point that no one wanted to do this anymore, because of the emotional damage, exhaustion and how time consuming it was.

Dean writes according to it, “Capitalism makes us think about short-term gains, not building the long-term capacity for all of our well-being. This can make it easy to go for the quick fix and ignore the damage we might be doing to each other along the way” (Dean, 2020 p.72). Moreover, this took the energy away from really working on programmatic change and proposals and it didn’t bring engaged newcomers to the movement but exhausted the individuals who attend them. That’s also why the collective proposition is so important in the assembly, as it proposed change through collective work.

After a violent demolition in a self-build neighbourhood in Loures, a municipality within the Metropolitan Area of Lisbon, that could not be stopped, several members of HABITA!, myself included, who spent two whole days there, were exhausted and emotionally affected for around a week. On June 21st 2021, the Loures City Council promoted the demolition of several houses and evicted, without adequate housing alternative, around 28 people, constituting 9 families, all descendant from former African Colonies. The Friday before, the municipality put out a notice on the demolition of several houses and began demolishing on Monday morning, not having given the families time to inform the municipality of the situation in which they found themselves, nor to properly defend themselves or negotiate for a solution. HABITA! was contacted Saturday by some dwellers. The police built up a barrier and let no one pass, not even journalists, nor social technicians, there were no previous conversations to investigate the situations in depth. We, from HABITA! managed to sneak in, and found us in the neighbourhood together with desperate dwellers, two members of a Catholic Institution providing social service work, with cold police officers and 3 technicians of the municipality. The municipal technician, who guide the machines, told the people who were being evicted to walk to the social security system, even if some of these houses were being demolished after 5 pm, and the social

security had already closed. The families stayed overnight at a church in the neighbourhood or at friends and family barracks. The social situation of many people had been worsening over the past few years and that the pandemic situation has further aggravated the crisis situation that already existed. Housing problems are getting worse, the supply of housing has not increased, nor has its accessibility. It is, therefore, a logical consequence that the self-construction of housing is a phenomenon that is increasing again on the outskirts of Lisbon.

From what was perceived, this situation seems to be caused by a census that was carried out at the beginning of the month by municipal technicians who visited the first 3 days of June, during daytime, to register the population. There seems to have been serious flaws that should have been taken care of there were people who were not registered because they were not at home when the technicians passed by, because they were working; others were absent because of medical treatment; or people were simply not at home. Proof of these failures is that on the very day of the demolitions, the council's technician was checking whether the houses that received the council's edict were inhabited or not. The city council officers who decided which houses to be demolished were hard to stand, they didn't take the dwellers, who were all descendants from Guinea Bissau, Sao Tome or Mozambique, serious and spoke more respectfully to us, the white activists. There were clearly racist and paternalist patterns in how they tried to convince the dwellers that it will be better if they collaborate and that no one wants to harm them, ironically saying all this while taking them their homes. Dwellers told me that this barrack was everything they had in Europe, everything they own, as the rest of the family is back home. They also mentioned that they were on the waiting lists for municipal housing, as housing in the private sector was impossible to access and that that they pay taxes, so they didn't understand why they were being treated without rights. Some dwellers didn't want to collaborate with the police and bring their belongings to another barrack. So, some houses were destroyed with belongings inside (see Photos in the appendix). It was intense, chaotic and emotionally exhausting. Therefore, some reflections have already been made on this with the "Core group". What in this case was perceived as helpful was that as the dwellers contacted HABITA!, more experienced members of HABITA! assumed that this demolition would not be stopped and made clear that we should not be disillusioned, and that the role is therefore to accompany and document what is going on. An activist who was not there, but accompanied other demolitions before, said,

"I liked the message; when I went to deliver my project, I saw message and thought it would have a good effect on you because I've been through this in the past. Now I know I'm not going there to stop the eviction, but at first, I went there with the disillusionment, the feeling of impotence and defeat. The feeling you always have before such an ugly and inhumane scene like this. Sometimes it is necessary to make explicit these kinds of things that are gained only with experience. If R. told me this three year

ago, and maybe she didn't know, but we're learning, but it would have helped me.” (interview activist colleague, June 2021, translated by myself).

It was good to know that the task is the documentation, to collect the names of the people without alternative and their situation, to afterwards denounce.

The effects of the housing struggles in everyday life of activists is an important point as, over the years, many people left HABITA as the struggle is so emotionally demanding.

Accornero who provides a long-term study of political (dis)-engagement of former Portuguese activists in the estado novo stated that, “The shape of their trajectory was also and mainly affected by the different political phases which they experienced, and the cognitive and emotional effects of these phases on them.” (Accornero, 2019 p. 319). An activist colleague expressed:

“a discourse around the care of something else must go hand in hand with revolutionary discourse. In other words, as soon as it changes in an organic way. I would like to talk about care at HABITA! now, but I would like to resolve the deeper political issues first. So we can develop a self-care like we want to do, sometimes I feel (off the record), but I feel that XY who absolutely wants to go on Monday and Sunday and if this destroys the life of 3 activists of 5, a whole week, means that we do not look at the political project. I want Habita to continue, not that in two months' time they'll all have a nervous breakdown.” (interview activist colleague, June 2021, translated by myself).

These lines refer to the demolition and that afterwards there was no energy left. More than half of the “core group” was exhausted, in the past this led to people needing a break from the mobilization and some didn't come back. Some of the members of HABITA! have kids, or care for their parents, or have 2 jobs to sustain a life. Fillieule states that, “On the other hand, we have the importance of ‘institutionalized changes’ and ‘biographical ruptures’ to different career stages. The pivotal nature of the plurality of life- spheres underlines that activist organizations are also comprised of individuals who are inserted in a variety of social space locations. Activists are thus permanently subject to the obligation to comply with different norms, rules and logic, which may potentially be in conflict.” (Fillieule, 2010 p.12). To this an activist colleague told me in an interview,

“it is not just a quantitative issue, but also a qualitative one. It's not because we're not good, I think we're very good, but it's because the lives, the lives of the people who make these struggles, are very precarious in the sense of being dispersed. Also, when they are not precarious even, they are dispersed because of daily life and affection, which takes us from a city to the another and makes us have connections with a lot of different things” (interview activist colleague, June 2021, translated by myself).

It is also about the restrictive capacities of the active members, who also take organizational roles or write communications about what is ongoing. This intervenes with personal life, each one also needs to address some time to wage labour and for family responsibilities, which also consume time and

energy. This has much to do with a growing flexibilization of life (Tiedemann, 2017), as many people just stay for a certain amount of time in the respective town.

Further my activist colleague states:

“From a personal point of view, I think I have always learned from the struggles and never learned as much as in the last four years in the struggle for housing here. And not just about housing and policies, but about the country and city where I live. The fight allowed me to get to know the city more and interrogate myself on other issues, people, problems, racial issues and beyond, labour issues, and gender issues. In other words, it's a huge learning experience talking about Habita and stopping evictions. In terms of care, for example, being in a collective like Habita environment, which is mainly women and I am the only man, I started to ask myself about the issue of motherhood, and the elderly, being with XY, who has to take care of her mother, who is like my mother back in Italy. In other words, within a collection of women, there is much more propensity, and I don't want to say that it's a feminine thing, but it was actually like that, asking how are you , how are we, trying to solve certain types of things.” (interview with activist colleague June 2021).

These lines express what also happens beyond mobilization and which discourses are touched. Also, it touches that practices of care and emotional well-being might stay in relation to the many women active in HABITA!. “Hence, participatory care includes both the reduction of risks associated with activism and members’ daily lives” (Santos, PhD thesis, 2019). Care is putting life at the centre and its part of all the activities done. So, to care within the movement in a participatory way is, “also aimed at reducing the risks that organizational members face in their daily lives” (Santos, PhD thesis, 2019). If care were seen as the central pillar of society, people would be at the centre instead of profit. Caring is, on individual and mutual levels, a huge pillar of the movement.

Besides activists, many of the HABITA! members are also academics. Therefore, Mondays transformed into working days in the Sirigaita headquarters. Moments after the organization meeting are also used to share more the emotional state of the struggle.

“In these four years, several people that have passed through Habita lasted a short time because this type of struggle was very exhausting, and not only because of this, of course. The fight for housing is perhaps the toughest there is. This I always knew very clearly because it has to do with the place of reproduction of life, work, all the symbolic and emotional meaning it has, and it is so central to the interests of capital. It goes through very violent processes like an eviction in physical, visual, bodily terms, and because it's so central to that, Habita has to remake this type of thing, mainly in self-care in the care it wants to take because, in fact, there is a haemorrhage of militants. In the last year, I myself changed my way of being in Habita because I went through the Lumiar and Chelas squatters. I woke up every morning at six, and I never had sleep problems in my life, but with the paranoia that there was an eviction. I went to sleep with this anguish. And I think that fighting is not the place for

comfort either; this is something that is always necessary to say. Nowadays I feel uncomfortable, fighting is exactly that, a place where you have to feel good, but at the same time, it's not comfortable. We cannot be mistaken and say that being three hours in an assembly where you have to listen to everyone is the best thing you can do. Sometimes yes, but sometimes no, the fight is hard.” (interview activist colleague, June 2021, translated by myself).

The interview showed there is a point about the emotional exhausting dimension of this struggle. The people coming to HABITA! and being more engaged within the core team often do not stay that long. While the advice and mutual support is the answer to emergency in everyday life, attending to people, often being the only one who listens, has its effects on the personal life of the more organized activists. Lately, this is recalled a lot within the movement and that it is needed to work on a more theoretical and programmatic plan for policy and structural change, just as these lines show,

“Now, one cannot stop only with reflection, because then the political objectives that come from the analysis and come from the construction and shared discourse, make the difference between just doing solidarity, which is not little, and doing politics or political solidarity. Politicization goes through this and I think we are missing it. There is no time to think about what housing policies could work, maybe a little too, but not much, what is needed is a more complex discourse on urbanism, the city, the right of the city, but also the revolutionary horizon that we want to reach beyond the city.” (interview activist colleague, June 2021, translated by myself).

A comprehensive, ethnographic analysis of political practice can provide personal insight, showing that other discourses and societal forces are intertwined and interlinked and come to play. Also, it gives insights into what are limits of protest, such as being emotional exhausting.

4.7 Lisbon, 27th of March. A Playground for Kids

To exemplify how an action is carried out, an insight into the street assembly, and the organisation behind it, on the 27th of March is provided in the following chapter. Like this, the important meanings and values attributed to everyday life practices will be highlighted. As previously mentioned “‘practices’ can be understood as the variety of short-term and mostly realisable activities that any movement group do together” (Yates, 2015b p.15).

The 27th of March was the European Action Day for housing, whereby different housing networks and movements organized actions throughout Europe, connected through the European Action Coalition¹¹, holding different activities, varying from cinema to street assemblies to demonstrations. For organizing the street assembly of the 27th of March, a working group was set up, which I was part of. It was the first action after the second lockdown, which lasted from the end of January to the middle

¹¹ <https://housingnotprofit.org>

of March 2021. The organization was formed together with Stop Despejos, which is often referred to as the sipping organization of HABITA!. Stop Despejos is currently also a kind of an Action Network that manages to rapidly mobilize many people, which is practical for stopping evictions or demolitions. Moreover, there are several persons with great movie-making skills to document trajectories and histories. For the street assembly, a square in Intendente, close to Sirigaita the headquarters of HABITA!, was occupied. Chairs were laid out, posters with messages for the Right to Housing and the City were hung out. One area of the square was prepared for a stage, with speakers and a microphone, so that people who wanted to tell about their housing trajectory could speak up. The open microphone was for sharing the stories. Afterwards, the moderation part retakes what someone shared about their housing trajectory and attributes the political meaning to it and transforms it into the claims for the right for the city. If someone, for example, is referring to eviction and there is no place to go, the message could be transformed into “no evictions without alternative,” which then becomes a chorus. Like this, solidarity also is expressed. It reinforces a narrative and logic followed by the movement and reveals the enunciators position and the aim to empower. “Empowerment also produces a broader concern for social justice, which enhances a sense of solidarity. As well as unity and support, which are necessary but not enough on their own for empowerment to endure, what is needed is a ‘sense of confidence that inspires participants to continue and increase their involvement” (Poma & Gravante, 2018 p.62).

In these street assemblies, narratives of housing precarity, an eviction or demolition, without having a housing alternative, often families with kids, are brought from the outskirts of the city to the city centre. This has an important symbolic strength - it’s a collective action that transports and produces political meaning, as it transforms what is often presented as an individual failure and situation like an eviction from one’s home into a systemic and political one. Also, since several people sharing these stories, people are not alone. They are brought back into the city and they also gain back their voice. This goes with Levebre when he referred to the right to the city, also referring to the most excluded residents which are left alone in these housing questions. People come and use the urban space in Levebre’s sense of the right to the city and claim the public space. Vasudevan refers to retaking the right to the city through expressing solidarity (Vasudevan 2017 p.7), which is what happens on events like this. Yates articulates that, “prefiguration involves experimentation. Experimentation took place not just in everyday practices and projects, but also in those relating more directly to political mobilization. Participants in social centres treated many activities as opportunities for experimental performances or, more precisely, possible new ways of carrying out practices in the future” (Yates, 2015b). From event to event, it is understood what went well and what needs to be improved. Therefore, also certain practices are adapted, reinvented or changed.

There is something liberating and soothing about seeing a main square in the city occupied by people who fight for more social justice. To occupy squares, take them over and bring people from the margins, there is an essential part of the practice of resistance. It is a meeting in name of solidarity, solidarity with all the people excluded from the housing market, excluded from participating and having a voice in the city. A shared ideal is that one day all will have a roof over their head, be in housing security and not have to worry. People who are no longer part of the housing struggle were invited to share their struggles and victories with others. Something that was often said is that people were, in the beginning, ashamed of their situation and didn't want to ask for help and look for help, but now, they are not ashamed anymore and want to speak up. In these moments on the microphone, politicians are named and shamed for their lack of empathy and human compassion. It is asked something like, *"Medina, how can you sleep at night knowing that women are sleeping at the street? If they have the right to housing, it is said in the article 65 that everybody has a right to housing."* (Fieldnotes, 27.03.2021). Different people referred to their trajectory and narrate through a microphone about their personal stories and the effect of the eviction for their kids and the family, about their visions and aspirations. These stories are brought into the city centre, like this, the personal trajectory gets political meaning through the collective action. It's a dynamic of empowerment which transforms the personal condition into a political one in the interaction with the collective.

For some families who were evicted shortly before, the transport to the inner-city centre was also organized, so that they could participate. To have encounters of different people in the city is "inherently liberating, providing opportunities for subverting the prevailing consumer culture and creating social activities that expose the contradictions of capitalist space, thus opening up opportunities for developing alternative urban projects" (Mendes, 2013 p.154).

Regarding the construction of the space, any practices have a purpose, so a playground for kids was constructed. The playground was kept simple with some carpets on the ground, some colours and toys, but like this the parents can connect with other families and enjoy their moment of political engagement.

"In assemblies, we thought about having animations for children. This, for me, was a way to take care of mothers who have to struggle. Care passes through activists, but affected people who, for example, have been fighting in Stop evictions for years, like XYZ, who had a very fragile situation, care involves not only monitoring the moments of struggle, but also finding out about health conditions, helping with certain types of things, a change, or other types of things." (interview activist colleague, June 2021, translated by myself).

If there is a playground for kids, parents will have more time to connect with others, to share and enjoy their moment of claiming the right to the city.

Something that is taken into account in HABITA! in Lisbon on bigger day events, such as the one of 27th of March, is the provision of foods and drinks. Many dwellers come from the outskirts to the centre and have an economically very low position. Moreover, they often come with many kids. Therefore, it is the intention to offer some food and drinks to share, during the day occupying a square in the city. This also goes hand in hand with the idea of an anti-consumerist ethic, not to oblige the people to have to buy something in the city, but to provide goods without payment. Even though the food is kept simple, with just some cakes and lemonade, it is believed that it makes a difference when food is shared while sharing the stories in the constructed space. It fosters the connection and identification with the movement. This food sharing practice is also an activity designed to encourage interaction among the people coming, making it easier to start conversations sometimes.

Also, these events are used for interaction with other organizations. Usually, one or two of the HABITA! members cook for the whole assembly. If there is no time for cooking among the HABITA! members, there is a collaboration with the “resistance kitchens,” like RDA or Zona Franca¹², which can help in the preparation of food. Eating together has some ritualized meaning. It’s part of the assemblies, like the presentation of the members and organization. It offers a “you are home” feeling and awakes the feeling of community. Food is shared, and the responsibility to prepare it divided between members. Also, people who were in such events for the first time took up a role, as they helped in food distribution, etc. Additionally, practices of food sharing and childcare play a role in the sense that it holds the people together for a long time in an assembly, which usually takes about 3-4 hours. The choice to not consume but to freely exchange - a politicization of the collective and taking into mind that for some people coming to these events are more accessible if some basic food is provided. Therefore, these practices are politicizing, as this consideration takes into account the situation of the families attending. It’s a sub and micro practice of political activity, which is reflected in taking into account the very situation of the people seeking help in HABITA! and contributes to the insight into everyday life of social movements. Taking socio-cultural conditions and background into account, how actions are carried out and planned inspires and shows how alternative societies could look like. It’s an attempt for a less capitalistic working society through small-scale food provisioning. Obviously on these events especially on the end, also some people buy a beer to drink on the street accompanying the concert. Political ideas of community and the right to the city are also carried out by eating in public space, occupying a public square and using it for your purposes. It is in such moments that political ideas of participation, of reclaiming the right to the city, are carried out in practices. Moreover, people who pass by stop and learn about the movement and ongoing struggle.

¹² The Zona Franca and RDA in Anjos are both non-profit cultural, recreational and gastronomic association reserved for members.

In this sense, the street assembly of the 27th of March showcases practices of collective identity, collective struggle, and solidarity affirmation. Moreover, as an entire square in the city is taken, it's putting in practice the right to the city. It's a cross moment between different movements and networks. Often, different people interested in housing issues approach this area, for example, academics who have their research interest in these fields. There are moments of shared "idealism" of communal struggle, goals and aims. In these moments also, ideas of sharing norms of collectivism and ideals about equality are enforced and manifested through the practice of making it an essential part of the event; it becomes a communal life. The spaces created during assembly practice are also constructed in the form of a community, unified in the right to housing and the city. Therefore, it also shows that people can come together if interactions points are made. In these moments also, empathy and mutual understanding are developed. It is not forced, but kind of a side effect of communal practice in assembly when sharing fears and anger. It is shown and shared that the welfare state fails and argues for social justice; the long-term neoliberal austerity politics are criticized in how they subject social infrastructure like housing, mobility or health. That some people are threatened and affected by this intersectional on the urban level is highlighted to create understanding.

Also, during this assembly, testimonies of people were recorded in videos, where they could expose their housing trajectory. These moments are also important for the documentation and collection of data, which also refers to collecting the contemporary history storytelling. This street assembly ended with a small street concert, where everybody was dancing on the square and sharing beers.

4.8 Women and the Fight for Housing ,

"We are women and we are diverse. We are the mothers of single parents who have been subjected to the violence of an eviction. We are the ones who were left homeless, without our belongings and without adequate social responses. We know what it is like to live in situations of serious housing precariousness that put our health (physical and mental) at risk, which threaten our social well-being and our full development. We are migrant women. We live in situations of overcrowding where we are forced to share the same roof even with those we don't want to be. We are the women pushed onto the streets by domestic, gender and institutional violence. We are the young mothers who seek socioeconomic autonomy from their families of origin and the not-so-young mothers who are forced to return to their parents' homes due to the precariousness of our lives. We are the elderly who have been forced out of their homes, the ones who are not protected from evictions and rising incomes. We are continually threatened by the possibility of non-renewal of lease contracts, and, ultimately, by the danger of evictions." (Open letter MuDHa 8.03.2021).

In Lisbon, in the summer of 2020, the movement MuDHa (Mulheres pelo Direito a Habitação) was built. The Women for the Right to Housing (MuDHa) movement is a feminist network made up of diverse women, associations and collectives that fight for gender equality, decent housing and living conditions. It's a mutually supportive group, proposing concrete and systemic solutions to combat the various forms of oppression, discrimination and violence that women experience daily and throughout all stages of life (Mudha Open Letter 2021). I first came in contact with HABITA! when I conducted my previous research (2018/2019) about women squatting municipal houses in a social housing neighbourhood in Lisbon. At that time, I accompanied several women closer in their housing trajectory. Already, this time in HABITA!, there was the notion that it's mainly women who seek help and that they are also the ones organizing the struggle in the neighbourhoods. Therefore, neighbourhood assemblies were held in Lumiar/Alta de Lisboa, a social housing area, mainly with women. In Lisbon, when the movement MuDHa was built, I brought some of the women back into the activist sphere to support them in their engagement. Then, I had already started my role as an "anthropologist support worker" (Wilde, 2020, p. 7) and I dived deep into Lisbon's precarious housing reality. With some women I accompanied back then, I looked for contact in the first lockdown (March-May 2020). I wondered how they managed to maintain hygiene, living without water and electricity, but with kids (Hernandez LMD, 2021).

The people who founded the movement MuDHa were mainly women who were members of other associations, such as Mulheres na Arquitectura¹³, Irmas oblatas¹⁴, GAT (grupo de ativistas em tratamento¹⁵, Djass¹⁶ (Associação de Afrodescendentes), UMAR¹⁷ HABITA! and StopDespejos. Therefore, there was a certain cultural capital of political organization. Furthermore, it is important that the group of the MuDHa is very fluid and changing. It started with "organized women" inviting "affected women" to come to the assemblies, which took place in UMAR. The building of the collective MuDHa shows that there has been more concern for intersectional concerns of women in housing vulnerability. For example, women are more likely to suffer from domestic violence and have different practices when it comes to homelessness. The first "action" of MuDHa was writing an open letter highlighting the particularly vulnerable position of women confronting homelessness. This came from the background that there were several women either squatting or living in informal self-built neighbourhoods or were homeless. Therefore, a "working group" was built to write an open letter released on the international feminist struggle day, the 8th of March 2021. The development was very fruitful and participatory in recognizing the problems and division of work on the letter itself, with

¹³ <https://www.facebook.com/mulheresnaarquitectura/>

¹⁴ <https://www.oblatasportugal.pt>

¹⁵ <https://www.gatportugal.org>

¹⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/associacao.djass>

¹⁷ <http://www.umarfeminismos.org>

several meetings. This division of task is aimed to help prevent that there are some people who are “more expert than others,” which happens very easily in movements. Like this, more equality can be guaranteed and more distribution of knowledge. Also, it acts to battle the frustration that comes up and develops among some members, who having the feel that decision-making is not horizontal enough and the division of tasks still needed to grow.

Furthermore, in a workshop/assembly thoughts were collected to “mulher na casa” – women at home. The topics that came up and put on a wall using post-it notes were: “domestic violence, domestic struggle, struggle for the right to property, gypsy women and housing precarity, homely, houses with a social function, home, immigrants, old women & bullying, food sustainability, overcrowded, squatting” (fieldnotes, October 2020). These Topics came up as many women invited are in precarious living situations, like staying at the house of relatives and friends from time to time, in overcrowded and uncertain situations; they are, in fact, homeless, *“I know that at any time I can be kicked out of this house, I know this house is doing us harm, but I have no alternatives. I do not know what else to do. What I ask is that they allow me to pay rent according to my income and that they allow me to put up windows that let the sun in. I've already tried to explain our situation at a council meeting, and I've been rejected. I was in contact with the councillor's assistant, but there was no solution for us.”* (fieldnote diary, Assembly MuDHA October 2020 – Translated by myself)

Gender based violence is more common in households suffering from economic hardship (Schneider, Harknett, & McLanahan, 2016). Economic precariousness, health and household troubles are interlinked and destabilize one's life to a degree that it is difficult to find time to engage in collective activities. This open letter was written, giving light to the specific condition of women in a situation of homelessness. “Defining homelessness has long been a topic of debate, but international agreement is elusive, and most of the various definitions of homelessness in use across the world are not conceptually grounded” (Amore et al., 2011, p.19). The problems of access to housing intersect with many other problems, like ethnic-racial discrimination, family conflicts, low wages, precarious jobs and/or informal work, social exclusion, domestic and gender violence, among many others. Mainly the assemblies begin with people presenting their history and current situation, similar to the assemblies of HABITA! or Sindicat de Llogateres. This it often turned into a large discussion and a sharing of experiences that help to empower the participants through acknowledging cultural practices, mutual learning and teaching and the recognition of the practices in politicizing subjects in the housing crisis. They have an impact on the positioning of subjects and, therefore, impact the socio-cultural change and political landscape.

It is important that this is quite a new Social Movement Organization that still needs to test which ways of working together will work well and which need to be reviewed, so that processes are improved, and decision-making carried out in a mutual way, where everybody feels they belong.is

revaluated. For the future, it is planned to have a rotative system for mails and other tasks. This will not just be timesaving for some members and improve the skill sharing, but also it will require and enforce a minimum level of engagement and divided responsibility. The working group who develop the open letter by collecting voices and testimonials of women, manage to include horizontally from housing precarity affected women and empower them, "Empowerment is also related to collective self-objectification, which means 'to be a subject – and being a subject rather than an object of others' actions is a definition of empowerment or agency" (Poma & Gravante, 2018 p.67). A special feature of MuDHa is that this collective has a lot of knowledge shared among women. Women who have problems with housing access and women whose job it is to help solve the problems of housing.

Besides these actions, there was a very active WhatsApp group in which women were continuously sharing about their ongoing everyday struggle in experiencing homelessness or their experiences while squatting and how they were getting on during the lockdown. The pandemic caused by COVID-19 has further exacerbated already existing problems. The social, economic and spatial scales of inequalities have increased and are now more visible and affecting the female population with more violence. Women are the most vulnerable group in the face of poverty, precariously dedicated to the care economy. Homeless women find themselves even more exposed to multiple forms of violence, generally not considered in the few existing responses. Today a growing number of women and families are at risk of or are already in a homelessness situation. Therefore, MuDHa argues that being homeless is more than living on the street. The wider understanding of a homeless person does not reflect all the experiences experienced by women and families in these contexts of vulnerability, illegality and uncertainty. For women, the fear of exposure to violence experienced on the streets results in searching for other options that are not the occupation of public space. In order to ensure personal and family safety and security, shelter in less accessible and invisible places is chosen. When they are mothers, finding a safe space becomes a priority. Faced with homelessness, the occupation of empty or abandoned buildings is the most immediate solution, even if these do not meet the minimum conditions of habitability. Women who live on the street are placed in a more vulnerable situation than men, subject to constant abuse and humiliation (Bretherton, 2017). That's why, for MuDHa, a woman who has to leave the house where she lived to preserve, or restore, her safety, and lives under a roof from where she can be expelled at any time, should be considered "in a situation of homelessness" (In these cases are women who live in abandoned houses including those living without title in municipal housing). Practices of Care, Mutual Support and sharing practices take into account that the specific condition of people in order to construct the political subject of an activist. Also, a dimension of support HABITA!/MuDHa gives is, supporting single mothers squatting abandoned apartments in public housing neighbourhoods. The revindication here is that "no eviction should be carried out in absence of a decent solution for the households and, second, that it is

unacceptable that, in the face of thousands of households on waiting lists for accessing public housing, hundreds of publicly owned flats have been abandoned for years” (Tulumello 2019 p.72).

Throughout my journey in an association that defends the Right to Housing and the City, women have been the main protagonists in the struggle for their homes and neighbourhoods. Already in previous research, I have argued that without aiming to focus on women, women became the most relevant actors. It is known that the pandemic has further aggravated the fragile economic and social situation in which many families find themselves. Single parent families are especially affected by this pandemic crisis, if it was already difficult to pay an income with a single salary, in a situation of unemployment, it became impossible. Faced with the impossibility of paying rent in the private market, some women took the decision to occupy a house and, thus, provide shelter for themselves and their children (Hernandez 2021). Portugal is the second country in Europe that spends more money on housing, around 50% of family income (EUROSTRAT). The fight is to stop all evictions whenever families are in conditions of economic weakness and have no other housing alternative. It is the state that is taking the lead in this wave of evictions and demolitions, when it should protect the neediest families and pay special attention to the well-being of children. The impact that this situation of violence and instability has on the mental and physical health of any adult or child leaves such deep marks that they are not removed just by resolving the housing situation.

“I am a mother in a single parent family with 4 dependent children, and a teenager who dreams of going to college to do accounting. I say dream because no matter how hard I work, I can't find a house with an affordable price to live with dignity. I have 5 people in my charge, we want to have a better life, but with housing prices today this is impossible.” (D. in her letter to the city council 09.08.2021)

An analysis of supported applications was carried out by a member of MuDHa. It's a long waiting list (the last list published by CML, here, has 4376 submitted applications). Since its entry into force of the new regulation of the right to Municipal housing, 88 houses were distributed to families:

- 12/21/2020: 30 houses (2805 applications submitted)
- 02/03/2021: 37 houses (3721 applications submitted, +32%)
- 13/04/2021: 21 houses (4376 applications submitted, +17%)

In other words, applications are increasing, and few houses are distributed, and the waiting list grows. Right now, there are 4355 applications in the list for supported social rents. Moreover, a woman who is occupying a vacant house, cannot, in practice, apply on the server, although she is at imminent risk of losing her home. Many are busy because of having to protect themselves (and their children) from domestic violence. Even with proof that they have been through extremely serious situations, it is difficult to get a flat. And it's widely known that when they are able to rent privately, there are often informal “contracts,” without any security or asking for sexual favours.

In a single-parent family situation, proof of regulation of parental responsibilities are expected, but it's known that parents have often irregular presence figures, making the families, in practice, mono-parental or how MuDHa like to refer to as, "monomarental", as this refers to the active caring mum. A woman, single-parental family, with 2 or 3 dependent children, with a low salary, knowingly cannot rent a house in the private market. Even with victim status, women remain on the waiting list for municipal housing programs for many years. The survivors of domestic violence who only find an answer in shelters do not fit the definition of homelessness and are considered a population at risk (ENIPSSA, 2021; Bretherton, 2017). Thus, the solutions that are reserved for women are the abandonment of their residence and community support network and eventual integration in emergency shelters. They are denied their right to choose where they live and how they live. Usually, women resort to the police when there is already serious physical aggression or when life is in danger. Housing movements are working at the end of the line to supporting victims without housing alternative.

Rita, squatting for home making

A paradigmatic story from Rita, which is so similar to so many, was brought to the movement. A woman I accompanied during a long time in 2018, and who I also visited again in the lockdown to document how she is getting on during the lockdown. I met her because she came to an assembly of HABITA! in 2018. Afterwards, we met several times in her squatted apartment. Last year she squatted in another apartment but was evicted shortly after and went back to the previously squatted one. She is a mum of two kids and came to HABITA! when she squatted in the first apartment in 2018, back then I accompanied her in the process of home making (Hernández 2021). She nearly got evicted twice, but HABITA!, both times, managed to stop the evictions by negotiating with the municipality and mobilizing on the door. She still lives there and, in the quarantine, to maintain her hygiene, she depended on her neighbours to fill up the water canister. I connected her with the movement MuDHa, as from her previous engagement, I knew how good it was for her to be with other women in similar situations. Last year, I did not contact her regularly but got worried over time about her mental condition. She entered into depression and lost a pregnancy due to that, according to her. She suffers from being in an uncertain situation for the past three and a half years. Moreover, she needs to live in this apartment with her partner, who has a medical documented mental illness and sometimes can be bipolar and aggressive. She depends on this flat even in its condition as she has no other alternative to go to. She agreed on being referred to in my research, though I often felt projections settled on me about change and hope, which I cannot fulfil. Also, when I filmed her case with a movie maker friend, she hoped that this would be shown on TV to provoke change. With Rita, I learned a lot about social conditions. She has fascinated me for some years with her strength and humour, despite the context she finds herself living in. I think that the relationship is one of mutual learning and recognition. Trying

to understand about help services, we learned together in the following years. Within MuDha, she made a Housing First¹⁸ application via the organization GAT but was refused. The only offer for her was a temporary shelter to be with her kids until another alternative. She didn't accept, so also, no other alternatives were presented to her. She refused as she knew about the conditions in these shelters and that even if they are designed for being temporary, you can stay in there for a long time. Not being accepted in this program, but projecting a lot of hope on it, just held her in this continuous cycle of uncertain situations and temporality. Her kids also suffer in this setting, as she needs to spend a lot of energy in getting water, heating it up, washing them, and is always dealing with uncertainty, because she always can expect to have the paper on her door notifying her that she will be evicted within three days, which would, in fact, leave her homeless. By the time it was clear that she needs support. Supporting her, interviewing her, and being in HABITA!, I realized how paradigmatic her housing case is, and this is the condition of so many. Bringing her to the movement MuDHa was of particular importance for me, as we knew each other for a long time and I know her willingness to fight and connect with other women. Moreover, I became worried about her in the pandemic, as she seemed to develop a depression out of this uncertainty. To make meetings with MuDHa possible, I even picked her up sometimes by car and brought her kids with her to her mum. Every time I see her, she says sorry for not having been present during the last actions – its connected to kind of guilt and shame. Also, when she asks for help, she often refers to not being present always but still hoping we can come and will still invite her. It seems like she does not “own” the movement yet. Seeking support in these contexts is often through the social worker, whereby they must demonstrate their level of vulnerability, but often, the support they aim for, starting with a home, is denied. Moreover, what is reported by many women in the assemblies is that they fear that the state will take their kids away, as they cannot sufficiently provide shelter. These women are terrified daily by the weight of the possibility of removing their children. Squatting or illegal settlements are the end of a cycle of poverty that is difficult to break. Wilde writes that its often-local authorities that practice a kind of “gatekeeping - that is the unlawful denial of a legal duty” (Wilde 2020 p.10). He argues that this provides an accurate description of the guiding moral economies operating inside local authorities. He explains that “this moral economy is anchored on the claim that scarce resources must be administered according to stringent evaluations of relative need and the tough, often punitive use of legal distinctions to reduce pressures on council resources” (Wilde, 2020, p.10).

Also, women without kids are excluded from the housing market. A woman in the self-description from the “Etnia cigana”/Gypsies from Portugal came to HABITA! as her parents didn't allow her to

¹⁸ In the housing first program which was originally developed for homeless people. Flats are rent from private holders, and the council gives them to the organizations managing the program “housing first.”

finish school and work, so she wanted to liberate herself from her family to become independent. She inscribed herself on the waiting list of the municipality and communicated her situation to her social worker. Still, the possibility that she will receive any consideration is so low that she will unlikely get a flat. This limits her scope of action. Also, if the parents have council housing, it will always be assumed that you could live with them. Even with kids, to be in overcrowded living arrangements is presented as a solution, no matter the relationship you have with your family. Also, something Wilde refers to and what has also been seen in Lisbon, is the language of responsibility and accountability. According to my observation, this also fits in the neo-liberal paradigm whereby each one is responsible for its luck, having to be clear about its actions, regardless of how limited they might be according to the context.

In housing movement, intersectionality might be more framed and addressed than maybe in other movements. Therefore, women get more space and visibility in these contexts. In this collective also alternative economy take place. For example, clothes and furniture are shared and different goods circulate within the militants and users, often shared through a WhatsApp group. Also, eating together plays a role in the MuDHa assemblies, where a break is always held in the middle of the meeting to eat together, to share more personally and individually what helps to accompany the processes for each one. There were some struggles with the time demanding tasks of some and not enough shared responsibility, something that came up for discussion. Arguments were here that even if it's voluntary and if each one brings in the movement what each one can according to a specific moment in life we are in, it was widely acknowledged that some tasks like the emails, the invitations for the meeting, etc. were always being made by the same people. Therefore, a plan was made to rotate the tasks, and that from now on, two people will be responsible for the email account. Moreover, the assemblies always depended on 1) the availability of the place UMAR and 2) the presence of members of UMAR to open the space. In the past, this led to misunderstanding and criticism among members. This also resulted as not everybody felt seen and recognized in the same way. Therefore, the discussion led to looking for alternative places to meet like other associations or meetings in the park and public areas.

Moreover, because involvement and engagement stir up emotion and housing are a tense field, different moral economies come into account, several moments of tension within the movement were experienced. For example, when the movement was invited to speak with municipal institutions like the ministry for equality. These meetings were prepared to cluster the topics, and a "working group" was built. At this time, more and more women who were squatting in municipal houses came to HABITA! and were in danger of eviction. This ensured these topics were discussed and brought to the meetings, which emerged in tension and delusion of homeless women who wanted the focus in these meetings to be on the solutions to their specific different problems. Being in a wide and open

movement brings these problems a defining focus, as different problems are united in the access to housing issues.

This shows how important it is to cast feminist perspectives on the city and the right to the city. Not only being concerned with a feminist criticism of the city as a space, but also with the thematization of feminist perspectives in the initiatives for a right to the city. The importance of creating a space to exchange feminist perspectives on the right to the city is created through a variety of practices in MuDHa. Content-related discussions, further than housing, regarding power and gendered stereotypes, work, street harassment, separation of public and private space is a basis of feminist discussions and empowered in such meetings. Much value-creating of this movement is also sharing knowledge from the different organizations, which helped a lot with the emotional weight. So often, when someone was dealing with a different case, through the WhatsApp group, it was asked what the others would suggest doing or if they have the contact of an institution to call. Reflecting on this with members of HABITA! and MuDha, we noticed that this sharing, regarding which steps to take next, are giving security and taking a lot of pressure away. What I personally appreciated a lot is also having the network of many women associations, which accelerated processes in support a lot.

CHAPTER 5 Conclusions

The thesis explored how the everyday work of the right to the city and housing movements is shaped by an interplay between long-term political propositions and the need to act in urgency in particular situations. Even if in the core group the aim to focus mainly on political proposals, the violence of evictions, demolitions and bullying demand fast action and mutual aid. Besides being an important practice to connect people to the movement, mutual aid is also often the first contact of the affected with the movement.

The insight into these movements also shows that there are practices designed for creating a setting of sharing, providing help and learning to use non-individualistic approaches for a more equalitarian society. Shining light on the struggle with vulnerable people also shows how hegemonic and counterhegemonic discourses are experienced by people. It is in the course of everyday practice that the political notion of the right to the city develops. The political notion connects individuals and forms collective identities, like this when new political identities are formed, individualism is tackled, and relationships of care develop. It's about the struggle to be heard in the city and to have a voice. The practices I gave light to in this thesis show how political ideas arise, are discussed in the movement and performed through practices in social movement spaces. The bringing together of very different people with different political and social backgrounds is part of the right to the city. The discourses associated and performed within this framework are brought together through the sharing of practices. The everyday life dimension of politicized practices, which are carried out by individuals in the collective setting, is part of the formation of a political, engaged and informed subject with a right to the city. The subjects pass through their trajectory of engagement and develop new capacities, abilities and meanings. Nevertheless, the insight into the rights to housings movements in Lisbon show, that in the HABITA! movement a strong the diversity is enacted There are more and less politicized people, which bring different ways of performance of practices.

It was shown that those different types of housing activism can be understood as a manifestation of the right to the city struggle, as presented by Lefebvre (1968), to challenge the different problems brought by globalization, city change and consequences of the neoliberal paradigm. Mobilizing and claiming for the common idea and demand to have a say in all matters of living in the city and to defend themselves against a neoliberal urban development policy that only serves the interests of capital. It's about that all residents of the city have a right to the city. It is a capitalistically organized economy and society that puts profit logic and private property first and thus, systematically ultimately produces social incompatibility, when in fact all the city residents should have equal rights and jointly decide on the use of urban space. A look at the protest movements shows that a large part of the urban resistance refers to a right to live in the city that is threatened by the commodification of housing, austerity

consequences, the attraction of global investments, tourification and gentrification. The right to the city, on the other hand, “opens up the possibility of placing different struggles in a global anti-capitalist context through which, despite their differences, they can develop common demands and find each other” (Harvey 2008). In general, these movements mobilize not only against oppression and in defence of vulnerable people, but by organizing around egalitarian, solidarity and often anticapitalistic ideas. They also purchase radical alternatives to live in the urban environment (Chatterton, 2016; Vasudevan, 2015). Looking at the balance of power, it becomes clear that the right to the city must be where justice applies to everyone. The root of the crisis is the decades of housing policies that made space for speculation, housing financialization and the attraction of global investments, which produced entrenched forms of exploitation, affecting the ones already on the margins, silencing them in their right to the city and housing. In the everyday experience of people being excluded, it’s crucial that housing activists bring these people back into the centre and help make the claims of secure and affordable housing heard. This thesis was not only interested in the right to the city but in the activist self-perception of this framework.

It was shown that care plays an important role in the political work of housing movements. The right to the city offers an attractive frame for alliances and bundles intersectional experiences in the urban sphere. The struggle for the right to the city and housing is presented, including other demands and intersectional topics. It becomes kind of a link for a counter hegemonic project. Hence, as many other discourses interfere, just focusing on the right to the city and the sense making regarding this would not go wide enough and leave many other discourses and forms of collective action and the everyday resistance out of the picture. That’s because the right to the city demand is also carried by diverse forms of direct social action, which evolve around acknowledging and giving importance to everyday life. Day to Day life is intensively connected to all activities; “it is their meeting place, their bond, their common ground”(Tiedemann, 2017 p.81). Lefebvre argues that it is in “everyday life that the sum total of relations which make the human - and every human being - a whole takes its shape and its form” (Lefebvre 1991 p. 97). Lefebvre argued for everyday life as an object of study and as a possible origin of change (Lefebvre 1991 p.88) and that the practices of everyday life actually constitute the place where creativity, agency and human progress can develop (Lefebvre 1991 p.87). Tiedeman argues that, “hegemonic stability also depends on its consensual support by subaltern classes, a focus on everyday life becomes relevant.” (Tiedemann, 2017 p.81). It is when structures are no longer viable because of questionable actors that changing the previously practiced order of everyday life.

Furthermore, this research has shown, that the events of the Social Movement Organization become channels of communication for people who were unlikely to meet and are finding through this practice of common interest, overcoming dichotomies. I argue that it is here where a quality of a right to the city discourse lies. It broadens coalitions of forces and creates new subjects in the course of a

shared struggle. Stopping an eviction or demolition becomes a source of motivation as it presents possible outcomes of this crisis. Cities have been shown as the centrality of social struggle and that it is in cities where change and solidarity can become an experience which politicises people and makes them defend a bigger course.

I have set an interactionist, relational, ethnographic action framework for the urban dynamics and struggles. With the goal of exposing what happens when you zoom into everyday life movement practice around the right to the city (and housing). The different topics coming up are about numerous social struggles and not just class struggles united under the right to the city frame. The production of a common agency, intersecting and various contention prorated is expanding the concept of the right to the city. The research highlighted that political process and larger dynamics are interlinked with personal experiences, as it is in everyday life, where precarity or racism is experienced. Hence, everyday life and macro frames cannot be separated. Dean argues that social movements are offering a different powerful view and an insight much closer to that what social service worker, for example, are seeing. They “see and go where people live, where they work, eat and ask and listen where injustice is experienced and how to resist. They create networks where togetherness it is learned, care is discussed, experiments are made and people aim to inspire and how liberation can be cultivated” (Dean, 2020). Connecting Social Movement Research with Policy Proposals can open up fruitful insights.

Based on my analysis and findings regarding emotions behind their activist practice, housing is essentially intersecting with the emotional exhaustion and violence of this struggle. Once in, your trapped, emotionally involved and already in the painful experiences of demolitions and eviction. Therefore, this longing for social justice is externalized through the call for activism. The housing activism is embedded and interferes with the everyday life of the people. There is the wish of systemic socio-economic change in society that goes beyond the practices of everyday life of the activism.

This research gave insight into that within the right to the city slogan movements and, more concrete, the struggle for the right to housing specific care practices are carried out to fight, recognize and react to different intersectional experiences within the city. Goals and practices were shown as multi-layered, hybrid and adaptive to the needs of people seeking help. So even if a systematic change, new legislation, or a utopia is desired, many practices focus on establishing a mutual understanding of the collective struggle, offering political information and education, and establishing a more democratic, participatory, equal and informed society. These movements challenge the hegemonic discourses embedded in the city, when responding to already marginalized people with designed practices. It has been shown that these practices of the movement are designed to be integral thinking about child care, actions and food. There has been a certain dissatisfaction by some members of the Social Movement Organisations in Barcelona and Lisbon when the activists are put in the role of the

social service worker in writing letters and assisting individual cases. And “although they see themselves as part of a broad struggle for social justice, more and more of them find themselves reluctantly taking on the role of mediators, bureaucratic translators, brokers and carers” (Gutiérrez Garza, 2020) But, at the same time, a lot of new knowledge is acquired by the members of the movement, as this quote shows,

“this really goes well. It started like a thing like that, quiet, let's say, good... Popular and I have ended up being what it is now, very professional because we are very professional people and with very specific studies. What we know of mediation, of laws. You knew. Before I read a ley and mother mia, I thought, what language is this? I didn't understand anything. And now, Mother Mía, if only now I read a law of any ordinance and all are understood perfectly. Because we have acquired an incredible legal knowledge... “(Interview Ponto de ajuda, Sindicat Barcelona, April 2021, translated by myself).

The aspect of care was shown as drawing on the different practices showing mutual recognition of needs, considering building frameworks that facilitate accessibility and showing what is *“making the movement a home.”* It presents the importance of care practices and ethics which are central to the presented right to housing movements. Public events and activities serve as interaction points connecting participants. Creating time and space for people to coincidence is already provoking a change in understanding practices and bringing together people with different beliefs from academics to the most vulnerable parts of society. Knowledge creation is enhanced when people frequently discuss and share ideas whilst eating together. Moreover, skills are shared in writing cards, going to municipal services or events where contacts are made and where contact between a variety of people around the social movement sphere come together. The sharing of practices across movements shows that the first need of being cared for in desperate situations takes an important role.

Following the topics and questions of urban social conflict, the assembly practice has shown that within the right to the city movement practice, other topics embed in the social justice discourse arise. The traces lead to topics varying from violence and racial discrimination, the need for holistic answers, and gender-based violence. Studying empirically social movements, with their engagement, can unpack the overlapping and interwind practices and their functions within the movement. The production moment of the collective was shown by highlighting the trajectory through which people pass. It was paid attention to the hybrid and fluid identification moments within the movement and about how involvement has an emotional weight and how practices are developed according to the local specific context, and how, in this context, political meaning is co-produced and developed. The recognition of the urban inequalities is the starting point for adequate and fitting solidarity actions, community projects and alternative economies. The city not only offers space for political interventions, but it is also part of this change as a spatial manifestation of social conditions: places where the spatial and social order are called into question and open spaces for alternative and resistant

modes of action are, according to Lefebvre (1970), "heterotopias." According to Lefebvre, there is a different coexistence in the conflicted heterotopias in self-organization; a right to the city is possible. In such spaces, different self-organization of a right to the city is possible. Moreover, the heterotopia manages to empower (some) citizens while progressing through first care and holding space to inform them about the right to defend themselves in a conflict.

In contrast to the exclusive and segregated experiences within the city, there are heterotopia practices in the city, in which the residents are transforming and recreating their city in a chain of political moments. The movements engage systemically while trying to transform within the system, but also anti-systemic in their claims criticizing the market-focused order. Robinson argues that bringing "the structure of conceptualization and research practice, which puts specific urban cases into conversation with others in order to extend the ways in which we can understand and talk about the nature of the urban." (Robinson, 2016). What this research has shown is that care work in social movements is political and emotional interlinked. This is aligned with findings of feminist scholarship which also have managed to highlight that care is vital and a political practice, which can bring innovation.

It was shown, that the effects of emotions on disengagement and the biographical fragmentation in different spheres is a problem for the permanent engagement. The macro dynamics producing the housing crisis are interlinked with the life of the activist and reflect on their biographies and life course. The political subjects HABITA! supports cannot be directly translated into the ones who actually are organizing, making the back office and working on strategies. There are different layers of involvement and organized struggle intertwine with the necessity of other everyday life tasks of an organized activist, like wage-labour or reproductive work, including the concern about a fragmentation of political radical left work in the struggle against the neo liberal capitalist order of urban society. Following these conflicts, an image of cities with people who can no longer afford rising rents and who are moving out of their apartments in the city centre to the outskirts. Cities in where the right to the city and housing became an expression of different power discourses, social movements become alternative actors with integral practices, where mutual learning and caring are essential. That's why I'm arguing that urban social movements for the right to housing act for Lefebvre's Right to the City, as they take power back, to engage in the urban space and offer alternatives. So, following Lefebvre, not only those who are legally involved in the production of urban space have citizen status, but all residents of the city who engage in meaningful practice or everyday life. The right to the city is a radical confrontation of the residents with the historically grown city in which they live—with its inherent power discourses—but to break with the conditions and claim their needs.

The right to the city articulates an antagonism towards neoliberal urbanisation which presents a threat to the citizens. This frontier is situated on many scales and comes to place when looking on

which power relations come up. Although this is not explicitly mentioned by the movements, it is something that is politicized by the movements. A crisis is portrayed, against which actors can mobilize and act with collective care and question this order. The right to the city mobilization presents a narrative against the current order and narrating about a universal social good, which is housing. They create counter narratives and alternative practices filled up with alternative meaning and a vision aligned on social justice, self-determination, dignity, care and mutual aid. The counter narrative and the change of the perceived personal failure into a political one is crucial and of which the right to the city is a part of. It's an interconnected and globalized world, which is ruled by neoliberal capitalism, everything affects us. There are no single sided issues, everything has an intersectional manner. Practicing solidarity in a collective exercise, can become the base of our shared lives. From Lefebvre's perspective, a right to the city only exists if it is lived in spatial practice at a specific moment. In view of this, people have to fight again and again for the right to the city in everyday urban practice. The right to the city can then be understood as a transformative process that links various moments of resistant action with one another and connects different fields and people.

I end with a statement of HABITA!: "Cities live off the work of the people, of all of us, and whoever sustains the life of the city should have the right to live there. As such, housing has the social function of housing people and cannot be subordinated to interests that transform our houses into an investment product to accumulate capital. Our fight is for the house, the neighbourhood, the city and it crosses with many other fights, and with all those who decided not to give up, resist and dream!" (habita.info)

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Appendix

Index

- a) List of Interviews
- b) Example transcript of one of the Interviews with an activist colleague:
- c) Photo documentation

a) List of Interviews

Name of the Participant (anonymised); Position	Number of Interviews
<i>Alex, (HABITA)</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Rosa, (HABITA)</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Mayte, Housing Policy Advisor Barcelona</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Queralt, SIPHO Barcelona</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Rita, affected Mother of 2 children HABITA</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Interview Ponto de Ajuda Barcelona</i>	<i>1</i>

Additional to the interviews, there were a lot of informal conversations in the neighborhoods and during, after and before the assemblies. The data contains many pages of notes and thoughts in my field book diary and as Audio Memos at my phone documenting my perception of assemblies and meetings.

Moreover, in the street assembly on the 27 of march and in the neighbourhood assemblies I collected short testimony's of people explaining their situation.

Further reference was made to the open letter published by Mulheres pelo direito a Habitação (<https://www.publico.pt/2021/04/08/local/noticia/movimento-mulheres-direito-habitacao-pede-camara-almada-retire-queixas-familias-ocuparam-casas-1957704>)

Open letter by Dulce from Catujal (<https://habita.info/apelo-de-uma-mae-despejada-ilegalmente-actualizacao-despejo-no-catujal/>)

b) Example transcript of one of the Interviews with an activist colleague:

E: Pois, como te tinha dito, concordas que grave a entrevista?

A: Concorde.

E: Bem, somos colegas ativistas, mas também académicos e, não sei, se calhar me podias contar um pouco de como chegaste à HABITA e um pouco o teu vínculo.

A: Então, cheguei aos movimentos de luta pela habitação na cidade de Lisboa porque de facto já tinha participado neste tipo de mobilizações e atividades em Roma onde há um contexto um bocado diferente de luta, mas que, enquanto estudante, também se tocava a questão da habitação e através

da ocupação daquilo que a gente chama “estudantado”, não sei como se diz em português. Lugares que a gente ocupava para termos residências para estudantes.

E: Residências de vivenda?

A: Sim, antigos prédios abandonados do estado para depois criar residências estudantis. Na realidade para criar residências para os militantes daqueles coletivos. De facto, estavam todos a precisar porque estavam a pagar rendas incomportáveis. Através do talento estudantil desta questão, também ajudávamos e lutávamos juntos com quem estava a ocupar, mesmo sem ser estudante. Normalmente eram populações imigrantes, mas não só; e os movimentos de Roma eram muito fortes e já existiam, portanto, para mim a questão habitacional sempre foi bastante central. Em Lisboa, na realidade, demorei anos antes de começar a fazer política nestes moldes e a questão habitacional e a vontade de fazer algo em termos de luta para a habitação, começou quando voltei de Roma (a última vez que voltei, porque já voltei várias vezes). Em janeiro de 2017, de fato, quando voltei para encontrar uma casa e pagar uma renda, foi muito complicado, demorámos 5 meses, mesmo tendo alguma disponibilidade para pagar, nem muita, mas já tínhamos alguma disponibilidade, eu e a minha companheira. Pensei que ia haver as autarquias em setembro e tínhamos de falar disto, porque ninguém estava a falar da questão da habitação. Então aí comecei a observar a Habita, porque me parecia o único movimento, aliás, na altura tinha havida uma ocupação por parte do RDA. Comecei a observar o que se mexia na cidade neste sentido e reparei que a Habita tinha um discurso bastante fixe e também uma análise mais profunda de outros atores, o problema foi a Habita e o bloco de esquerda e eu não queria fazer política para um partido, mas era uma sensação errada a que tinha na altura, era ligada aos boatos e às vozes. Depois percebi através da caravana que o trabalho era mesmo que fosse do bloco ou de qualquer outra coisa, era um trabalho político bem feito e sério em termos de exigências e das populações mais vulneráveis, mas não só. Aquilo da caravana era nas populações mais vulneráveis, era na altura das autárquicas, ou seja, setembro de 2017. Não participei diretamente na Caravana, só nalgumas iniciativas, mas respondi logo a seguir a uma chamada para uma assembleia que falasse de como organizar uma defesa contra os despejos, aquela vaga de despejos que se estava a realizar nessa altura, em 2017, que era cinco anos da entrada em vigor da lei Cristas. Os contratos também estavam a caducar e as renovações de contrato que não caíam em termos oficiais, dentro da nomenclatura dos despejos, mas que, de facto, constituíam em despejos na prática de uma série de residentes na cidade, incluindo amigos e pessoas conhecidas e vizinhos. E pronto, a partir daí respondi à chamada da Habita e daquela assembleia formou-se a “Stop despejos”. E a “stop despejos”, no início, era uma plataforma que juntava algumas organizações como a rede de solidariedade que, entretanto, também já não existe, que estava

em Lisboa e Gaia e etc. e também indivíduos que queriam lutar contra essa coisa dos despejos. A partir daí, como o coletivo da “stop despejos” quis pôr-se mais como campanhas e levar a solidariedade a certos setores, a certas pessoas e certas situações, eu lembro-me de falar com a Rita na altura e a Maria João e dizer “olha eu estou muito interessado e para mim fazer política parte de um trabalho de base, não faz sentido estar a só a fazer a “stop despejos”, mesmo que nem todos tenham a disponibilidade, eu tenho a disponibilidade e tempo e quero-me aproximar mais às pessoas, porque é a partir daí, eu tinha aprendido que a gramática da luta parte ao conhecer os problemas reais da população, conhecê-los e partilhá-los. Então isto foi bastante orgânico e natural, formar a “stop despejos” primeiro, mas logo a seguir entrar na Habita que continua a fazer um trabalho mais de base de organização de pessoas afetadas.

E: Obrigada. Como vêes tu essas duas organizações ou associações na reivindicação do direito à cidade.

A: Eu acho que na realidade, na reivindicação do direito da cidade, há ainda muito para fazer. Ou seja, eu acho que são duas organizações que conseguem impor-se muito na questão habitacional e no direito à casa e à habitação, menos de um ponto de vista de “o que é que significa de um direito à cidade”. A Habita tem, no próprio título, a associação que luta pelo direito à habitação e a cidade, portanto já tem mais explícita esta coisa. A stop despejos nunca explicitou nunca explicitou, mas partilha a ideia de que a cidade que não é baseada num lucro, o direito à cidade é entendido como uma cidade construída a partir das exigências das pessoas que a vivem. Mas não é uma coisa explícita, aliás, às vezes quer na Habita, quer na Stop despejos se fala em aprofundar este discurso, acho que

também por uma certa necessidade de responder às emergências que a questão habitacional provoca, impede uma particular reflexão e desenho de desenvolvimento de direito à cidade enquanto tal. Mesmo à volta da forma de direito da cidade, que é algo que a gente como nós entende, não tenho a certeza que seja a forma melhor. Não porque não esteja de acordo com Lefebvre, mas em si, a nível pessoal, não sei se estou de acordo com essa questão do chamar “direitos”. Ou seja, o direito é algo gasto e de que a democracia enche a boca, mas que não consegue respeitar, é algo de programático e os direitos são algo que para mim vêm um pouco de uma tradição liberal, que uma mobilização comunista ou revolucionária devia tentar, pelo menos, ultrapassar. Dito isto, não tenho uma coisa para ir além desta palavra, desta forma, por isso continuamos a utilizá-la. Acho que em vários momentos se tocaram nestas coisas, porque tudo constrói o direito da cidade, mesmo sem querer às vezes, fazendo certas iniciativas ou ocupando, através do teu corpo, determinados espaços da cidade e isto em várias ocasiões de mobilizações junto a ministérios, junto a câmaras, a isto ou aquilo.

Acho que a experiência mais interessante nos últimos anos em termos de direito à cidade, foi na formulação do festival da habitação, em setembro de 2018. Aí acho que mesmo não compartilhando uma análise muito profunda do que é que seria o direito da cidade, temos a forma daquelas que são as ideias um pouco escondidas em cada um de nós, ou então faladas por metade dentro das assembleias, porque por um mês ocupámos a cidade sem pedir autorização a ninguém, a construir um festival que passou de mobilizações políticas a eventos culturais a exposições e intervenções artísticas e tudo mais alguma coisa. Por um mês inteiro, houve muitos eventos que conseguiram juntar não só essas duas organizações, mas outras que pertencem ao mesmo ambiente. Portanto acho que aí foi uma das coisas mais interessantes, aí se colocou a base para se continuar a falar, infelizmente as emergências e as urgências da questão habitacional, impediram-nos de aprofundar este tipo de discurso e, por exemplo, voltar a repetir a experiência do festival o ano a seguir.

E: E nos anos a seguir também se tentou, ou se fez demonstrações, não? Em setembro?

A: Exato. Final de setembro foi uma coisa diferente, mas sim, chegou-se a 29 de setembro e criou-se uma grande assembleia e ensinar um despejo de massa na Avenida da Liberdade.

Acho que aí, nesses casos, quando organizamos movimentos públicos e também neste ano, na “housing action day”, quando tomas uma praça para discutir com grupos ou indivíduos que normalmente não estão no teu dia-a-dia já estás a mexer neste sentido. Mas há muito para fazer neste sentido e não pode ser levado a frente só por organizações que, pelo menos até agora, apesar de quererem desenvolver estas questões, estão focadas na habitação. Direito da cidade para mim é uma outra forma para a construção de uma comuna ou de um ambiente revolucionário. Um território urbano mais parecido com a nossa utopia. Uma das razões pela qual não gosto do direito de cidade é porque, ultimamente, tem sido facilmente usado pela retórica capitalista ou neoliberal. Isto tudo, porque na realidade o neoliberalismo, ou mais o capitalismo, o que este não consegue absorver é o bloqueio da produção. O resto, no momento podes criar as práticas mais revolucionárias, o capitalismo tenta sempre encontrar uma maneira de absorver.

E: E achas que a criação do discurso do direito à cidade e de outros discursos mais aprofundados estão a ser mais lentamente desenvolvidos porque uma grande parte trabalha em atender as pessoas afetadas?

A: Eu acho que foi por causa disso sim. Há duas coisas, é por causa disso e pelos números, que não são muito grandes, de quem é ativista ou militante neste tipo de organizações.

E: Claro.

A: E não só, não é só uma questão quantitativa, mas também qualitativa. Não é porque não somos bons, acho que somos muito bons, mas é porque as vidas, as vidas das pessoas que fazem estas lutas, são muito precárias no sentido de serem dispersas. Também quando não são precárias mesmo, são dispersas por causa de vida quotidiana e da afetividade, que nos leva de uma cidade à outra e nos faz ter ligações com imensas coisas diferentes. Não é que falte vontade de continuar este discurso, mas é claro que se dá uma certa precedência à questão habitacional, do que ao

desenvolvimento do discurso crítico, é certo que ele acontece, mas um dos limites do ativismo contemporâneo, não só em Portugal, é a incapacidade de parar. Há muita vontade, é uma coisa que também reparo em termos geracionais, não que seja velho, aliás, já me diziam há quinze anos que nós queríamos fazer as coisas, mas não queríamos fazer análise. E agora parece-me ainda mais, é por isso que contesto um pouco a palavra “ativismo” e “ativista” sobretudo, porque é muito centrada na ação, enquanto eu acho que o trabalho de um militante político tem de sempre passar pela coisa clássica do marxismo, de “tória e praxitoria”, ou seja, ter sempre uma dialética entre a dialética e o prático. Acho que pelas razões que estava a dizer à bocado, da maneira que nós temos, enquanto literatos ou não, que fazem as lutas a partir de não usufruir das mesmas fontes de informação ou de estudo. Há vinte anos atrás, tu e eu íamos ler o mesmo jornal de extrema-esquerda ou não, e depois à noite íamos ver o mesmo telejornal na televisão, assim como todos os outros. Hoje em dia, nós que até se calhar somos pessoas parecidas, lemos coisas de fontes completamente diferentes, por isso também é muito difícil desenvolver um discurso ou uma crítica comum e temos de lutar para ter esse espaço. Acho que é uma das coisas que nos falta aqui nos movimentos sociais, que é uma característica global, acho eu, nos movimentos pós-modernos, se quisermos chamar-lhes isso, ou pelo menos das últimas décadas, temos de recuperar o espaço para a reflexão.

Agora, depois não se pode ficar só na reflexão, porque depois os objetivos políticos que vêm da análise e vêm da construção e do discurso partilhado, faz a diferença entre fazer só solidariedade, que não é pouco, e fazer política ou solidariedade política. A politização passa por isso e acho que nos faz falta. Não faz falta pensar em quais poderiam ser as políticas de habitação que poderiam funcionar, talvez um pouco também, mas não muito, o que falta é um discurso mais complexo do urbanismo, da cidade, do direito da cidade, mas também o horizonte revolucionário que quisermos alcançar além da cidade.

E: Achei muito interessante o que estavas a dizer das diferentes fontes, mas o conhecimento comum que se cria é nas assembleias, a ouvir as pessoas afetadas, a partir daí podemos desenvolver a proposta política. Sentes que essa proposta política não está desenvolvida por vínculo 18:48, mas a transformação de afetados a ativistas, como vês a correr isso?

A: Essa é uma pergunta importantíssima e difícil de responder, eu acho que há um problema. Outra vez, na palavra ativista há esse problema. E não és tu que a estás a usar, somos nós aqui que a usamos. Eu digo sempre que uma coisa é ser militante de uma organização revolucionária, ou uma organização política. Uma coisa é ser ativista, porque ativista pressupõe que alguém é mais passivo que tu ou mais ativo que tu e cria-se esta distinção entre pessoas afetadas ou não. Enquanto que criar laços com as pessoas afetadas, que é também um dos objetivos do quotidiano da Habita e da Stop, o problema é que ao longo dos anos, as tentativas que fizemos de melhorar isso devido a muitas razões que agora não é preciso aprofundar, ou então sim, veremos depois, está-se a tornar muito complicado, mesmo com vários modelos de organização, assembleias maiores, menores, atendimentos...torna-se difícil. Para mim um dos erros que se pode fazer e que se fez é que de nos considerarmos a nós próprios afetados, e isto liga um pouco à questão do direito de cidade. Eu sou uma pessoa que, há alguns anos, recebi uma herança e, de facto, consegui comprar a minha casa, sou uma pessoa privilegiada, com sorte, etc. E claro que não tenho um problema de habitação direta, tinha há quatro anos quando não tinha esta herança. Eu tinha de pagar uma renda com o meu ordenado, mas mesmo a partir de quando comprei a casa, não sinto como se não fosse afetado, eu sou afetado no direito à cidade, mas, e isso é um problema na “Stop despejos”, porque quando descobres o que se passa com pessoas que estão muito pior do que tu, então comesas a considerar-te “Não afetado” e a elas sim. E acho que essa distinção que é algo natural é que é o erro.

E: Mas é algo interessante porque acho, e agora que o dizes, é algo que também quando entrei nos movimentos, os seus discursos foram incorporados no meu dia a dia porque vivemos num mundo capitalista e numa cidade neoliberal, mas também estás confrontado com outras vulnerabilidades que também fazem o discurso focar-se mais aí.

A: Sim, e é natural que isso aconteça, mas depois faz falta aquilo que estávamos a falar mais à

bocado, um discurso mais aprofundado à volta do direito da cidade e a ideia de que “eu quero ficar neste bairro e quero que o meu vizinho, que está muito pior do que eu, fique neste bairro e tenha luz e água”. Mas se o meu vizinho se vai e vem um turista que cada 3 dias se muda porque é um Airbnb, isso vai mudar a minha qualidade de vida, e é evidente que o meu problema é menor do que aquele da pessoa que já não tem eletricidade e água e não consegue pagar a renda, mas, de facto, acaba por ser um problema, um problema meu. Um problema até das pessoas que não questionam isso. Então sim, acho que isso é central e que se resolve através de uma análise política um pouco mais aprofundada, que é uma dessas coisas que faz falta, isso não quer dizer que não exista. Existe e acontece, mas sim, a questão da emergência e o facto de ver pessoas que estão muito pior que tu, isso muda a pessoa. E, repito, o facto de nos chamarmos ativistas e aos outros “afetados”, esta coisa não me convence. Também acho que devíamos, enquanto movimentos de habitação, aprofundar o conceito de organização, de autonomia e ver exatamente o que isto quer dizer. Porque não podemos dizer que as lutas destes anos foram uma derrota, não foram. Mas, sobretudo neste momento em que somos todos e todas muitos afetados pela pandemia e os trabalhos, pelas vidas difíceis que temos, temos de voltar a pensar na auto-organização para lutar para nós e para os outros.

E: Completamente de acordo. E, por exemplo, tu achas que a Rita e eu e também outros que estamos vinculados à academia e ao ativismo, isso pode ser útil para trabalhar estas questões?

A: Eu antes era muito era muito cético em relação à academia, tanto que pensei que não ia voltar a entrar no mundo da universidade e a tirar um doutoramento, agora, eu acho que esta é uma questão que tenho de aprofundar porque é relativamente recente a minha experiência de académico comparada com a minha experiência de militante ou ativista. O que eu penso é que com certeza o facto de na “Stop despejos”, muita gente mesmo que não trabalhe em questões de habitação, mas que estuda física ou matemática, ou seja, as pessoas da academia têm ou mais disposição, ou mais tempo para participar na luta, isso é um facto. Acho positivo neste sentido, é bom utilizarmos os recursos que o estado nos dar, os nossos ordenados, para levar uma massa crítica à luta, como académicos, e não só porque não precisamos só de ser académicos, mas estamos habituados a desenvolver um pensamento crítico, em teoria, temos a responsabilidade de criar mais momentos de reflexão e análise à volta destas coisas e, a nível pessoal, é algo que vou fazer. Já falei na Habita, mas estamos a tentar construir com o Marco, que é um orientador e através dos debates e tal. Mas criar momentos de uma verdadeira ligação entre política e academia, acho fundamental. Ao mesmo tempo sabendo que, como trabalhadores da academia, estamos dentro de uma instituição globalizada e neoliberal e céticos. E às vezes sinto, pelo menos aqui em Portugal, que nos faz falta uma mobilização, não podemos pensar que somos académicos e doutorados precários, sem grande futuro, por isso além de trabalhar no ativismo, na minha opinião, devíamos organizarmo-nos dentro das faculdades. Mas uma coisa de cada vez. Eu ia por aí, e volto à habitação, nunca vi a habitação como algo desligado do resto. Em Roma isto era muito mais fácil, há uma tradição em que não existe só o partido, não é só o partido que tem um discurso holístico à volta da política. Existe uns movimentos em Roma da habitação, mas cada área política da autonomia dos movimentos tenta, de facto, tratar de todas as ocasiões. Eu estava numa organização estudantil, mas podia dizer-me que era nos movimentos antirracistas também. Aqui vês já uma separação, devido a várias razões, à falta de espaços onde partilhar, a falta de uma cultura política autónoma, um contratempo do país em termos de modernismo, um “welfare state” pensado num período que, para o resto do mundo, já era pós-moderno e neoliberal. Há várias razões para isso não acontecer. Mas temos de usar as ferramentas que a academia nos dá para criar estas condições. E tornar as nossas lutas mais abrangentes, hoje em dia chama-se “interseccionais”, não sei se concordo bem com esta noção de interseccionalidade, antes sim, mas agora estou a começar a refletir que na realidade quero algo que não seja interseccional, ou seja, fragmentado, porque esta ideia de interseccional mantém uma ideia de fragmentação. Acho que é preciso algo mais articulado que toque em todos os assuntos, mas que seja mais abrangente em si, que consiga abranger tudo num conjunto. Não quer dizer que tenha de haver só uma organização, mas acho que como académicos (e não só), a partir do nosso trabalho quotidiano, temos mais

responsabilidade que outros que não têm a mesma disponibilidade de tempo, nem trabalho à volta do pensamento.

E: Seguindo isso, por exemplo, o que pensas da ideia, ou do statement de que as coisas têm de ser feitas dentro do sistema, que se tem de encontrar respostas dentro do sistema para ajudar as pessoas em emergências. E as propostas políticas que se fazem, também se fazem dentro do sistema, mesmo a questão da habitação está enquadrada numa crítica geral, anticapitalista e tanto sistémica como anti sistémica. Como vês isso? É uma contradição ou é o que se passa?

A: É uma boa pergunta e temos de distinguir o que eu sinto e o que eu penso do que na realidade acontece nestes dois coletivos. Ou seja, a nível pessoa, eu seria mais de ter uma posição anti sistémica e em termos ideológicos, o que me interessava fazer, não só por ser interessante, mas também porque determinante, podiam ser as coisas reputadas mais radicais ou mais anti sistémicas em si, mais contrárias. Deixa-me formular melhor...a falta de uma análise comum do discurso à volta do direito da cidade, a falta de um discurso mais de crítica e de análise. Ou seja, nestes coletivos somos todos bastante parecidos, partilhamos a ideia de cidade mais ou menos vaga e temos mais ou menos a mesma ideia de o que queremos de um ponto de vista de habitação. Mas também somos de sensibilidades muito diferentes sobre este tipo de questões de atitudes táticas ou posições anti sistémicas. Acho que as duas organizações são anticapitalistas, no sentido puro em que não querem o capitalismo, porque o capitalismo tem claros problemas, ao mesmo tempo a falta desse discurso prejudica a capacidade de ter objetivos a sério, sistémicos. Vou-me explicar melhor, isto foi algo que aprendi com os anos, há dez anos atrás dizia que não há maneiras reformistas que nos ajudam a levar para a frente. E para mim, a ideia de avançar é a ideia que queremos de sociedade alternativa. Ainda hoje considero as instituições liberais do capital como um terreno que é uma mistificação da democracia a sério, agora, acho que como estão as coisas, temos de nos tornar ecléticos, táticos e usar um repertório variado que passa também por propostas que aparentemente são reformistas e não revolucionárias, mas que nos permitem alcançar e abrir espaços de onde podemos agir politicamente e, de facto, poder contra popular com esses espaços. Isto para depois desafiar o estado, ou não. Agora, isto não é só o meu pensamento, na realidade é o pensamento bastante partilhado quer na Habita, quer na Stop. Podemos chegar a vários objetivos de várias formas e temos de ser táticos e inteligentes como estávamos a dizer, nos sítios onde não há participação política e não há um movimento de massa que não está a pedir o socialismo. Não temos essa realidade e então temos de contruir isto e perceber as maneiras através das quais podemos ter essas coisas. Uma das coisas interessantes da pandemia que nos apresentou dificuldades enquanto militantes, foi os pensadores autónomos de um certo anarquismo, que é uma necessidade de um discurso à volta de um estado que temos de levar à frente. Ou seja, a pandemia nos demonstrou como é que os movimentos, mesmo tendo propostas autónomas a nível micro, a níveis de bairro, de uma casa ou de uma certa questão, ainda tem de desenvolver um discurso anti sistémico que ultrapassa ou resolve a questão do estado. Com a pandemia, vimos que o mais autónomo, de não querer que o estado se meta nos nossos assuntos porque o estado é aquilo ao qual se chamava...havia uma expressão, deixa estar. Como é que garantimos a saúde pública a todos, de repente, na habitação e despejos, ou nos movimentos sociais da cidade de Lisboa? Não conseguimos e nunca vamos conseguir se não partilharmos essa ideia de direito da cidade e, além disso, o direito à transformação do estado, e o que fazer com o estado, além do capital. Quando temos bastante clara a questão anticapitalista, acho que não está quase nada falada a questão do estado. Então, o que é que é o estado e qual é a nossa relação com ele? Nós na Habita e na Stop despejos, sobretudo na Habita, enquanto solidário da Habita, encontramos-nos muitas vezes a ter de fazer negociações, algo que, na minha experiência anterior em Roma não acontecia. Mas não acontecia a mim, mas depois reparei que além daquela fachada que nós tínhamos de autonomia, havia sempre um plano de negociação, portanto, hoje em dia é importante manter a barra, tê-la lá e desenvolver discursos há volta do estado e do capital e das formas alternativas da sociedade que se podem alcançar. Não as tendo completamente desenvolvidas, continuamos reféns do estado e do capital, mas acho que algo se fez, acho que

as sementes que se cultivou para estas lutas têm agora de ser capitalizadas, utilizadas a nosso favor. E pronto, mas acho que vai ser muito importante pensar nestas coisas e acho que ainda não se fez o suficiente em termos coletivos nos movimentos de habitação aqui na cidade.

E: Podes pensar em formas de criar tempo para essa reflexão, essas perguntas e também a forma como podem ser geridas. Acho que também é interessante. E relativamente ao contexto na Itália e na Alemanha que é muito diferente daquele que existe em Portugal, eu estive agora atendendo à essa assembleia em Barcelona onde, claramente, a politização dentro da assembleia grande, com 60 pessoas, é partilhada de forma diferente pelos membros. E posso imaginar que na Itália isso também aconteceria, é provavelmente conectado com a cultura política em Portugal. Não?

A: Sim, com certeza. Ou seja, não sei se é só um problema de cultura política, acho que é sobretudo sim, a semente está na história. A história que vem da cultura, se olharmos para a história da Barcelona, na realidade o que é interessante em Espanha e Portugal é que não se justifica com a desculpa de “tivemos 40 anos de ditadura”, mas na Espanha também. Então porque é que ali sim e aqui não? Porque na Espanha, antes da ditadura, houve movimentos revolucionários muito fortes, sobretudo anarquistas, mas não só, republicanos, comunistas. De facto, estes movimentos deixaram umas sementes. Em segundo lugar, a Espanha e a Catalunha têm uma centralidade com o resto da Europa que é muito maior do que a de Lisboa. No receber os fluxos de ideias, na minha opinião, de pessoas, de paradigmas, de lutas, de políticas, estas espalham-se mais facilmente na Espanha. Uma das características e aí sim, essa é uma parte fundamental, há uma grande diferença por aquilo que eu vi e li sobre os movimentos espanhóis. Esta diferença é que o sujeito político se mobiliza. Em Espanha, além do movimento de ocupas muito forte a partir dos anos 90, que era algo parecido com a Alemanha e a Itália na mesma altura, e que aqui não aconteceu. Porque é que não se conseguiu desenvolver isto na altura? Porque havia um atraso, uma pobreza maior do país, uma iliteracia maior. Aqui, quem se mobiliza e quem vem às assembleias que tu vês e participas e animas na Habita, são mesmo as camadas mais pobres da população ou quase. Raramente vemos uma classe média, vemos alguns sujeitos, mas aqui a classe média não tem tradição. Não existe bem uma classe média.

E: Queres desenvolver isso um pouco mais?

A: Sim, mas é muito pouco científico, é baseado na minha percepção.

E: Mas estou interessada na tua percepção e nas tuas experiências que viveste cá.

A: Ou seja, para mim uma classe média, baseando-me na visão da classe média italiana construída no milagre económico dos anos 50 e 60. Uma classe média é algo de poderoso, para já, médio, no sentido que é a maior parte da população. E que se construiu numa altura em que os ganhos e os salários iam crescendo. E, de facto, alcançou-se um bem-estar bastante difundido. Aqui, eu conheço amigas que se consideram classe média desde a nascença, mas que nasceram em T2 com 6 pessoas, em casas com bolor na parede. E consideram-se classe média porque conseguiram estudar e pedir um crédito para estudar. Para mim há um Shift na pequena burguesia, que não é classe média, que se considera classe média. Claro que se atingiu aqui alguma coisa, através do crédito e da habitação. Mas acho que, não só em Portugal, mas em todo o mundo, a criação da palavra “classe média”, pacificou várias coisas e não distingue bem as coisas.

E: Também está a fragmentar em todos os lados a classe média, e aqui também o processo de industrialização começou muito mais tarde.

A: Mas tudo, não é só a industrialização que eu considero modernismo, para mim há uma falta de modernismo neste país. Ou seja, houve uns modernistas atores, pintores, artistas, lindos escritores portugueses modernistas, mas um país que chegou a 74' com setenta e não sei quanto por cento de analfabetismo...enquanto todos os outros da Europa da mesma região, não do leste da Europa, mas aqui do sul da Europa, criam uma distinção, um contratempo que este país tem. Então pronto, essa cultura política da classe média mobilizar-se, é assim, a classe média italiana (que não se chamava classe média), tornou-se classe média através da luta operária e não só.

E: Claro, e na Alemanha também, sobre o sindicalismo-

A: E aqui, como é que se cria uma classe média? Foi o capitalismo que, de repente, criou a classe média porque é bom? Não me parece. Agora, não sou economista por isso é que digo que são só sensações de sociólogo e observador político. Mas utilizam-se aqui algumas categorias que não fazem sentido

pelos tempos que a história do país teve no desenvolvimento de uma democracia e uma economia de mercado. Portanto, uma classe média que se torna média sem ter lutado, voltando ao discurso inicial que era Espanha e Portugal, em Barcelona mobiliza-se uma pequena burguesia ou uma classe média endividada com a crise de 2008, e não só, mas a partir de 2008 num contexto financeiro muito mais avançado, comparando com Portugal. Tem mais ferramentas literárias, no sentido de conhecimento, mas também de tempo e de disponibilidade, portanto sim, cultura, mas também o tipo de pessoas que se mobiliza.

E: É diferente.

A: O tipo de pessoas que se mobiliza também vem da história da cultura, pronto. Acho eu que não se resolve assim a questão, acho que a história da cultura das organizações de luta se passa e que os sindicatos de hoje em dia se podem unir a uma tradição sindical muito forte da Espanha no século 20, sobretudo antes de Franco. Acho que aqui também houve esta experiência, mas se calhar essa memória, este recado, também por uma questão nacional resolvida, comparando com a Espanha, acho que chegou aos nossos tempos, há uma fratura. Enquanto que as questões nacionais nos países bascos, ou na própria Catalunha, põe também uma questão diferente em termos de mobilização e pacificação social, que faz com que te mobilizes mais.

E: Procura-se mais o conflito também. É certo, país Basco e Catalunha, também por outras questões, não só da habitação, mas também do separatismo e também questões culturais. Mas agora há uma mobilização bastante forte à volta da habitação e do discurso de habitação, e aqui encontram-se outras lutas. Capitalismo e racismo e, se calhar, outras reivindicações culturais. Se pensarmos um pouco sobre o processo de aprendizagem, aqui no contexto específico em Lisboa, que dirias?

A: Como assim, a nível pessoal?

E: A nível pessoal e como militante.

A: De um ponto de vista pessoal, acho que sempre aprendi com as lutas e nunca aprendi tanto como nos últimos 4 anos na luta pela habitação aqui. E não só sobre a habitação e as políticas, mas sobre o país e a cidade em que vivo. A luta me permitiu conhecer a sério a cidade e interrogar-me em outras questões, e as pessoas e os problemas e as questões raciais e não só, as questões laborais, as questões de género. Ou seja, é uma aprendizagem imensa e espero, uma das coisas que quero sistematizar através do doutoramento é sistematizar o quanto aprendi. Claro que foi através de várias coisas ao longo destes anos, mas a aprendizagem, acho a sério que seja algo sobre o território, mas também sobre a prática política. Eu tive de me reabilitar muito e desistir de certas...eu vinha de um contexto muito mais politizado, o que não quer dizer que agora seja, porque a Itália mudou bastante nos últimos 10 anos. Mas um contexto politizado e uma ideia política radical que havia no meu coletivo de dezenas de pessoas e com a minha organização, com milhares de pessoas. Aqui isto não acontece, e isso poderia permitir-me de dizer “as coisas fazem-se assim e nós queremos isso e tu, se és de esquerda, és companheiro e tal ou estamos quase em conflito contigo com este tipo de coisas”. Mas isso agora faz-me rir, eu tenho quase saudade desse tipo de experiência pelos números que havia à volta. Tive de abdicar, não tanto das minhas convicções morais ou pensamentos políticos, mas na prática sim. Isto ajudou-me muitíssimo a aprender coisas, eu era muito cético de muitas metodologias que se utilizam mais em certos contextos norte-europeus, por exemplo de ferramentas metodológicas académicas. Isto é completamente diferente de há uns anos atrás, a política era outra conversa, a tua vida era só política. E ainda hoje penso isso, mas na altura não era só pensado, era mesmo a realidade e pronto, aprendi a voltar para trás e a ser mais tático, a ser mais eclético, a tornar-me mais curioso, e a idade também ajudou. Agora, o desafio é aprender estas novas coisas sem nos tornarmos nuns reformistas pacifistas, algo que eu não quero ser. A minha aprendizagem foi imensa, a nível de educação, de território, de sociedade, a nível humano, interpessoal, linguístico. Dentro da luta aprendi a escrever em português, nunca tinha escrito nada em português além das mensagens do telemóvel. E ainda hoje não sei escrever bem em português e foi só através da luta, depois de anos de relação com Portugal é que comecei a escrever. Portanto, a aprendizagem, e estou-me a esquecer de várias, sem fim.

E: E achas que, por exemplo, em várias práticas que se possam sistematizar dentro do cuidado, conflito, resistência e proposta, que é algo se se situa um pouco na aprendizagem e na autorreflexão. Também vêss essas vertentes como importantes na luta? Cuidado, conflito e proposta.

A: Concordo completamente, acho que o cuidado foi algo que aprendi nos últimos anos, acho que é algo que a nível global se está a discutir agora, acabaram de publicar um livro belíssimo, do qual só li algumas partes, em Itália, do coletivo do “colective”. E traduziram para italiano o livro, ou seja, a questão do cuidado e da cura, acho que é algo que politicamente está a entrar agora, graças ao movimento feminista e o movimento LGTBI+, já descobri que não se pode por o “q”, mas não percebi. Há questões há volta do “queer” ...não sei, juro que neste sentido não consigo ter uma posição, tento ser o mais aberto e inclusivo possível, mas a questão do cuidado acho que é algo revolucionário. Na realidade os movimentos feministas nos anos 70 já falavam disto, sempre falaram. Mas a força que conseguiram propô-la hoje em dia, e a centralidade que assumiu hoje em dia, em termos também laborais. Acho que essa foi uma das inovações dentro da minha bagagem política, que ainda é para descobrir e aprofundar, mas que aprendi nos últimos anos. Em termos de conflito e resistência, de resistência fala-se de diferente maneira, mas gosto de utilizar a palavra conflito, para mim é através do conflito que se ganham os direitos e se ultrapassa a questão dos direitos e se vai para uma sociedade comunista. Porque é o conflito que é que põe medo aos patrões, e com conflito não quero dizer necessariamente violência, o conflito quer dizer uma postura de ataque, de alguma maneira, em vez de sempre só de resistência. Ou seja..., mas é um conceito que tenho de desenvolver, agora não sei. Mas resistência e conflito estão lá, de certeza, e propostas também. Agora, propostas para quem? E voltamos à questão anterior, para o estado, para o capital? Ou para nós realizarmos algo mais alternativo? Claro que não vamos resolver em tempo breve a questão do estado, não vamos, mas se ao propormos ao estado tivermos sempre em mente a questão da proposta que o ultrapassa o estado, então, primeiro, temos um projeto revolucionário em curso, não estamos só a fazer uma mistificação, uma parodia. Mas também teremos a médio e curto prazo avanços que nos permitem formar um “contrapoder” que funcione.

E: Achas que podes contar umas “anecdotas” dessas várias vertentes, ou de onde é que essas vertentes são claras para ti? Têm um papel?

A: Então, falando da Habita e da Stop despejos, em termos de cuidado, por exemplo, eu estando num coletivo como a Habita que é sobretudo mulheres e sou o único homem, comecei a ter de me interrogar sobre a questão da maternidade, a questão dos idosos, estando com a Maria João que tem de cuidar da própria mãe, que é como a minha mãe lá na Itália. Ou seja, dentro de um coletivo de mulheres há muita mais propensão, e não quero dizer que é uma coisa feminina, mas efetivamente foi assim, a perguntar como estás, como estamos, tentar resolver certos tipos de coisas e há muito para fazer ainda e que é algo a trabalhar. Ao mesmo tempo, pela primeira vez há uns anos, em assembleias pensámos, pela primeira vez, em ter animações para crianças. Isso para mim era uma maneira de cuidar das mães que têm de lutar. O cuidado passa através de pessoas ativistas, mas afetadas que, por exemplo, estão a lutar na Stop despejos há anos como a Maria João Neves que teve uma situação muito frágil. O cuidado passa por, não só acompanhar os momentos de luta, mas também informar-se sobre condições de saúde, em ajudar em certos tipos de coisas, uma mudança, ou outros tipos de coisas. O cuidado, e fizemos, não só com ela, mas em várias formas e com muitas pessoas. Conflito e resistência, em cada despejo que conseguimos intervir acho que aconteceu. Acho que entre os conflitos maiores que tivemos, por exemplo, quando tivemos de ocupar o gabinete da vereadora, criando um conflito muito forte de habitação com a câmara. Criando um certo pânico dentro da vereação, pois estivemos de uma forma muito firme lá dentro e conseguimos que a família despejada no próprio dia voltasse a entrar na casa que tinha sido despejada. E foram muito poucas pessoas que simplesmente se puseram entre uma porta que estava a ser fechada, eu, neste caso, e por um corpo numa porta que se estava a fechar e dizer “eu não saio daqui, tens de me matar e veremos o que se passa contigo se deixares estas crianças na rua”, acho que esse foi um momento de conflito. Outro foi ajudar a ocupar a “Cear”(?), a defendê-la das cargas policiais, acho que é resistente construir em si uma assembleia de bairro, uma assembleia de resistência aos despejos. Acho que já é uma primeira prática.

Anedotas, epá se calhar agora não tenho, não estou a ser muito produtivo neste sentido. Em termos de propostas, nós há pouco tempo fizemos as nossas propostas de grupos parlamentares e não só, para a formulação da nova lei de bases da habitação. O próprio festival de habitação há três anos era uma proposta para a cidade, era uma maneira para mostrar como a cidade pode ser vivida de uma maneira alternativa, uma maneira implícita e explícita ao mesmo tempo. As poucas demonstrações que organizámos foram sempre cheias de propostas, as nossas propostas reformistas passam por um aumento da habitação social, fim dos incentivos à especulação, aumento e reconstrução de uma dimensão cooperativista do habitar, uma moratória aos despejos, a regulação das rendas, acho que estas são propostas que vieram de um trabalho político de análise que existiu e existe e é forte. Agora, como

propostas revolucionárias, aí ainda temos de trabalhar muito, e voltamos ao discurso de antes, acho que será um terreno a aprofundar nos próximos tempos.

E: Só tenho mais duas perguntas, uma é da política, achas que a Habita e a Stop despejos, ou seja, nos últimos anos cresceram de alguma forma, mas achas que também ganharam influência política?

A: Sim, com certeza. A stop despejos nasceu em 2017 e, quando comecei a luta há quatro anos aqui, havia um problema grave que era que nem se falava do problema da habitação. Porque não atingia, ou pelo menos fingias se que não atingia a classe média. Acho que nós tivemos um papel muito forte, também na Habita que considero muito aliada, quase irmã, mediatizar o assunto não tanto no centro da agenda porque nunca chegou a estar no centro da agenda, mas a ter uma certa visibilidade. Acho que crescemos e tivemos um certo poder negocial, não é um caso que, por exemplo, na nova geração de política de habitação ou na própria lei de bases fomos convocados pelos próprios grupos parlamentares, quanto Habita e Stop, para convocar as nossas propostas. Foi reconhecido um certo valor e representatividade das nossas propostas. Acho que se cresceu muito neste sentido, em termos de expertise, skills acumuladas, agora vieram só palavras neoliberais, o inglês para mim é neoliberal. Ou melhor, usar o inglês enquanto estás a usar uma língua latina é neoliberal. Mas acho que crescemos sim, em mediatismo e capacidade de negociar e em termos internacionais, não só de levantar as questões aqui, mas também “lá fora”, como dizem os portugueses. A atenção que conseguimos acender à volta desta coisa, às vezes tocou mais jornais ou jornalistas estrangeiros do que os locais, e acho que também foi graças a nós, às relações internacionais que temos e à maneira com que pomos a questão. Penso que conseguimos sensibilizar mais à volta destes assuntos. Eu acho que não crescemos o suficiente, um pouco por nossa falta, por in experiência, um pouco por outras razões. Acho que estávamos muitíssimos logo antes da pandemia, mas que a pandemia bloqueou este crescimento, esta capacidade de organização. Aumentar, expandir, multiplicar as lutas como, em parte, estava a acontecer, mas sim crescemos no impacto. Podemos fazer muito mais, temos de fazer muito mais.

E: Sim, e a última pergunta, que vai um pouco à questão de cuidado de que estávamos a falar, e das emoções, porque também, pelo menos a mim, algo que me afeta emocionalmente é a demolição de uma casa, mas também num despejo, com uma mãe jovem, como eu, que tem crianças e está posta na rua. Achas que há um desenvolvimento de práticas, de cuidado das emoções dos ativistas que deve tomar um papel mais importante? Como é que isso podia ser feito?

A: Complicado isso. Ou seja, eu acho que essas são questões antigas, mas que estão a ser reformuladas bem agora e, tendo ainda essa composição tão pequena, não conseguimos lidar bem com esse tipo de questão do autocuidado e do cuidado. Acho que nestas duas organizações não há muita atenção para isto, aliás, há implícita, mas não se consegue ainda desenvolver um sistema que nos permita tratar disto. É uma coisa a fazer, em termos de emoções, acho que quem é militante tem essa humanidade e que é normal que quando estás em frente a uma demolição ou a um despejo, que sintas. Eu pessoalmente, sinto uma raiva profunda, é a emoção mais forte que tenho e também empatia e compaixão pelas pessoas. Lutei bastante para me libertar do sentimento de culpa que uma educação católica forte que tive me deu, consigo bastante bem e aprendi a não me sentir responsável no processo de luta. E isto eu considero um pouco como autocuidado, não é que me tornei mais frio, mas não posso pensar que se não estou a fazer algo, então sou culpado por não estar a fazer a diferença aí. Isto não. E acho que é uma coisa que na realidade, e falei disto na assembleia

outro dia, temos de desenvolver mais isto para também melhorar o trabalho. E isto não é cínico, nós temos de pensar uma luta que vai além de nós, mesmo que pensemos que somos super-homens e super-mulheres, e não somos, temos de pensar que estamos a construir uma organização política que vai além de nós. Uma organização política que vai além de nós, pensa no autocuidado e pensa em como se defender deste tipo de situações e tenta fazer a falta de números de pessoas, especialmente agora, porque quando se falou mais do cuidado foi, foi quando a Habita tinha um número um pouco maior, dois anos atrás, quando eramos umas 10 ou 15 pessoas. Na Stop também, num trabalho político autónomo e organizado, acho importante que todos e todas saibam fazer tudo, mas é preciso organizar as tarefas. Quando somos todos a fazer tudo, há coisas como o autocuidado que vem um pouco a menos, mas pronto, a questão emocional tem de estar central nesta nossa luta e não sou a pessoa indicada para este tipo de coisas, confio mais em companheiras e companheiros que possam propor.

E: Não gostarias de trabalhar um pouco nisso?

A: Outra vez, acho que através de uma análise aprofundada e política, de objetivos políticos de longo prazo, também se chegue a pensar nisso.

E: Por exemplo no feminismo negro, era uma questão central. E criar esses passos de cura para lidar com violência.

A: É central, é central, mas o que eu sinto, no movimento de habitação em Roma, há mais de 10 anos, quando eu estava lá, na altura mais forte, acho que as questões do cuidado que o feminismo italiano também aprofundou, juntamente com o feminismo negro da mesma altura e da mesma forma. Talvez não fosse tão explícita nas assembleias dos movimentos da habitação, mas acaba por ser, porque através da vontade de levar para a frente uma luta autónoma que implicava resolver sozinhas e sozinhos o problema da habitação. Em prédios inteiros e enormes onde se pode alojar mais de 100 famílias de culturas diferentes de maneira bastante orgânica, logo a seguir se pensava qual era o espaço dentro prédio que se tornava na cresce partilhada. Mas de uma maneira bastante orgânica, todas as operações de cuidado aconteciam. Orgânica não quer dizer espontânea, quer dizer organizada, mas também sem uma reflexão política à volta do cuidado, era uma reflexão geral à volta da autonomia que fazia com que este cuidado acontecesse. Não quer dizer que temos de tornarmos aquilo, acho também mais difícil, mas um pouco isso, um discurso à volta do cuidado de qualquer outra coisa tem de ir, a par e passo, ao discurso revolucionário. Ou seja, assim que se transforma de maneira orgânica...eu gostava de agora na Habita falar de cuidado, mas gostava de resolver primeiro as questões políticas mais profundas. Assim podemos desenvolver um cuidado ou autocuidado oportuno que queremos fazer, às vezes sinto (**e agora off the record**), mas sinto que a Maria João que quer ir absolutamente à segunda feira e ao domingo e...se isto destrói a vida de 3 ativistas de 5, uma semana inteira, quer dizer que não olhamos para o projeto político. Quero que a Habita continue, não que daqui a dois meses estejam todos com um esgotamento nervoso.

E: Isso é algo que se tem de refletir, porque a demolição é algo que realmente quebra uma semana porque estás um dia inteiro lá cheio de emoções, cheio de raiva, de que não consegues agir porque tentas negociar e não consegues. E as máquinas seguem. Podes sentir um burnout, mas é difícil ver uma alternativa.

A: Um, ao longo destes anos, a Habita, antes de eu entrar, tinha outras pessoas que já lá não estão. Nestes quatro anos passaram várias pessoas pela Habita que duraram pouco tempo porque era muito esgotante este tipo de luta, e não só por causa disto claro. A luta pela

habitação é talvez a mais dura que existe. Isto sempre tive bem claro, desde que era estudante em Roma e estava a apoiar da nossa maneira a luta pela habitação. Tinha bem claro isto e foi a primeira frase que pronunciei na assembleia que depois substituiu a Stop despejos. Disse “a luta pela habitação é a luta mais dura e esgotante que possa haver”, isto por várias razões. Porque tem de haver com o lugar da reprodução da vida, do trabalho, todo o significado simbólico e emotivo que tem, e é tão central nos interesses do capital. Passa por processos muito violentos como um despejo em termos físicos, visuais, corporais, e porque é tão central a isso. Dois, a Habita tem de refazer este tipo de coisas, sobretudo do autocuidado, mas do cuidado que quer levar, porque de facto há uma hemorragia de militantes. Eu próprio mudei no último ano a minha maneira de estar dentro da Habita, porque eu passei na altura das ocupas do Lumiar e de Chelas, eu acordava todas as manhãs às seis, e nunca tive

problemas de sono na minha vida, com a paranoia que houvesse um despejo. Ia dormir com essa angústia. E acho que a luta também não é o lugar do conforto, isto é uma coisa que é sempre preciso dizer. Hoje em dia sinto-me desconfortável, a luta é exatamente isso, um lugar em que tens de sentir bem, mas que ao mesmo tempo não é confortável. Não nos podemos enganar e dizer que estar três horas numa assembleia onde tens de ouvir todos seja a melhor coisa que possas fazer. Às vezes sim, mas às vezes não, a luta é difícil. Essa era a primeira parte, a segunda parte era mais interessante-

E: Sobre o desgaste dos ativistas?

A: Essa era a primeira, várias pessoas se foram embora por causa deste desgaste-

E: Eu também me fui embora depois da investigação, porque tive ansiedade, porque me ligaram de umas mulheres que passaram por violência doméstica às 12 da noite. E pensei “para”.

A: Mas claro.

E: E depois voltei.

A: A quantidade de horas que passava ao telefone só para dar um conforto psicológico, muitas vezes acabas por fazer isso e sim, é central a questão das emoções. Muitas vezes quando fazia atendimento, pensava que estava a fazer apoio psicológico. Ao mesmo tempo há que tentar, e eu gostava daquela fase, mas pronto, não me vem a segunda parte da questão. Qual é que era a pergunta?

E: Perguntei-te sobre o papel das emoções e do desenvolvimento das práticas de cuidado para lidar com isso.

A: Tinha outro ponto na cabeça. Passou. Espera que se calhar vem. Estávamos a falar do desgaste, da Habita, das pessoas que se vão embora-

E: Sobre a luta da habitação e que é desconfortável e dura.

A: ...Quando disse “A Maria João (**off the record**)”, era outra coisa, não sei.... Se me lembrar depois envio um áudio.

A: - Não sei se era a parte mais interessante, mas pronto. E: Eu acho essa parte interessante.

A: Então, estava a dizer que a luta não tem de ser fria, tem de ser feita de paixões, nunca nos tornamos indiferentes perante um despejo ou uma demolição, mas aprende-se a relativizar um pouco mais, no sentido que se vê que quando comesas a ver um número imenso, sabes que não podes reparar a tudo, não podes chegar a todo o lado, no mesmo momento que estás a ajudar ou a apoiar ou a documentar um despejo ou a resistir no despejo ou uma coisa desta, está a acontecer a mesma coisa ao lado e tu não sabes disso. Não estamos a resolver os problemas de habitação para todos, claro que não se pode acabar, não se pode dizer não às pessoas de uma maneira assim, porque não me apetece, mas em função dos objetivos políticos sim. Era aqui que eu queria dizer, acho que, por exemplo, na comparação que disse que poderia ser interessante para ti, na comparação com Lisboa e Barcelona, o sindicato em Barcelona, há uma grande diferença. Tu dizes que o sindicato recolhe todas as pessoas que vão lá e que dizem que têm um problema específico. Nim. Eles já fizeram através de uma análise crítica e não só, um círculo que é “nós organizámos só os inquilinos, o sujeito político, se estás a ser despejada, há outra organização que faz isso, nós somos solidários”. É universalista por necessidade, chamo universalista porquê? Porque acolhe qualquer tipo de vertente, qualquer tipo de luta quer seja de ocupações, quer seja de arrendamento privado, quer seja de hipoteca, quer seja de renda, no público ou no privado.

E: E em todo o país.

A: E em todo o país, epá, é algo que faz sentido na falta de mais alguém que faça alguma coisa de parecido e na vontade de responder de maneira humana a todas estas questões. Mas é por aí, não quero dizer tornar-se frio, mas é tornar-se estratégico em termos políticos. Melhorar a própria luta, não é dizer não porque “melgaste”, é não porque a gente não trata desse tipo de assuntos, ou então porque organizamos uma outra parte que trabalha neste assunto e vai para esta parte. Agora, o problema dos números volta sempre, somos tão poucos. E nisso falhámos por um lado porque a certa altura estávamos a subir, e não é nossa culpa, mas falhámos porque efetivamente, em termos de militantes ativistas, não crescemos muito. Em pessoas que nos acompanham crescemos imenso. Mas outra vez, a questão do cuidado e de pensar não só no direito de habitação, mas na reprodução social que a casa em si é o elemento mais importante, talvez, de uma maneira mais abrangente e mais desenvolvida, pode-nos ajudar a articular um discurso à volta do cuidado e do autocuidado. Isto para

depois podermos distinguir entre as questões e não correr para todo o lado como uma barata tonta, porque sentimos a obrigação ou a responsabilidade de fazer tudo.

E: Mas eu acho, por exemplo, isso é algo interessante. Que vemos como essa lupa em que podes ver mais os problemas sociais porque atendemos a tanto e isso acaba por destacar os problemas que existem. E acho que aí, isso que se fez o grupo de trabalho na carta aberta com os ciganos, isso já foi um passo de classificar os problemas que estamos a destacar. E a demolição na outra semana ajudou-me que a Rita nos dissesse “olha, vão lá, mas fique claro que não vão parar o despejo”.

A: Olha, gostei imenso daquela mensagem.

E: Eu também, ajudou-me a situar-me, porque também a Rita não estava e eu estive um pouco “Se a Rita não está podemos parar o despejo, calmo-me porque podíamos ir e acompanhar, mas ficou claro que não íamos conseguir parar o que acontece.

A: Eu gostei da mensagem, quando fui entregar o meu projeto vim direto à mensagem e pensei que fosse ter esse efeito em vocês, porque já passei por isso no passado. Agora já sei que não vou lá para impedir o despejo, mas no início ia lá com a desilusão, o sentimento de impotência e de derrota. O sentimento que se tem sempre perante uma cena tão feia e tão desumana como essa. Às vezes é preciso explicitar esse tipo de coisas que se ganham só com a experiência. A Rita me disse há três anos, e se calhar ela não sabia, mas vamos aprendendo.

E: Acho que a Sara também diz que a ajudou porque sabe que o papel dela não vai ser conseguir, mas vai fazer tudo o possível com as ferramentas que tem e documentar e negociar o levantamento das famílias e na ajuda organizacional, que também é algo que se aprende, um conhecimento que também podemos levar.

A: Esse aspeto de como se passa as competências e a experiência acumulada é muito, muito central, porque por um lado acho que é através da formação e autoformação que se aprende muito e através de ser dito explicitamente que algo se faz “assim assim e assado”. Por outro, acho que é só através da experiência direta, viver e estar junto, não só num momento de luta, de trabalho, mas também num momento de lazer, isto é importante. (Olha, é muito fixe falar contigo, mas agora já devia estar na Graça...).

c) Photo documentation:

Photos taken by myself, Elena Hernández.

Demolition in Montemor, Loures; the Dwellers in front of the Municipality





Neighbourhood Assembly in Talude, Loures; Sharing Food and Coffee:





Lisbon Street Assembly 27th of march 2021, a playground for kids, a microphone to share



