

# The pact against domestic violence in the Menino Chorão community (Campinas, State of São Paulo): ephemeral victories

O pacto contra violência doméstica na comunidade Menino Chorão (Campinas/SP): vitórias efêmeras

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## Abstract

This article discusses the pact against domestic violence implemented in the community Menino Chorão, located in the city of Campinas/SP. This pact, which was in effect between 2012 and 2016, has tensioned social power relations with the confrontation of domestic violence, one of the pillars of gender social construction. To analyze it, we consider the process of corporate and intersectional urbanization that reproduces gender-race-class structural inequalities. The pact is considered a victory of the urban periphery, even if ephemeral and incomplete, since it points to a possible overcoming of the capitalist-racist-patriarchal system through the organized social struggle by women that were capable of confronting an intensely reproduced violence in Brazilian society. It thus points to the potentiality of alternative rationality and modernity to capitalism.

**Keywords:** urbanization; urban land occupation; domestic violence; Menino Chorão community; Campinas/SP.

## Resumo

*Este artigo analisa o pacto contra a violência doméstica instituído na comunidade Menino Chorão, localizada na cidade de Campinas/SP. Esse pacto, que vigorou entre 2012 e 2016, tensionou as relações sociais de poder com o enfrentamento da violência doméstica, um dos pilares da construção social de gênero. Para analisá-lo parte-se do processo de urbanização corporativa e interseccionada que reproduz as desigualdades estruturais de gênero-raça-classe. O pacto é considerado uma vitória, ainda que efêmera e incompleta, da periferia urbana, pois aponta para uma possível superação do sistema capitalista-racista-patriarcal através da luta social organizada pelas mulheres, capaz de combater esse tipo de violência intensamente efetivada na sociedade brasileira. Indica-se, assim, para a potencialidade de uma racionalidade e modernidade alternativa à capitalista.*

**Palavras-chave:** urbanização; ocupação de terras urbanas; violência doméstica; comunidade Menino Chorão; Campinas/SP.



## Introduction

The intersectionalized socio-spatial segregation (Rizzatti, 2020), a consequence of Brazilian urbanization process headed by corporate interests that reproduce the structural inequalities of the Brazilian socio-spatial formation (Santos, 2008b), is daily contradicted by the resident population in the several and huge urban peripheries of the big cities and metropolises of the country. Among the different content-forms of peripheralization intrinsic to corporate and intersectional urbanization, the organized urban land occupations stand out for their effective and potential capacity to build parcels of cities through rationalities and modernities alternative to its capitalistic forms.

The organization necessary for the installation and maintenance of these places constitutes alternative modernity (Millán, 2013) by reproducing and questioning this urbanization by means of thread-gestures (Ribeiro, 2005) and geographical events (Santos, 2017). All of this may be considered victories, even if an ephemeral and incomplete ones, that should be valued (Chatterjee, 2008) since the repetition and/or accumulation of this kind of victories can generate considerable changes in social power relations.

To carry out this analysis, we present the land occupation called Menino Chorão, located in the city of Campinas/SP, which, through a woman and feminist leader, Mrs. Ramona,<sup>1</sup> managed to organize a pact against domestic violence that ruled during the four-year period from 2012 to 2016. This pact is a demonstration of the victories we have mentioned above and although it is

for now broken, it has tensioned the social construction of gender (Saffioti, 2015) and constituted collective subjects<sup>2</sup> (Rodrigues, 1988). These victories were not lost even with the rupture of the pact, as they endure in the form of knowledge and skills acquired by the population that carried it out and maintained it during this considerable period of time.

The text begins with the presentation of the main methodological assumptions, with emphasis on corporate and intersectionalized urbanization, alternative modernity and ephemeral victories; in the sequence, it deepens the discussions about the place, the generalized organization of urban space and domestic violence mobilized in this analysis. Afterwards, the Menino Chorão community is presented and, finally, we analyze the pact against domestic violence that took place there.

## Methodological assumptions

Brazilian urbanization is directly associated with the process of conservative modernization of the territory (Santos, 2008a; Brandão, 2012), both occurring through the capitalist rationality that is updated to maintain or to stop its decadence and through the urbanization given on a global scale (Harvey, 2011) increasingly grounded in an exacerbated consumer society (Santos, 2008a; 2014). As Santos writes, "the extraordinary generation of wealth, increasingly concentrated, is not in contradiction with the enormous production of poverty that is increasingly widespread" (2008a, p. 115).<sup>3</sup> However, to envisage this diffusion is not

an easy task, because it is necessary to find the specificities. Mestre recalls that "The phenomenon of peripheralization [...] assumes forms that hide the essence of processes, and the very modernization of cities is a path that hides formulas of growth and poverty" (2015, p. 245).

We understand that the diverse forms that the urban periphery presents result from different moments of corporate urbanization that demanded diversification in the strategies of the majority of the population that lives there to survive and oppose themselves to this process. It cannot be assumed, therefore, that the urban periphery is a content-form that evolves linearly, tending to homogenize fractions of space and society. It is, in fact, a complex existence of several content-forms that coexist over time in solidarity and also in a conflictive way. They result, among other factors, from different forms of urban planning that, historically, force the adaptation of the city to changes in the mode of production and, concomitantly, they result from different strategies elaborated by society to adapt, reinvent itself, resist and survive. As Santos (1999, p. 17) explains, it is "a form that, by having a content, creates a society in a particular way, which is determined by the form", stimulating each other.

The urban peripheries are, thus, the result of the constant selective modernization of the territory; that is, in their own way, they are also modernity. As named by Millán (2013) based in Bolívar Echeverría, it is a kind of "alternative modernity". The author explains that "In the opened space in and by the social mobilizations of the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st, movements that cross and break with the really existing

modernity from which they come, we find the social, political, experiential, imaginative and enunciative, performative and prefigurative laboratory of what we call alternative, post-capitalist modernity"<sup>4</sup> (p. 50).

Therefore, it is necessary to understand modernity as something different from capitalism, although inherent to it. As Millán (ibid.) explains, the really existing modernity is the hegemonic modernity, that is, characterized by the "totalizing tendency of one form of modernity, while there is the existence of other possible forms of modernity, as stressed simultaneity of the present time" (p. 47). In the author's words, "While it is true that one cannot conceive capitalism without modernity, it would nevertheless be possible to imagine a modernity without capitalism, which has existed in the past, as defeated projects of a non-capitalist modernity; and which is presented to us as a potency prefigured in the present" (ibid., p. 51).<sup>5</sup>

This reading is based on the agreement that the colonization carried out in Latin America for more than three centuries has engendered, besides its peripheral position in the international division of labor, also a rejection of all the culture, cosmology, technology, language of the societies that lived here. Thus, it was forbidden to understand them as modernities. Referring specifically to Brazil, Santos explains that:

Coloniality is at the same time (1) the complementary counterpoint of modernity (there would be no modernity without coloniality, and vice versa); (2) inheritance, updating and continuity of colonization (which, more than the arrival of the colonizer, was the arrival of an "entangled package of

power relations"); and (3) a totalizing form of reading the capitalist mode of production which, instead of privileging a specific form of exploitation, domination and hierarchization (the class relation) as one capable of defining the whole, takes the idea that this mode of production would not assert itself without coexistence [...] of multiple forms of power operating in the complexity of interactions and the social fabric.<sup>6</sup> (2019, p. 4)

According to this perspective, urban peripheries should be understood as a kind of alternative modernity, even if in potential, since their construction and maintenance are only possible through the accumulation of knowledge and skills by the population that lives there (Ribeiro, 2005). There are, therefore, alternative rationalities that enable the reproduction of life in these places. The term urban periphery is understood, in this text, as referring to the "absence of accessibility and endowment of goods and services [...] [and not the] physical distance from the center" (Santos, 2009, p. 36), an explanation that is also valid for the poor population living in the central areas who, although close to these goods and services, often do not have access to them.

Nevertheless, when one apprehends the periphery from its everyday life, the complexity of its space-time dimension is amplified, embracing the myriad of relationships that constitute it and that is constituted through it. As Telles writes (2007, p. 204), "there is an uncertain zone that is not reduced to the physical boundaries (if they do exist) of what we call the 'periphery', since it passes through all the intertwining of social life, its practices

and mediations, the circuits of urban life and the connections that are made in the folds of social life."<sup>7</sup> This observation confirms the relevance of knowledge and other rationalities required to maintain the vivacity of these relationships in these enormous portions of the cities.

We analyze the urban peripheries from their scale as a place to their reproduction through the process of urbanization effected by capitalist-racist-patriarchal rationality (Saffioti, 2015; Biroli and Miguel, 2015). We point out, therefore, that in order to deepen the analysis of national urbanization, it is necessary to understand that civil society is structured based on social class, race and gender, which intersect with other social markers of difference.<sup>8</sup> Although capitalist modernization attempts to deny it, it is totally dependent on these diversities that it exploits, dominates, violates, oppresses, makes disappear and kills. Thus we propose the understanding of corporate and intersectionalized<sup>9</sup> urbanization (Rizzatti, 2020). In the words of Harvey (2010, pp. 204 and 258):

Imperialisms, colonial conquests, inter-capitalist wars and racial discriminations [and the exploitation of the reproductive works of life] have played a dramatic role in the historical geography of capitalism. No account of the origins of capitalism can avoid confronting the significance of such phenomena. [...] *Racism and the oppression of women and children were foundational in the rise of capitalism.* (Emphasis added)

Among the content-forms of the urban periphery, in this text we highlight the organized urban land occupations,

increasingly present in the metropolis and large cities of Brazil since early 1980s as updated manifestations of corporate and intersectionalized urbanization. It is a content-form characterized by the fast process of housing construction within the urban perimeter, mostly on public land but also on private land, by the low-income population and made possible by prior planning for the choice of location, time and how the occupation will occur (Rizzatti, 2015). As well as it requires planning to build and maintain it through new uses given to the objects and actions that make up the urban space (Rizzatti, 2014).

The keeping of an urban occupation is only possible due to the accumulation of knowledge and skills during the thirty, forty, fifty years or more of life of those who build it. As De Certau says (2003, p. 47), "Many daily practices [...] are of the tactical type [...] [and] depend on very old knowledge". Surviving through spontaneous action, through the "art of making out" and its "tactics", through "hustling" (Ribeiro, 2005) or the "art of getting by" (Telles, 2015),<sup>10</sup> in itself, demands the gathering of knowledges and skills that actually goes beyond the time that each person lived. These practices are only possible due to the overlapping of past knowledges, which also points to the importance of communication in this process and the coetaneity<sup>11</sup> between past and future.

Thus, the construction and maintenance of these urban peripheries take place through the thread-gestures (Ribeiro, 2005) and geographical events (Santos, 2017) that weave the daily life that resists and, at the same time, reproduces the capitalist-racist-patriarchal

system. Understanding in-depth these anonymous and unplanned thread-gestures and geographical events, which have a higher degree of planning and can result from a set of these thread-gestures, allows us to escape the "generalizing narrative of the periphery" that silences these enormous parcels of urban space (Paterniani, 2019). It is necessary to face the challenge of analyzing the periphery without generalizing it. To this end, daily victories, even if ephemeral and incomplete (Chatterjee, 2008), may be valued because, besides making it possible to remain in these places, they continue to strengthen the set of essential knowledge for the maintenance and relative improvement in the quality of life of the majority of the population living on the periphery of the world-system.

The spontaneous action is based on communication and past knowledge [...]. Clearly, there is domination of spontaneous and preserved from past learning action, of hierarchical relationships and the experience of scarcity. But this action can go beyond what is already conceived and foreseen. Radical discoveries and unpredictable bonds can emerge from the "unthinking" thread-gestures, what is in fact necessary to the social fabric, especially in a period characterized by the estrangement of social relations. It should be added that the understanding of thread-gestures as "unthinking" by a certain social segment can simply express the existence of alternative rationalities, unfamiliar to the dominant (divisive and excluding) systemic logic. (Ribeiro, 2005, p. 421)<sup>12</sup>

Also, the formation of an urban occupation does not begin on the day the first person arrives there. Usually, it is a formation that refers, ultimately, to the African diaspora, to migrations among the Brazilian macro-regions and/or to the country-city migration. It is a story told through the lives of many people and points out lines of escape from the present: "rejecting presentism, the white monopoly on the future and the present as something definitive are ways of not succumbing to death" (Paterniani, 2019, p. 169). Milton Santos writes at the end of his work *O espaço do cidadão*: "Being a prisoner of the present or the past is the best way not to take that step forward, without which no people can find the future" (2014, p. 161).<sup>131</sup>

To value victories that are, as a rule, incomplete and ephemeral does not mean to support the population living precariously in the urban periphery - we believe that to devalue the importance of these victories is not an untouched position either. As Chatterjee (2008) defends concerning the population that resides in irregular low-income areas and manages to remain in these places, although in an unstable and fragmented way, "we can (and should) say that they have expanded their freedoms in ways that were not for them in civil society" (p. 143).<sup>14</sup> From that, in this text, we want to analyze one of those victories achieved through the pact against domestic violence established by the women living in the community Menino Chorão in the city of Campinas/SP.

## The social construction of gender, gendered organization of urban space and domestic violence from the place: the field of confrontation

Considering geographic space as a contradictory and complementary combination between territorial configuration and social relations (Santos, 2017), studying urbanization requires us to pay attention to its entire web. From the totality to the place, it is important to understand how society and space build each other. From the daily life of the place, constituted by the relations between society, State and corporations inseparable from materialities (Santos, 1999), urbanization is also woven. Thus, to enter the scale of the place is to find how the structures of corporate and intersectionalized urbanization manifest themselves, being reproduced and contrasted in everyday life. As Saffioti (2013, pp. 80 and 81) explains,

There is no macro and micro plane, as some intellectuals believe [...]. Evidently, there is a thick mesh and a fine mesh, one being the reverse of the other, and not different levels. Strictly speaking, it could be said that social processes have two sides: one micro and the other macro, standing out one or the other, depending on the circumstances. By transmitting

to the words "plane" and "level" the idea of hierarchy, people immediately put the macro above the micro. This new terminology [of the loose knot] is intended to avoid this hierarchization, and to show the threads of these processes. *And women know how to weave the social fabric, operating in both macro and micro processes.* (Emphasis added)<sup>15</sup>

From that point on, the geographical understanding of the place was synthesized by Ribeiro (2005) as being: the convergence of the vectors of modernization with the culture of places, which the author also defines as the basic unit of social life, composed by the communicational density, the pedagogy of co-presence and the social bonds created by shared experiences, tastes and gestures that stimulate the collective memory (Ribeiro, 2013a). While the vectors of modernization are composed by the speed, convincing capacity and modeling of this social life (ibid.) – in other words, they are imbricated relationships.

This notion of place, in our view, follows the proposal of Massey (1994), who understands it as a set of flows constituted by local and broader relations, hence full of conflicts. In the author's words:

Instead then, of thinking of places as areas with boundaries around, they can be imagined as articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings, but where a large proportion of those relations, experiences and understandings are constructed on a far larger scale than what we happen to define for that

moment as the place itself. [...] places do not have to have boundaries in the sense of divisions which frame simple enclosures (Ibid., p. 154 and 155)

Based on this proposal, the geographical events of the place are understood as the manifestation of actions that are responsive to the poor population's project and intentions of survival. These events being a mediation between actions and objects. Their ephemerality does not reduce their importance, since the everyday life of places is composed of this same ephemerality: the thread-gestures that sew sociability (Ribeiro, 2005).

Thus, we will analyze a geographical event that allows us to glimpse possible changes in social power relations: some resisting them, others strengthening them and many doing both at the same time. The geographical event concerned is the pact against domestic violence instituted in the land occupation Menino Chorão (Campinas/SP). To analyze it, it is necessary to understand the gender inequalities built from the social construction of gender. As Scott explains (1986, p. 1067):

Gender is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power. Changes in the organization of social relationships always correspond to changes in representations of power, but the direction of change is not necessarily one way.

The author also points to the gestation of other possible futures, for now utopian, from the changes, for now ephemeral, in the social relations of power. She writes that “this new history will leave open possibilities for thinking about current feminist political strategies and the (utopian) future, for it suggests that gender must be redefined and restructured in conjunction with a vision of political and social equality that includes not only sex, but class and race.” (ibid, p. 1075) We can notice that the social construction of gender is simultaneously a logic external and internal to the place.

We emphasize that the social struggle necessary for the construction and maintenance of urban occupations is essential and historically composed by women, although not only by them. However, considering the oppression-domination-exploitation imposed on them by the patriarchal-capitalist-racist system, we must pay attention to how women are present in the struggles around reproduction and maintenance of life (Massey, 1994; McDowell, 1999; Silva, 2009; Simões, Campos and Rafael, 2017; Garcia, 2009; Helene, 2015, 2019; Tavares, 2015, among others).

It is important to address the strong presence of the female body in the struggle – and to value its victories. Thus, “Let’s move on, then, to explore the material aspects of gender and gender relations, but keep in mind the idea of ‘place’ as the grounded intersections of a whole variety of flows and interactions that operate over a range of spatial scales” (McDowell, 1999, p. 6). In Ribeiro’s words (2013b, p. 198),

These other forms of power include community bonds, religious experiences, ethnic relations and ancestral learnings. [...] it is necessary to study counter-hegemonic tendencies. This study requires the research of other forms of power that, gathered in the urban scene, acquire visibility and great influence in the most intense moments of conjunctural change.

To analyze how thread-gestures can lead to a structural change of gender inequalities, we will call into question in this article two intrinsic components of these inequalities: the dichotomous division between public and private space, relating them to productive spaces and reproductive spaces that foster gendered organization of urban space and domestic violence.

Federici (2017), when analyzing how gender inequalities were restructured at the origin of the capitalist mode of production from Western Europe, emphasizes the imperative of domination of the female body through its oppression, as well as the exploitation of “reproductive” work by women. This process also constituted the gendered urban organization “that institutes public and private spaces from the [dichotomous] separation between productive and reproductive spaces” (Helene, 2019, p. 959). Constantly, these spaces and these works merge (Sabaté, Rodríguez e Díaz, 1995; Okin, 2008).

As Okin (ibid.) explains, in this dichotomous division ‘the private’ [...] [is] used to refer to a sphere or spheres of social life in which intrusion or interference regarding



freedom requires special justification, and 'the public' to refer to a sphere or spheres seen as generally or justifiably more accessible" (p. 306). It is, in fact, a division (never dichotomous, since it has several imbrications) between public and domestic space. After all, there are countless issues related, for example, to the family (which, in a dichotomous view, would exclusively belong to the private space) that require and/or occur at the public sphere (which is conventionally defined as the sphere of the State), ignoring the "political nature of the family, the relevance of justice in personal life and, consequently, a central part of gender inequalities" (ibid., p. 307). Urban land occupations, in their turn, cross the boundaries between public and domestic space. Thus, more than modifying the definition of one and the other, we want to consider them in a relational way, that is, the uses given to the space define them, and this definition should not be immutable or excluding.

When domestic violence is addressed, this questioning of the dichotomy between what is public and domestic is also constantly overcome. Saffioti (2015) relies primarily on human rights in analyzing violence, defining it as "every agency capable of violating them" (ibid., p. 76).<sup>16</sup> From this, the author (ibid.) explains that gender violence happens between people who establish a sexual relationship with each other, regardless of whether they are of different genders or not; however, this violence can include domestic violence. In its turn, it is delimited concerning the domicile, although it is not only within it that it occurs. This kind of violence points to a power relationship between genders and within the household, as a family character, although it is not restricted to

this character either. And without dealing with the generational differences that would lead to intrafamily violence, also related to the universe of domestic violence. This is, therefore, an obligatory male violence (Saffioti, 2015), but it can be carried out by a woman when she assumes the patriarchal role or when she directs it against the children who live in the house in obedience to the household leader. Thus, domestic violence extrapolates and connects the limits of gender violence, intrafamily and in the domestic space. Also, it is one of the main reasons for the high rates of femicide in Brazil.<sup>17</sup>

According to the Atlas of violence (Ipea, 2019), 13 women are murdered every day, the equivalent of one woman every two hours approximately. Between 2007 and 2017, 66% of the total number of victims were black women, and the growth of this crime in the country in this period was 29.9% for black women and 4.5% for non-black women. Concerning the cases defined as femicide, between 2007 and 2017 at least 28.5% of the homicides against women occurred inside the residence, a number that can reach 39.3%, due to the inconstancy of the analyses made from health micro data (ibid., p. 40). To this is added the low percentage of reports to the police in these cases, since most of the time victims and torturers live in the same house.

For several reasons a lot of courage is required on the part of poor black women to report their partners: financial issues, lack of support, lack of place to go after reporting etc. "There is [...] a family defense ideology that even prevents mothers from reporting sexual abuses perpetrated by fathers against their own children [domestic and intrafamily violence], not to mention the tolerance, over

the years, of physical and sexual violence against themselves" (Saffioti, 2015, p. 74).<sup>18</sup> Thus, from women's perspective, home can mean the opposite of the space of protection and be the place of violence, of fear, of silencing, since it is precisely inside the house that women suffer domestic violence (Massey, 1994). In Saffioti's words (2015, p. 75):

Indeed, the issue [of domestic violence against women] lies in tolerance and even in the encouragement by society for men to exercise their strength-power-domination against women, at the expense of a sweet and sensitive virility, thus better suited to the enjoyment of pleasure. Social acceptance for men to convert their aggressiveness into aggression does not, therefore, harm only women, but also themselves. The social organization of gender, based on virility as strength-power-domination, allows us to predict that there is a marked amorous disagreement between men and women.

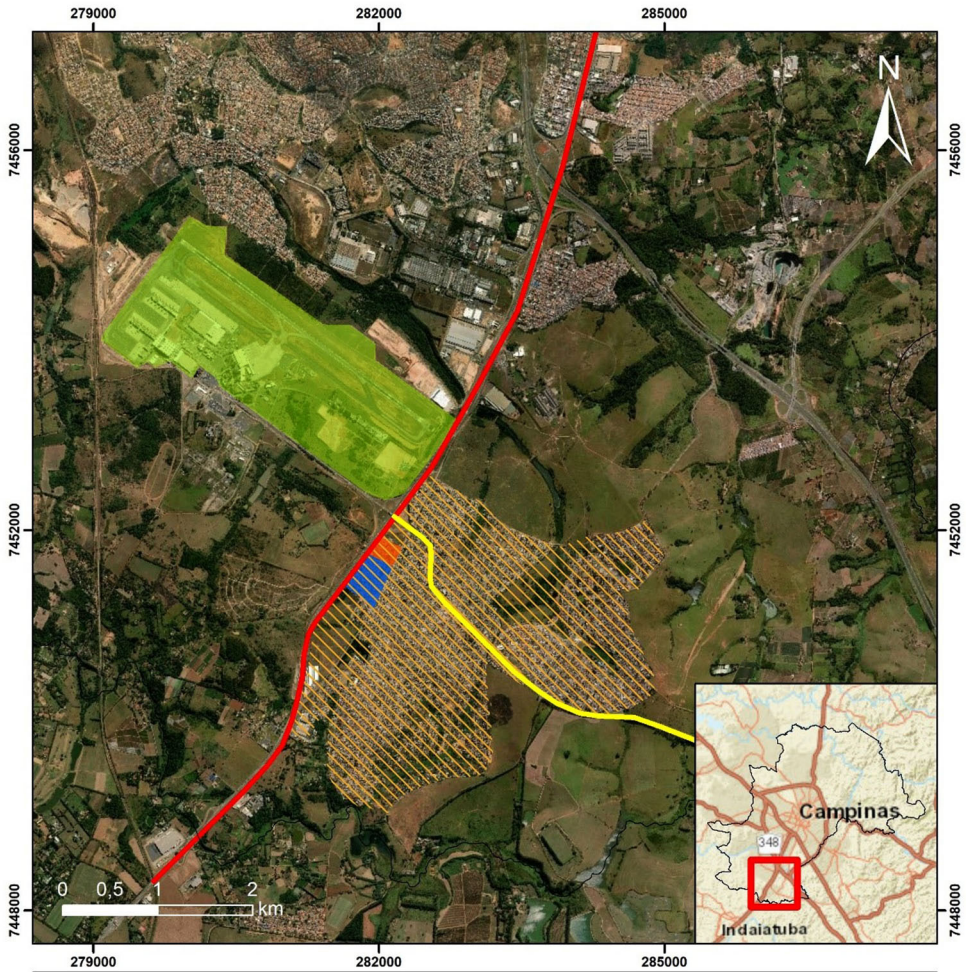
By understanding gender inequalities based on the social construction of gender and fostered through the production of urban space arranged in a gendered way, domestic violence presents itself as a pillar of the maintenance of these inequalities. Thus, we will analyze the pact against domestic violence established in the community Menino Chorão due to the victory it achieved against this unequal structure during the period in which it ruled. It is an ephemeral and incomplete victory that, even so, was constituted as an accumulation of knowledge and skills by people who lived there during that period.

## Menino Chorão Community (Campinas/SP): the place

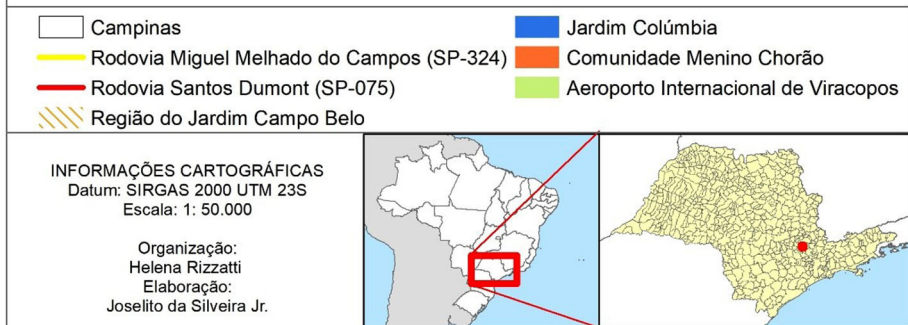
This organized urban land occupation built in the region of Jardim Campo Belo, south of Campinas, was started in 2010 and, despite being under great pressure from the municipal government for its removal due to the expansion of the Viracopos International Airport,<sup>19</sup> it remains in place with 381 houses. Taking cohabitation into account, this number of houses indicates that there is an even greater number of families. Thus, it is estimated that around 1,500 people live there, although there is no official control of the population contingent by the community. The occupation is located on the margins of the Santos Dumont highway (SP-75) and the Engenheiro Miguel Melhado de Campos highway (SP-324) that surround the entire region of Jardim Campo Belo. This portion of the city of Campinas is mostly made up of land occupations, with approximately 7,500 families in 20 neighborhoods (Moysés, 2016). On Map 1, it is possible to see the community, the fixed airport, the highways and the region of Jardim Campo Belo.

The occupation has one of the most precarious urban extensors and collective equipment deployments in the region where it is located, because it was not included in the Vip-Viracopos Social Inclusion Project, which was part of the Urbanization of Precarious Settlements Program of the federal level Growth Acceleration Program held between 2007 and 2010 (Rizzatti, 2015). Even so, the community has water and electricity distribution systems, both initially installed

MAP 1 – Location map - Campinas/SP



Mapa de localização - Campinas - SP



in an irregular and informal way and today formalized, although they continue with irregular connections.

There is no social movement that supports or coordinates this occupation, but since its beginning there has been a leader, Ms. Ramona, who is supported by the women living in the community. This group is constantly changing due to the intense dynamics of arrival and departure of new families in this kind of occupation. This would be the composition of the community residents' association, but it is neither formalized nor regularized. According to the leader, there is a majority presence of women in the occupation because, from the beginning, it has a feminist slant.

Ms. Ramona is proud to say that it was the women residents who built the water and electricity systems at the beginning of the occupation. These facts are related, to a certain extent, to the leader's attitude, who considers herself a feminist and tries to build a community that is also feminist. The occupation even became well known in Campinas/SP for the wide dissemination made by the leader of the pact against domestic violence, which we will further analyze.

## The pact against domestic violence:<sup>20</sup> the victory (ephemeral and incomplete)

When we analyze the pact against domestic violence that prevailed in Menino Chorão community between 2012 and 2016, we observe that the personal history of the leader is frequently mixed with the history of the place, since both are constituted

concomitantly. The same tends to happen with the personal history of the population living in the area, since gender inequalities, being structural, are present in all social relations (Motta, 2017).

Ms. Ramona says that during her life she has always been in defense of women, although she has suffered domestic violence from all her husbands (seven in all), having an abortion when she was five months pregnant and losing part of her teeth due to the aggressions. Thus, according to her, her education as a feminist has lasted a lifetime and was strengthened with the welcome of the non-governmental organization "SOS Ação Mulher" and, later, with her joining the social movement *Marcha Mundial de Mulheres* (MMM), both in the city of Campinas/SP.

She says that after hearing so many women being beaten in Menino Chorão community without being able to count on the support of public security (the Military Police or the Municipal Guard), she began to discuss the issue in meetings with the residents, who at that time were already mostly women. At a certain point, they decided to establish a pact according to which, if there was violence against women "inside the favela," they would "go after to stop it". To explain their proposal, they used a famous saying rephrased by the Brazilian feminist movement: "in violence against women we put the spoon".<sup>21</sup> The original version of this saying is "in a fight between husband and wife, you don't put the spoon", and the change in its content breaks the boundaries theoretically well delimited between public and domestic spaces (and issues). The popular sayings, as well as this dichotomous vision of spaces, are means, among countless others, by which sexism

spreads and strengthens (Saffioti, 2015). As the author explains, the way out of the situation of domestic violence is usually related to the intervention of an external influence, which ends up forcing the limits of the domestic space to be crossed.

The pact was established in an agreement between the women residents. Among them was the owner of one of the only two bars in the community, so one of the penalties was that the men who committed domestic violence could not consume alcohol in that bar. There other punishments were: aggressors could not play soccer in the only field in the occupation, and the aggression could be fought back by the group of women if the victim decided to do so. At this point, what Saffioti (ibid.) calls "reactive violence" can be noticed. Women who have been assaulted, in one way or another, always react to the violence they suffer, which must be distinguished from the attitude of violent women who, although they exist, "are nevertheless very rare, given male supremacy and [...] the socialization [of women] for docility" (p. 82). Moreover, this possibility of battered women choosing whether or not to respond to aggression demonstrates the group's understanding that there are always specific aspects to broad social phenomena. The importance of both the culture of the place and the diversity that composes it is thus observed.

In the various meetings and reflections necessary for the establishment and maintenance of this pact, it was also encouraged to hold a "generalized sex strike" if there were episodes of aggression within the community. This measure adopts a sexual reaction to the violence that precisely mixes

gender relations with domestic and sexual relations. Therefore, in order to react to it, it is necessary to confront all these elements. Leaders and residents report that this strategy of struggle has proved to be very effective since, after being implemented, gender inequality began to be more debated at the domestic-family level. After all, "what is personal is political," as one of the most important slogans of the feminist struggle says.

During the period in which this pact ruled, the men residents warned the new families that came to live there about this deal because, if they did not like it (especially the newly arrived men), it was recommended that they move to another location in the region of Jardim Campo Belo. This communication between the old and new residents may indicate the ratification of the pact by those who lived there. After all, the social construction of gender also imposes oppression on men, who are forced to behave according to characteristics conventionally associated with the male gender (Saffioti, 2015). None of the men who lived in the occupation had the obligation to remain there – if they did and helped to spread the pact, it seems reasonable to understand such action as possible support. The feminist struggle is, above all, for equality, not for the continuity of oppression.

Also, the pact influenced a wider area than Menino Chorão community location. During the period in which it was valid, three women were murdered on the same night inside their own houses in the region of Jardim Campo Belo. In response, the residents of the Menino Chorão community, together with their leader, protested against this violence, blocking for a few hours the flow of

the Engenheiro Miguel Melhado de Campos avenue. This manifestation was supported by Marcha Mundial de Mulheres, a nationwide organization, and was broadcast by local media<sup>22</sup> (Moysés and Rizzatti, 2017). Thus, the pact also supported women who lived on the surrounding areas of the occupation.

It is important to note that during the period when the pact was in effect, Ms. Ramona had no regular partner, so she took less risk of experiencing an episode of aggression and having to create the courage to report her own partner. It is essential to remember the complexity involved in reporting such a situation to understand the dimension of this pact. Many women do not want their ex-partners to be imprisoned, since imprisonment is one of the main technologies for maintaining Brazilian structural inequalities (Akotirene, 2020; Borges, 2018).

The rates of femicide<sup>23</sup> in the country are enormous and they are mainly centered on the black and poor population, as already presented in this article. For the same reason, Ms. Ramona lived an imminent risk of being assaulted or even suffering femicide as a strategy to demobilize such a pact. Thus, seeking to protect herself and concomitantly strengthen the pact, the leader was dedicated to its disclosure. After some articles about the pact were published, there was a broad positive response from several local institutions.<sup>24</sup> Ms. Ramona participated in lectures and discussions at public and private universities in Campinas/SP, was interviewed by other local media, as well as expanded her participation in organizations in defense of women. These communicational actions proved to be essential for the maintenance and efficiency of the pact.<sup>25</sup> According to the

leader, domestic violence was eradicated in the community for three years, between 2012 and 2014, a period in which the disclosure of the pact was more constant.

The intense dynamics of arrival and departure of families, characteristic of urban occupations, was an additional challenge for the maintenance of the pact. Moreover, from 2014 onwards, the political and economic crisis was installed in Brazil, worsened since the questionable impeachment of then-president Dilma Rousseff (PT/2011-2016). This political process at the national level, which resembled a parliamentary coup, strengthened several discourses that disagree with the pact against domestic violence, such as: questioning the struggle for gender equality and the right to sexuality, fighting for human rights, reaffirming the arming of the population as a national security policy, promoting hate speech, among others. Thus, we believe that to understand the demobilization of the pact we must take into consideration this significant political crisis experienced in the country combined with the population dynamics of urban occupations and its enormous confrontation with the structural inequalities that characterize Brazilian socio-spatial formation.

Finally, in 2016, the first religious institutions arrived in the community, and their leaders began an intense campaign against Dona Ramona and the pact, until it was completely broken. Nevertheless, in the year 2018, after the discovery that some of these religious leaders committed harassment and sexual violence against some residents, they were kicked out by being stoned, as the leader says. However, so far the pact has not been reconstituted, which does not mean that this will not happen. Anyway, The leader highlights

that it is necessary to reestablish this debate in the community meetings and restart the path of awareness and confrontation since there are currently few women who lived in the community when the pact was valid and who remain there until today.

Thus, the pact against domestic violence established in Menino Chorão community, which was in effect from 2012 to 2016, resists the structure instituted by gender inequalities based on the social construction of gender and is understood as a victory, even if an ephemeral and incomplete one. It is a victory achieved through the tensioning of social power relations, tending to an alternative rationality and modernity by confronting logics that reproduce power relations.

## Final remarks

The pact against domestic violence is a geographical event resulting from the accumulation of thread-gestures in the personal life of both the leader of Menino Chorão community and the other residents, as well as the history of the place itself. Some of these women have met before in other occupations, in other moments of their lives and have supported each other until the peak of their mobilization, which took place when the pact was instituted. Although ephemeral and incomplete, since it was dismantled, the pact can be understood as a victory for the population and the place. All people who have experienced its implementation and maintenance have accumulated knowledge

and skills on gender inequalities and social struggle, constituting themselves as collective "subjects".

To establish and maintain this pact, it was necessary to tension the social construction of gender in the daily life of the place. There are some aspects that we see as essential to the keeping of the pact: the bonds of trust that were built among women and the possibility of intervening through local businesses and shared spaces, such as the bar and the soccer field. All this was made possible by the fact that urban occupations are parcels of city built in an organized way by the population that resides there. This characteristic requires the development of solid relationships in the place, leading the people who live there to establish ties with each other. In addition, the considerable ratification by the male residents and the strategic use of communication spreading the pact beyond the boundaries of the community have also proved essential for its maintenance and efficiency.

Thus, it is possible to create alternative rationalities and modernities to the capitalist social construction of gender and its rationality and modernity. We consider that these victories are part of the daily life of urban peripheries throughout the country. It is necessary that researches on urban space and urbanization address these cases, recording and studying them so we can understand these socio-spatial processes that question the racist-capitalist-patriarchal system - and they are not few. In this way, the glimpse of a post-capitalist society can be expanded and, at the same time, assimilated, which is essential for its strengthening.

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## Notes

- (1) Her name was changed.
- (2) In Portuguese the term is “*sujeitas coletivas*”, that is, the substantive “*sujeitas*” is applied in feminine and plural form in a kind of neologism. Unfortunately, in English we cannot reproduce this procedure.
- (3) We freely translated quotes from articles and books written in Portuguese and Spanish that do not have English translation.
- (4) Free translation from: “*en el espacio abierto en y por las movilizaciones sociales de fines de siglo XX e inicio del XXI, movimientos que atraviesan y rompen con la modernidad realmente existente de la cual provienen, encontramos el laboratorio social, político, vivencial, imaginante y enunciativo, performativo y prefigurativo, de lo que denominamos modernidad alternativa, postcapitalista*” (Millán, 2013, p. 50).
- (5) Free translations from “*tendencia totalizante de una forma de la modernidad, al tiempo que hay la existencia de otras formas posibles de modernidad, como simultaneidad tensionada del tiempo presente*” (ibid., 47) and “*si bien es cierto que no se puede concebir el capitalismo sin la modernidad, sería sin embargo posible imaginar una modernidad sin capitalismo, que ha existido en el pasado, como proyectos derrotados de una modernidad no capitalista; y que se nos presenta como potencia prefigurada en el presente*” (ibid., p. 51).



- (6) Free translation from: “A colonialidade é ao mesmo tempo (1) o contraponto complementar da modernidade (não existiria modernidade sem colonialidade, e vice-versa); (2) herança, atualização e continuidade da colonização (que, mais do que a chegada do colonizador, era a chegada de um “pacote enredado de relações de poder”); e (3) uma forma de leitura totalizante do modo de produção capitalista que, ao invés de privilegiar uma forma específica de exploração, dominação e hierarquização (a relação de classe) como sendo aquela capaz de definir o todo, toma a ideia de que este modo de produção não se afirmaria sem a coexistência [...] de múltiplas formas de poder operantes na complexidade das interações e do tecido social (2019, p. 4).
- (7) Free translation from: “há uma zona incerta que não se reduz às fronteiras físicas (se é que elas existem) do que chamamos de ‘periferia’, pois passa por todo o entrelaçado da vida social, pelas práticas e suas mediações, pelos circuitos da vida urbana e pelas conexões que se fazem nas dobraduras da vida social” (Telles, 2007, p. 204).
- (8) The University of São Paulo's Nucleus of Studies on Social Markers of Difference (Núcleo de Estudos sobre Marcadores Sociais da Diferença – Numas) defines the markers as: "classification categories understood as social, local, historical and cultural constructions, which both belong to the order of social representations - like fantasies, myths, ideologies that we create - and influence the world through the production and reproduction of collective identities and social hierarchies". Therefore, the differences are inscribed in a set of social relations.
- (9) The imbricationist analysis has gained strength in researches lately through the concept of intersectionality coined in 1989 in the United States by Afrojurist Crenshaw (1989). In the same direction, Collins (2019) proposes the idea of a matrix of domination that associates the oppressions of gender, race, class and nation, being necessary "to determine the bonds between these systems" (Collins, 2016 p. 108). Several Brazilian authors have addressed the issue of intersectionality, even before the term was coined, notably Lélia Gonzalez (Akotirene, 2019).
- (10) In Portuguese, these terms are known, respectively, as: “*arte do fazer*”, “*viração*” and “*arte do contorno*”.
- (11) Coetaneity means that, although knowledges come from the past, they are also part of the present, constituting a continuity between these two moments that can be captured coetaneously.
- (12) Free translation from “A ação espontânea sustenta-se na comunicação e em saberes pretéritos [...]. Evidentemente, existe dominação da ação espontânea e preservada de aprendizados pretéritos, das relações hierárquicas e da vivência da escassez. Porém essa ação possui a capacidade de ir além do já concebido e previsto. Dos gestos-fios “impensados” podem vir descobertas radicalmente novas e vínculos imprevisíveis, o que também é necessário à tessitura do social, especialmente num período caracterizado pelo esgarçamento de relações sociais. Acrescente-se que o entendimento como “impensado” por determinado segmento social pode simplesmente expressar a existência de racionalidades alternativas, estranhas à lógica sistêmica (parcelar e excludente) dominante” (Ribeiro, 2005, p. 421).
- (13) Free translation from “ficar prisioneiro do presente ou do passado é a melhor maneira para não fazer aquele passo adiante, sem o qual nenhum povo se encontra com o futuro” (Santos, 2014, p. 161).
- (14) Free translation from: “*podemos (y debemos) decir que han expandido sus libertades por caminos que no estaban para ellos en la sociedad civil*” (Chatterjee, 2008, p. 143).

- (15) Free translation from: “Não há um plano macro e um plano micro, como creem certos intelectuais [...]. Evidentemente, há uma malha grossa e uma malha fina, uma sendo o avesso da outra, e não níveis diferentes. A rigor, poder-se-ia dizer que os processos sociais apresentam duas faces: uma micro e outra macro, sobressaindo-se uma ou outra, dependendo das circunstâncias. Transmitindo as palavras de plano e nível a ideia de hierarquia, as pessoas põem logo o macro acima do micro. Essa nova terminologia [do nó frouxo] pretende evitar essa hierarquização, além de mostrar o emaranhado desses processos. *E as mulheres sabem como tecer a malha social, operando em processos macro e em processos micro*” (grifo nosso, Saffioti, 2013, p. 80 and 81).
- (16) The definition of what human rights mean should also come into question. Therefore, the author points out the relevance and urgency of deepening the understanding of human rights in the feminine sphere (Saffioti, 2015, p. 78).
- (17) According to the Brazilian Atlas of violence (Ipea, 2019, p. 40), “[...] there is recognition in the international literature that the significant majority of intentional violent deaths occurring within homes are perpetrated by acquaintances or people who have intimate relationships with the victims. Therefore, the rate of intentional lethal incidents against women occurring within households is a good proxy for measuring femicide. Of course, even if the actual number of feminicides is not equal to the number of women killed inside the household (specially since several cases of femicide occur outside the household), such a proxy can serve to highlight the evolution of femicide rates in the country.”
- (18) Free translation for: “Há [...] uma ideologia de defesa da família, que chega a impedir a denúncia [da violência doméstica e intrafamiliar], por parte de mães, de abusos sexuais perpetrados por pais contra seus (suas) próprios(as) filhos(as), para não mencionar a tolerância, durante anos seguidos, de violências físicas e sexuais contra si mesmas” (Saffioti, 2015, p. 74).
- (19) According to the airport's expansion plans, in the area occupied by Menino Chorão community, private parking lots would be built in addition to those that already exist within the macrofix of transportation itself.
- (20) The data and information included in this section of the text are the results of field works in which the researcher conducted interviews and workshops in the community between 2014 and 2020 to carry out extension projects and masters and doctoral research.
- (21) In Portuguese, this saying counts with an internal rhyme between the words “mulher/colher”: “Em briga de marido e mulher, não se mete a colher.” This rhyme adds a rhythm to the saying (important aspect to its spreading) that we cannot reproduce in our English translation. But, as it is said, choosing the word “colher” has to do also with the domestic ambiance of couple's fights, that's why we choose for a literal translation of the dictate.
- (22) <http://g1.globo.com/sp/campinas-regiao/noticia/2013/10/apos-serie-de-mortes-mulheres-protestam-contraviolencia-domestica-em-campinas.html>. Last accessed on April 16th, 2020.
- (23) According to the 2013 Joint Parliamentary Inquiry Commission on Violence Against Women, femicide is “the ultimate instance of control of women by men: the control of life and death. It is expressed as an unrestricted affirmation of possession, equating women with an object when committed by partners or ex-partners; as the subjugation of women's intimacy and sexuality through sexual violence associated with murder; as the destruction of women's identity through mutilation or disfigurement of their bodies; as the degradation of women's dignity by subjecting them to torture or cruel or degrading conditions”. This definition can be found in <https://dossies.agenciapatriagalvao.org.br/violencia/violencias/feminicidio/>; accessed 30 Jul 2019.

- (24) Brasil Urgente Campinas television report, available in: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ovt8rm0jHF4>. Last accessed on April 16th, 2020.
- (25) In some discussions in which the leader participated, mainly in universities and colleges, she was criticized for using violence against aggressors. We consider this criticism mistaken. Whoever lives in the place decides the dimension of their acts. Outsiders have no idea of the magnitude of the violence they were experiencing and are not in a position to make such criticism. Add to this the complex issue of imprisonment in the country that does not present itself as a solution to the problem.

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