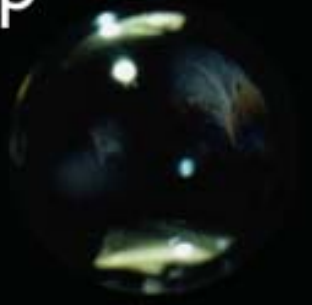
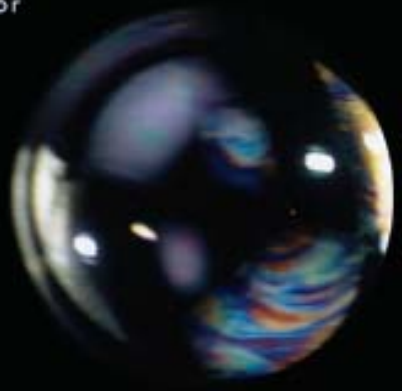
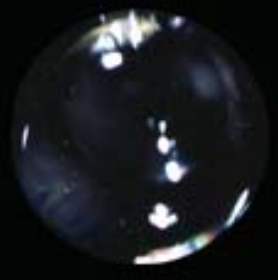
Specialerække nr. 248

# Contesting the Moralities of Leadership

The consequences of participatory politics for the local understandings and performance of moral neighborhood leadership in a poor urban area in the Northeast of Brazil







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It is all a matter of style
Pierre Bourdieu

# Organization of the thesis

There are 32,979 words in this thesis excluding footnotes, references, summary and appendices

# Part One

## Introduction

### 1.1 Leading while the music changes

Luís and Roberto both love to dance. Luís's great passion is the intimate, sensual *brega*, a popular dance from the Northeast of Brazil. When Luís dances *brega*, he almost does not move, but the little pressures of his hand against his dance partner's back makes the *brega* come alive. He leads by making the woman the sensual centre of the dance. Roberto is devoted to the Caribbean *salsa*, even though its alien origin is regarded with some scepticism among the residents of the poor neighborhood of Milagres in Recife, the capital of the state of Pernambuco in the Northeast of Brazil, which is where they both live. *Salsa* requires a higher degree of bodily involvement from the male dancer than *brega*. Watching Roberto dance *salsa* with a woman, it is difficult to determine who leads who. It seems as if the *salsa* somehow forces both bodies to become equally involved in the dance.

In a sense, this thesis is about the differences between the two dances. Metaphorically, it is an analysis of what happens if during a dance of *brega,* a *salsa* tune is put on. Luís and Roberto are also neighborhood leaders, and the central theme of this thesis is neighborhood leadership in a poor urban area in the Northeast of Brazil. It is about changes in the morality of leadership caused by external factors. Metaphorically, it is the threatening of *brega* by *salsa*[1].

From February to August of 2001 and again in March 2002, I carried out fieldwork among neighborhood leaders in the poor community of Milagres, located in the centre of Recife (see Appendix One). In other metropolitan areas in Brazil, such as São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, the poorest neighborhoods also constitute the physical margins of the cities. In Recife, this is not the case. All

[1] The 'dance-metaphor' is unfortunately not my invention. In "Tango i dansk takt – Et studie af kulturforskelle i praksis i danske datterselskaber i Argentina" (2001), Jens Frahm-Rasmussen uses the dance-metaphor to describe the co-operation between Danish and Argentinean employees of a Danish company in Argentina.

through the 20th century landless, unemployed people have had no alternative but to invade private or public land throughout the centre of the city, resulting in the gradual increase of *favelas* [squatter settlements] in the urban area. This process called into being the co-existence of two simultaneous urban zones; middle class areas neighboring poor *favelas* without basic social necessities.

Talking to residents of the middle class areas, I often got the impression that the overt physical signs of poverty in the poorest areas, such as fragile barracks and trash heaps, were perceived as symbols of the social life in the *favelas*. To some middle class residents, the conditions of the *favelas* justified their eradication. This was made clear to me during a conversation with Joel, a municipal engineer, in the small room behind the radio shop that he ran during the afternoons:

> "Joel: Have you seen Milagres from the air?
> Morten: Yeah, when we first got here.
> Joel: Is it a beautiful sight?
> Morten: I don't know. I suppose not.
> Joel: Well, it's not. Around it, the river bends in a beautiful 'S' (makes an 'S' with his hand) with fertile mangrove. And in the middle, there is a *favela* with prostitution, open sewers and *tráfico* [drug dealing]…the best would be to re-urbanize [viz. relocate the residents of the area]. […] Those who live in the area, their grandparents and their parents, die poor. I think an adaptation to poverty occurred… I've worked with those people, but I didn't like it, they're troublesome"

At other times, the word *favela* was used to connote a bodily trait. One day I was talking to Sergio, an employee at Cendhec, a local NGO, about a musician from Recife. He concluded that "…Canibal [the musician] is still *favela*. You can see it in his face". The negative evaluation of *favela* resonates with municipal political strategies towards squatter settlements which have lasted until the early 1980's. Beginning in the late 1920's, a "social question" emerged. One of its first concerns was with "hygiene" and "delinquency" (Outtes 1997). The *favela* was seen as a "parasite" contributing with nothing to the surrounding society (Ramsdell 1990:165).

Until the mid-1980's, the municipality refused to acknowledge the *favelas* as permanent settlements, making eradication a latent possibility (Souza 2001a). In the struggle both to prevent this and to secure necessities for the residents, neighborhood leaders have played an important part as intermediaries between the residents of 'their' areas and various political agents. There are

approximately 20 neighborhood leaders working with political issues in Milagres (see Appendix Two). Their activities are centered around three associations: *Conselho dos Moradores*, the main neighborhood association; *Centro Social*, which houses the local public school; and *Comissão Central*, the first neighborhood association in Milagres.

I soon discovered that the relationship between the neighborhood leaders was anything but harmonious. All leaders publicly agree that the ideal is to put all personal objectives aside in the united quest for improval for the community. However, this ideal, which I describe as the *communitarian ethic*[2], was both highly contested and rarely achieved. The actual practices of the neighborhood leaders were often at odds with the ideal. This generated constant tensions among the leaders, who accused each other of inadequate observance of the *communitarian ethic*.

Due to broader international, national and local political processes, neighborhood leadership in Recife is currently undergoing radical changes. Participatory approaches are slowly gaining a foothold in the local context. Residents are being urged to participate in political processes and take a personal responsibility for the improvement of their political, economic, and social conditions. This process threatens to alter the status of the neighborhood leader, who no longer stands as the sole intermediary between the political agents and the residents of the *favela*. My aim in this thesis is to gain an understanding of this process. The pivotal questions are the following:

> *What are the consequences of introducing participatory politics for the local understandings and performance of neighborhood leadership in a poor urban area in the Northeast of Brazil; and: How are the moralities anchoring[3] neighborhood leadership affected by the participatory politics?*

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[2] The notion of *communitarian ethic* is a neologism and is not to be conflated with Habermas' concept of *communitarianism* (1995). In this thesis I consider *ethic* to be a set of moral principles which prescribe a certain moral understanding (Politikens Filosofileksikon:120).

[3] In this thesis I describe practices as *anchored* in moralities by which I attempt to describe how practices are induced with meaning by certain moral understandings.

I focus on neighborhood leadership in Milagres and how the broader, national political processes of participation are involved in local conflicts between the leaders. Participatory projects introduce moral logics which are at odds with the moralities of traditional neighborhood leadership in Milagres. Many leaders therefore repudiate political initiatives that are based on popular participation

The tensions among neighborhood leaders regarding the *communitarian ethic* were increased by the conflict between the neighborhood leaders of two of Milagres's sub-areas, *Marineira* and *Campina*. Social conditions in Marineira have always been superior to those of Campina. The residents and neighborhood leaders of Campina therefore feel that people in Marineira see them as inferior.

Roberto heads the Marineira leaders assisted by Luís and Teresa, Roberto's protégée. Roberto is also the leader who most vigorously champions the new, participatory politics. Through his involvement in various political projects, he is introducing the idea of *participation* in Milagres. These projects have created a room for manoeuvring for the neighborhood leaders, which did not exist in the past: Roberto is active in numerous political forums, where he negotiates with local politicians, NGO workers and municipal technicians, who have to acknowledge (at least in public) the neighborhood leaders' claim to a legitimate political voice. Other neighborhood leaders in Milagres feel threatened by this altered status: Roberto is not only a more important political actor than they are. He tries to implement a political ideology which threatens to eliminate their position as intermediaries between politicians and the residents of their areas. I explore the altered room for manoeuvring that the participatory practices have created, and the ways in which other neighborhood leaders try to challenge Roberto's position as a legitimate neighborhood leader in Milagres.

### 1.2 A theoretical bricolage

Derrida claims that scholars should see themselves as bricoleurs – willing to use the analytic tools at hand (Derrida 1978:285). I have let myself be guided by this conception in the sections below. Throughout the thesis, I attempt to understand the logic of neighborhood leadership and the ways in which it is being

contested by participatory politics. In order to do that, it has been necessary to put together a theoretical bricolage. I believe that no single theoretical framework can capture the ambiguity and contradictions inherent in a real social situation. The theoretical toolbox I have used to understand the Brazilian context is therefore a compilation of contributions from several scholars which I have not attempted to merge into a single unified system. Here I will only outline the theoretical framework used for the understanding of morality.

I consider neighborhood leadership to be a moral category, through which ideas of good and evil, right and wrong are articulated and practiced in a given social context. I understand *morality* in the lexical sense as ”principles of right or wrong behavior and the goodness or badness of human character” (Concise Oxford Dictionary). However, because of the multiple overlapping moral logics underlying the neighborhood leaders' practices, morality must be understood in the plural as moralit*ies* (Howell 1997:3). These moralities inform, create and give meaning to the social relations in which they are activated. I see moralities as resources put to use through practice. *Moral interchangeability* is the term I use for this process of activating various moral resources.

In “The Gift” (1990), Mauss describes how morality acts as an integrating force by binding people together in obligatory social networks (In the following I refer to the Danish edition “Gaven” (2000)). Mauss shows how the *gift* binds agents together through the moral obligation to give, receive and reciprocate. The generosity of giving and reciprocating creates ties of friendship - and competition - among interacting groups or individuals and obliges them to maintain reciprocal exchanges (2000 [1923-24]:op.cit.35). This obligation engenders continuity in the social relation, at least until the responsibility to reciprocate is discharged (Sahlins 1972: 208).

The work of Michel Foucault exhibits a similar attention to social cohesive forces (1991, 1998, 2002). According to Foucault, the social bonds active in a historical period may be described as a *dispositif*:

> ”What I'm trying to pick out with this term [dispositif] is, firstly, a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions. Laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical propositions – in short, the said as much as the unsaid. The [*dispositif*] itself is the system of relations that can be established between these elements” (1980a:194).

The *dispositif* is a socially established heterogeneous morality which binds people together by creating dispositions for actions. It can be understood as a fragile and temporary 'compromise' between members of a social group (Raffnsøe 2002:17). This implicit 'compromise' is the mutual acceptance by the agents of the moralities implied by various norms[4]. A *dispositif* always has a 'functional' aspect (Foucault 1980:195). It emerges when a cluster of practices based on shared normative understandings aim toward the same set of targets[5] (Brenner 1994:691).

The social bonds created through and by the *dispositif* are always fragile, affected by the practices in which they take effect (Foucault 1991:75). This implies that the *dispositif* must be perceived as a tangle of heterogeneous elements which are always "off balance, now drawing together and then distancing themselves from another" (Deleuze 1992:159). I apply a reworked version of Foucault's understanding of *dispositif* to my material. Foucault perceives *dispositifs* as expressions of overarching social forces. In my thesis, I claim that they can also be understood as partial social moralities, none of which cover the whole social field.

### 1.3 Organization of the thesis

In Part Two, I describe the context of my study. Milagres is an urban *favela* and I describe its main characteristics in light of the municipality's political attitudes towards squatter areas. Several major cities throughout Brazil have experienced similar urban development with increasing growth in the number of urban *favelas* (Banck 1986, Huchzermeyer 2002). I analyze Milagres as a *critical case*[6] (Flyvbjerg 2001:79), which yields important information about the more

[4] Norms are moral rules for action (Politikens Filosofileksikon 1983:317).
[5] In "Discipline and Punish" (1979) Foucault describes the function of the *dispositif* of 'discipline' through his analysis of the structuring or 'disciplining' of society through practices at workplaces, in homes, prisons or at schools.
[6] If we compare Milagres with other *favelas* throughout Brazil, it has many of the traits that generally characterize squatter settlements: It lacks intrastructure, the housing accomodations in several sub areas are fragile, it is located in the centre of a major city, and throughout the last century there have been numerous threats of eradication. I therefore argue that Milagres has "strategic importance in relation to the general problem" of urban poverty (Flyvbjerg 2001:78).

general problems of urban poverty in Brazil. To contextualize my study of neighborhood leadership in Milagres, I outline the historical trajectories of the neighborhood associations and the reasons for the current conflicts between the leaders. I subsequently describe two participatory projects which affect the neighborhood leaders' practices.

Part Three is a description and analysis of neighborhood leadership in Milagres. Most neighborhood leaders are connected to local politicians through relations of *assistencialismo* [lit. giving assistance, but here meaning patronage]. I scrutinize these relationships and their consequences for neighborhood leadership in Milagres. Neighborhood leaders gain the support of the residents through individual *stylized performances.* I show how the leaders through the performances make use of several moral resources. This practice is what I define as *moral interchangeability*. In concluding Part Three, I argue that *moral interchangeability* can be perceived as a *dispositif* in Foucault's sense.

*Moral interchangeability* is currently being contested by a different *dispositif* introduced through participatory projects. In Part Four, I examine the historical trajectory of the new *dispositif*. *Participation* is an expression of both national and international strategies affecting the Brazilian social universe. International lending institutions promote participation in Brazil as part of an aid strategy aimed at social groups affected by economic adjustment programmes (UNRISD 2002). National developments in Brazil have produced understandings of participation which stand in stark contrast to the strategies of the lending institutions. While the former define participation as a primary prerequisite for political projects, the latter perceives participation through the lenses of adjustment strategies. Here participation is the *means* for the attainment of economic restructuring*,* whereas local readings in Brazil see participation as both means and end. I study how the two contrasting readings of participation get entangled, creating ambiguous attitudes towards participation among the local neighborhood leaders and residents exposed to participatory politics.

Part Five is an empirical case study where I focus on the local consequences of participatory projects for the neighborhood leadership in Milagres. I argue that participatory initiatives establish a room for manoeuvring for the

neighborhood leaders, which did not exist before. This creates expectations and desires among residents and neighborhood leader in Milagres of possible personal advantages and improval of social conditions. However, participatory projects do not yield immediate results. The beneficiaries are therefore often disappointed with the neighborhood leaders involved in participatory projects. Disappointment and scepticism regarding the neighborhood leaders involved in participatory projects were the results of the course of events described in Part Five.

In Part Six, I sum up my main arguments and discuss the current status of neighborhood leadership. I focus on the advantages and disadvantages of participatory politics for poor Brazilian urban neighborhoods.

# Part Two

## 2.1 The field

### 2.1.1 Urban margins in the heart of Recife

Milagres is a *favela*. Literally, *favelas* signify illegal squatter areas and as such they have been part of Recife's urban history for the last 150 years. Starting in the mid-eighteenth century, several vicious droughts drove farm workers from the interior to the city (Assies 1991:47). These waves of migration were further prompted by a decline in the local sugar industry starting from the beginning of the 19th century, which left thousands of people without income (Hecht 1998:216). As these unemployed workers headed for Recife, there was an explosive growth in the number of inhabitants. From the 1920s-1940s, the population increased with 46% and over the next two decades by 129% (Assies 1991:55). The result was a 'swollen city', completely unable to absorb the wave of migrants (Cabral & Moura 1994:58). Meanwhile, Recife fell behind the rapid industrialization of the South, more and more standing out as the poor, backward hinterland of Brazil (Assies 1991:51). The municipality did not consider the "swelling" a central public issue, and did not create a workable social welfare system. The new urban poor had no alternative but to squat on the swampy areas surrounding the city. Their primitive houses, called *palafitas* [shacks on stakes], soon became characteristic of these settlements. Built out of pieces of wood, tin, cardboard or virtually any scrap material that can be found, these shacks are built on stakes, which are pounded into the black mud of the river banks. Every two years they have to be re-built, as the humidity and heavy rain softens the wood holding the *palafita* together. By 1940, two thirds of the city's population was living in *favelas* (ETAPAS 1992:56). The magnitude of the problem could no longer be ignored, and so in the early 1940s, the city government initiated a campaign against the *favelas* in the attempt to eradicate all squatter areas (Fagundes et al. 1981:48). This initiative was based on the implicit assumption that it was the *favela* that caused the "swelling" of the city, and not the

political and economic context surrounding it. With the presidency of the populist Getúlio Vargas (1930-1945), this stance was radically altered (ETAPAS 1992:59). Realizing the political potential of the lower social strata as a base, he encouraged the invasion of public land, thus placing a higher moral value on *moradia* [dwelling] than on ownership rights[7].

The lack of political initiatives to solve the problems of the *favelas* has resulted in an ever-increasing number of people living in *favelas*. Today, more than half of Recife's 1.4 million inhabitants live in illegal settlements, which only comprise 14% (30 $km^2$) of the total urban area (214 $km^2$) (Souza 2001a:483). In total, there are approximately 500 *favelas* in Recife; one of these is Milagres.

### 2.1.2 Milagres

In official documents, Milagres is first mentioned in 1831, when a public hospital was built there (Costa 1981:63). Previously, it had been private land but in 1861 a second hospital, Dom. Pedro II, was built in the now official precinct, which was incorporated into the city in 1847 (op.cit.65). In the mid-1980's, the status of Milagres was changed. While previously it had been a sub-area of the district Boa Vista, it now gained the official status of *bairro* [district]. Luís told me that in the past, he referred to Boa Vista as his neighborhood in order to avoid discrimination: "When I was at the job interview in the bank, I only wrote Boa Vista and the street name as my address. It was only when I had got the job that my boss discovered that I was living in Milagres. I asked him if he would have hired me if he had known, and he said probably not. That was discrimination [...] Today I always say that I live in Milagres".

The first land invasions in Milagres took place during the early 1920's, on vacant plots of land close to the nascent timber and tile industries at Rua José Mariano (Observatório 2002). Rua José Mariano still constitutes the industrial centre of Milagres, with timber merchants and garages as its main businesses. In 1980, the Brazilian Federation leased the entire area to the municipality of

[7] For more on this, see Holston 1991.

Recife. According to article $2^0$ in the contract, the area was intended for a "habitation plan with the support from the National Habitation Bank" (contract 296 of 18 July 1980, my translation).

Milagres is located at the very heart of Recife. Its only natural boundary is the Capiberibe River, which finds its way from the *sertão* [semiarid interior] through the city to the Atlantic Ocean. In tourist guides, Recife is described as the Venice of Latin America, which is something of an exaggeration (Hecht 1998:223). Throughout the 20th century, the river was in effect an open sewer, with a distinctive smell and brownish color. On all other sides, Milagres is encircled by middle-class apartment housing and especially private hospitals. Recife has the second largest medical industry in Brazil, only surpassed by São Paulo - a position the municipality is keen on preserving[8]. The urban landscape is clearly marked by the decisive role of the medical industry. When you stand in Roque Santeiro III, a sub-area of Milagres bordering on the river, the distance to the luxurious Hope Hospital is only 25 meters. Since all the houses in Roque Santeiro are *palafitas*, the difference is almost too great to comprehend. In spite of the closeness of the hospitals, the urban poor have no access to these facilities. They must make do with the public health centers, many of which have been closed for decades as a result of municipal decisions.

Milagres comprises six sub-areas covering 25 hectares: Campina, Roque Santeiro I-III, Beira Rio, Vila Nova, Beco do Esparadrapo and Marineira (see Appendix Three). Official accounts state the number of inhabitants as 6,826 persons living in 1,854 'habitational units' (IBGE 2000), but according to Roberto this is a gross understatement. He claimed that there were approximately 2,600 houses and shacks, and with roughly four persons living in each, it gives a total of 10,400 inhabitants. Roque Santeiro I-III, Beira Rio and Vila Nova lie end to end along the river as a narrow strip of *palafitas*. These areas constitute the most marginalized part of Milagres, and I was often warned against entering them alone without the protection of one of the leaders. Other parts were more accessible, primarily Campina and Marineira. The latter is the oldest and

[8] The medical industry constitutes a significant source of income. According to a municipal worker, the annual tax revenue is approximately 10 million reais. This has meant that regulations are bent to accommodate the *oligarquia de medicina* [medical oligarchy].

consists of brick houses built by the residents. The sewers in Marineira work acceptably well and currently a more solid drainage system for rainwater is being constructed. Since the area's expansion has been based on a pragmatic principle of building wherever vacant lots were available, the network of streets is anything but simple. To get around, one must learn to orient oneself within a maze of narrow alleys, which can be something of a task for an inexperienced anthropologist.

Until 1981 Campina only consisted of *palafitas*. According to people who squatted in the area at the time, the living conditions were difficult. As Jarbas explains: "Why the name 'Campina' [lit. plain, level land or prairie]? Because when the tide rose, we woke up in the houses with our mattresses all wet. In a sense it was all right, because it killed all the bedbugs, but with the water came the rat plague…" Or in Luís's account: "We didn't have running water, so we made *pombo sem asas* [lit. a dove without wings, i.e. they defecated on a piece of paper and threw it away]"[9].

In 1981 the municipality of Recife introduced a Promorar[10] project for Campina. Promorar was launched on a national level in the last phase of the dictatorship (1979-1984), during what is now called *a abertura* [the opening]. Instead of removing the *favelas,* the aim with Promorar was to improve housing conditions (Assies 1991:96). Politically, it was acknowledged that eviction was no longer a useful strategy, especially for a government trying to maintain power in a democratic context (Banck 1986:530).

The Promorar project constructed 957 habitational units, each measuring 42 $m^2$. The Brazilian nation is still the actual owner of the area, but through the municipality the residents lease the land for a period of 50 years. No one pays taxes on real estate, nor do they pay for electricity. Once in a while power is shut down in some of the houses, but it is soon opened again by one of the self-

[9] These descriptions are confirmed by the municipal report made in 1981 describing Promorar (URB 1981). It states that "[t]he area [...] has no adequate water drainage system […] Because of this and the accumulation of garbage in the few existing canals, the inundations are constant. [...] These inundations, in combination with the garbage, make the spread of diseases possible" (op.cit.11, my translation).

[10] *Programa de Erradicação da Sub-Habitação* [Program for the eradication of sub-habitations]

appointed electricians who make a living bypassing the lead seal[11]. The brick buildings of the Promorar in Campina stand grey and raw with unpolished plaster, though almost all house ends are decorated with hand-painted election posters. The individual houses are two-storey 'units' with a 16 $m^2$ living room, a kitchen on the ground floor and one large room on the first floor. Quite a few augmented the family income by selling household staples through the living room window. Most residents do their daily shopping either in Milagres or at a market only five minutes walk away.

Most of my time in Milagres was spent in the streets of Campina talking to people hanging out while they were drinking straight cachaça [sugar cane rum], dancing a few steps of *brega* or playing a game of dominos in the shade. Especially Sundays were excellent for hanging out. Everyone was in the streets relaxing after yet another hard week trying to make ends meet. As Zau, a former school teacher who made his living as a cleaner, told me on a hot Sunday outside DAC, the domino club in Campina: "In the weekend it is all *farra* [carousal]. We need to [drink], considering all the problems we have. We drink to forget our problems". A friend of his joined in: "Monday, it is *só suada* [all sweat]. That's when the problems start". Both men and women would hang out in the streets, but only men would be there alone. Almost all the women I talked to were with their boyfriends or husbands.

Campina faces far more serious problems than Marineira. The sewers constructed during the initial phase of the Promorar project in the early 1980's do not have the capacity to serve the whole area, and people have connected their in-house sewage pipes to the rainwater drainage system which puts the latter under extreme pressure. All the main streets are used as dumps. When entering Campina from Rua José Mariano, the first thing that strikes the eye is a huge rubbish heap lying in the blazing sun. This is not an indication of general indifference. Without a working garbage system, the only alternative for the residents is to throw the rubbish in the street or in the river, which was also a common solution.

[11] This illegal, but effective practice is called *fazendo macaco* [doing like a monkey]

The most serious problem for residents is the lack of legal ownership rights. Many residents I spoke to wanted to own their house in order to avoid paying rent. As José da Silva[12] concluded: ”[When you pay rent], you pay today, and tomorrow your house could be sold”. Because of the constant insecurity surrounding squatting in the past, many residents fear that one day they will be put on the street. José da Silva explained: ”If we don’t have [ownership rights], the municipality can take our houses from us”. This fear was further accentuated by Carlos: ”The municipality does everything with malicious intentions. They want to build a shopping centre here”. Therefore, as Célio told me, it is vital to have a legal document proving your ownership rights, in order to ”negotiate compensation”. For the residents, the title is a guarantee, not against eviction, but against eviction without compensation (Souza 2001a:490, 2001b).

### 2.1.3 The emergence of neighborhood associations in Milagres

Since the 1920s, the prime agents for solving such problems in Recife have been the neighborhood associations (Cezar 1995:1). Currently, there are 107 official neighborhood associations in Recife, with two primary objectives: (1) to make public demands for all sorts of improvements on behalf of the neighborhood; (2) to capture funds, both financial and material, for later distribution in the community (Fontes 1999:198, 200). Put simply, this means taking care of business for the residents. As Carlos said: ”If we didn’t have [the neighborhood associations], the community would be abandoned”. Ideally then, the neighborhood association is an active intermediary between the community and various political agents in the city.

The first organization to emerge in Milagres was “Comissão Central”, founded by Arlando Holanda in 1965. Strictly speaking, Comissão Central was not a neighborhood association since it did not meet the two criteria described above. Instead of capturing funds and making general demands, it served as an initial platform for political discussions. The success of Comissão Central was

[12] I refer to my informants either by first name only or by first and last name. It depends on how their names were used by other people in Recife.

based on the personality of its leader so when Holanda died, his organization died as well. Comissão Central still officially exists with Isabella, Arnaldo's daughter as president and Roberto as vice-president, but in practice it only serves as a disputed icon for the leaders. The first true neighborhood associations would only appear in the last phase of the dictatorship with the most important being Conselho dos Moradores.

### 2.1.4 Conselho dos Moradores

In 1981, *Conselho dos Moradores* was created. This is generally acknowledged to be the most important neighborhood association in Milagres. The primary object of the association is to "unite the forces of all residents and institutions existing in the neighborhood to resolve the problems of the community" (Estatutos do Conselho dos Moradores 1981, article 1º, my translation). This orientation towards practical objectives emerges when talking to neighborhood leaders not involved with Conselho dos Moradores. Edvaldo[13], a Campina leader, claims that the organization works with "all problems that arise", and Roberto maintains that "the people working in Conselho dos Moradores solve the problems with the cesspool, the sewers, the street light ..."

Many leaders told me that the only way to get things done is by having close relations with local politicians and primarily those sitting on the city council. "If you need anything, you go to the politician to see if he can arrange it", Edvaldo candidly told me. In Brazil, this type of patronage is usually called *clientilismo* (Gay 1990), *coronellismo* (Roniger 1987) or *assistencialismo* (Fontes 1999), depending on the locality. My informants described it as *assistencialismo*, which is the term I use here[14]. It denotes the real or promised distribution of resources by political office holders or candidates, in exchange for political support, primarily in the form of votes (Gay 1990:648). From the very beginning,

[13] In order to present the different leaders, I state their political affiliation. When I introduce an informant without stating a political affiliation, it is because he/she is not a leader.

[14] Clientilism in Brazil has been extensively studied (Alvarez 1993, Banck 1986, Gay 1990). For an overview see Hagopian 1996 or Roniger 1987. Studies such as these focus on the relations of power in which the neighborhood leader is enmeshed. I try to expand this scope by specifically focusing on moralities anchoring the performances of the leaders.

the leaders of Conselho dos Moradores were in close contact with the mayor and several town councilors, who came to visit the area. The relationship between the city government and Conselho dos Moradores was strengthened over the years as successive presidents of the association maintained friendly relations with politicians in order to get social conditions in the area improved[15].

### 2.1.5 The background for the conflicts between the leaders

After a local election in Milagres in the beginning of March 2001, Luís drove me home. I had been in Recife roughly a month and Milagres was still relatively unknown territory. Sitting in Luís's taxi, he revealed a crucial aspect of neighborhood leadership to me. In his soft voice, Luís explained: "Milagres is split between Campina and Marineira and people vote in accordance with this". I later found that this view was widely held. Irene maintained that "only rich people live in Marineira. Here [in Campina], it's just swamps. Today the poor live here and the rich live there [in Marineira]". I asked Luís to expand on this on the basis of his experience of living in Campina. "The worst thing is the feeling of inferiority. It was a *pobreça da porra* [fucking poverty]. In Marineira, they've always had a better life". The differences in material and social conditions led to a similar difference in status, as Chíco explains: "People from Marineira never came to Campina. They thought it was all thieves".

The social differences between the residents of Campina and Marineira have existed since the first squatters invaded the vacant land in Campina during the 1960's. Marineira was already a settled area with brick houses, while the settlement in Campina consisted of simple shacks. These material differences have generated a social hierarchization similar to the moral differentiation occurring among peers in a poor area of São Paulo described by Sarti (1995). Because the social and economic distinctions among peers are not clear, differences are continuously expressed in moral categories. The neighborhood studied by Sarti consists of two slightly better-off areas and a squatter settlement.

[15] See Appendix Four for an overview of the different presidents of Conselho dos Moradores.

To the people living in the former areas, the *favela* embodied their basic fears: violence, robbery and drugs (op.cit.122). Likewise, the squatters in Campina have become the negative point of reference against which the residents from Marineira oppose their identity as persons worthy of respect. This hierarchization has led to intense conflicts between the leaders from the two areas. Jarbas, a former president of Conselho dos Moradores, is clear about this: ”Roberto and Luís had a group which was linked to Marineira. It included Esmeralda and Gracinha, and they only *puxaram pro lado de lá* [called attention to that side], forgetting all about this side”.

This conflict was further emphasized after the municipal election in October 2000. During the last phase before an election, all leaders help candidates to secure votes in their area. In Milagres, almost all leaders have for the last 30 years been associated with right-wing politicians. The last mayor, Roberto Magalhães, from the right-wing party PFL, was expected to win by a large margin, but he did not. João Paulo from *Partido dos Trabalhadores* – PT [The Workers' Party], surprisingly won in a tight second round with Magalhães. The leaders who had hoped to benefit from four more years with a right-wing coalition, were severely disappointed. Only Roberto and Luís had supported João Paulo by working for José Carlos, whose party, PCdoB [the Communist Party], formed part of the coalition behind PT. The wounds from the elections had not yet healed when I came to Milagres in March 2001. Teresa, Roberto's protégée, reminded me that ”Chíco, Félix and Noel [three neighborhood leaders from Campina] supported Magalhães, while Roberto and Luís supported José Carlos. This opposition has continued even after the election”. In sum, the election ruptured the traditional right wing consensus causing an increase in the conflicts between the neighborhood leaders.

### 2.1.6 Factors that complicate the position of the leader

Several external factors have influenced the way that neighborhood leadership in Recife is carried out. In this section I briefly outline the main factors, in order to contextualize the following discussion.

With PT in power in October 2000, the leaders were faced with a new situation. At a public meeting, this was made clear by a municipal worker explaining about *Orçamento Participativo* [Participatory Budgeting], the political flagship of PT:

> ”The municipality acknowledges that participation is crucial [...] we seek transparent relations with the neighborhoods [...] the idea is to make 100% of the city’s budget transparent. [...] We want to secure clarity”.

PT was created in 1981. The party had two priorities: First, by stressing *Inverção de prioridades* [inversion of priorities] the party wanted to put an end to the clientilist and authoritarian traditions that benefited elite groups. Secondly, *participação popular* [popular participation] was perceived as a condition for a working democracy (Abers 2000:49). To translate these priorities into action, PT created *Orçamento Participativo*, which attempts to involve all citizens in the planning of the city’s yearly budget. In Recife, the citizens agreed on budget priorities; i.e. sewerage, the educational system, cultural activities, etc. at meetings in all the neighborhoods, Subsequently the priorities with the largest number of votes were incorporated into next year’s general proposal for the city’s budget. At the same meetings, the citizens elected a number of participants to accompany the year-long process of inspecting the implementation of the priorities. For each 10 citizens to appear at the meeting, one participant gets elected; meaning that for a neighborhood or an association seeking influence, it is vital to gather as many people as possible[16].

Some leaders were enthusiastic about *Orçamento Participativo*. But while Roberto embraced the idea of popular participation from the beginning, most of the other leaders were more sceptical. With a political focus on participation and transparency, the position of the leader is obviously altered. The people will ideally be able to seek improvements for their community on their own through direct involvement in the political process. This task had previously been reserved for the neighborhood leaders.

[16] See Appendix Five for further explanation of the process.

The same ambivalence applies to PREZEIS[17]. Initially it was a law created by the Catholic Church and several neighborhood associations which was passed in 1987 but soon afterwards it became a public project. The PREZEIS law has given 66 invaded urban areas status of ZEIS[18], which protects the residents against relocation and prevents land speculation (FASE 1997:5). The law stipulates that urban politics must be planned through *dialogue* with all residents affected by the undertakings (Wampler 2000:8). In order to put the wording of the law into practice, the PREZEIS project was implemented as a collaboration between municipal workers and neighborhood leaders with the assistance of local NGOs acting as advisors for the neighborhoods. Together these groups define how to give workable infrastructure to the ZEIS areas and manage the difficult work of legalizing the individual ownership rights of the residents. The collaborative work takes place in COMULs[19], which are small neighborhood commissions, to which neighborhood leaders get elected for a four-year period. The position as COMUL member is extremely coveted, not least because it carries a wage. Each neighborhood leader is given a *jetom* [payment] of 100 reais per month to participate[20].

### 2.1.7 The leaders

As previously mentioned, there are approximately 20 neighborhood leaders working with political and social issues in Milagres (see Appendix Two). Currently, only Conselho dos Moradores is an official neighborhood association, but in total there are 25 organizations, including sports clubs, carnival groups and the domino league. It is the individual leader, not the association as such, who

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[17] *Plano de Regularização das Zonas Especiais de Interesse Social* [Plan for the Regularization of the Special Zones of Social Interest].
[18] *Zonas Especias de Interesse Social* [Special Zones of Social Interest]. These zones were described legally as consolidated areas of spontaneous settlements where special "urban norms" were to be applied in view of the social interest of promoting their legal regularization and integration into the urban structure (Alfonsin 1997:166-167).
[19] *Comissão de Legalização e Urbanização* [Commission of Legalization and Urbanization].
[20] The Brazilian minimum wage is 180 reais, which is the average pay for the odd-jobs sought by many residents in Milagres. The *jetom* can therefore be an important contribution to household income.

decides whether or not to work with community issues. Thus, one of the prominent leaders is Luciano, who is the president of DAC, the domino league in Campina.

My key informants were the ”Marineira leaders”, Roberto, Luís, and Roberto’s ”protégée” Teresa. They were all perceived as belonging to Marineira even though only Roberto actually lived there. 44 year-old Roberto was the nucleus of the small group. I first met him at a COMUL meeting in Milagres, and did not understand a word of what he said, but I admired his elegant looks. At most of the meetings in Milagres, the leaders came in shorts and a T-shirt, but Roberto showed up in freshly ironed black trousers and a matching shirt. During the carnival, he invited my wife and me to *brincar* [lit. ‘to play’, but here ’to party’] with his family, and so I got to know Genilda, his wife of more than 20 years, and his three children. I soon discovered that Roberto was a heavy drinker, which came as something of a surprise to me. Being unfamiliar with life in Milagres and quite taken by his elegant looks, I mistakenly assumed that Roberto was as disciplined and controlled in his private life as during political meetings. Later, I would often arrive in the morning at their small house in Marineira, to find him totally washed out after a long night[21]. My initial impression was challenged again, when I discovered that he had a 12-year-old daughter *pra fora* [outside], with another woman. Every month, Roberto gave 40 reais to the girl’s mother as maintenance. Roberto also took care of Genilda’s mother and his brother, and he was thus the sole breadwinner for eight people. In order to fulfill these obligations, he worked part-time as an accountant for a local company. After the municipal election, Roberto also worked as an *assessor parlamentar* [parliamentary advisor] for José Carlos, earning 600 reais a month. In the next section I will describe this function in detail; here it is enough to say that it primarily entails reporting to the politician about the problems of the community, thus bringing *favela* issues into the political arena.

Until 1996, Roberto had only been involved in communitarian work through the local football club. His father had previously been in charge of the

[21] Once, I actually got there before Roberto, much to his amusement. He ignored Genilda’s obvious embarrassment.

local elections, and that year Roberto was invited to follow a similar career. It was an election for COMUL, but instead of being in charge of the practicalities, Roberto won the election, much to the surprise of the other candidates. When talking politics with Roberto, he always referred to that election as the turning point of his life, which 'opened his eyes'. Today, Roberto is vice-president of Comissão Central, newly elected president of Conselho dos Moradores and coordinator for PREZEIS.

41 year-old Luís had green eyes which sparkled with amusement and did nothing to weaken his reputation as a womanizer. When asked if all his six children were *na casa* [meaning with the same woman], Graciela, a NGO-worker interrupted: "Look at that face! Do you actually think that a guy with a face like that has six kids *na casa*?" And she was right. Luís has six children with three women, to whom he must pay 120 reais per month as maintenance. When I was in Milagres, Luís dated 21 year old Carla, which did not stop him from frequently seeing at least two of his former girlfriends. Luís worked every day of the week in his beat-up taxi, preferably outside the Tacaruna Shopping Centre. I would find him there, sitting in the back of the car with the door open and a *brega* songbook stuck in the window, rehearsing the songs I had heard him sing many times before. The line of taxis in front of him was interminable, but he did not mind waiting for his turn, which with some luck would earn him 10 reais. At night, he often picked up passengers from a strip bar in the centre.

Luís's life has in almost every way been the opposite of Roberto's. While the latter enjoyed a relatively safe childhood with a father on steady income, Luís had to beg in the nearby neighborhoods, given the 'irresponsibility' of his father, meaning that his father due to alcoholism did not provide for his family. All through his childhood, he found ways of surviving, carrying heavy water barrels to people's houses from the well in Campina or collecting and selling usable things found in the garbage. The longest lasting paid job Luís ever had, was as a driver for a local bank. He held that job for 14 years until 1991 when he was fired and started as a taxi driver. Luís' home was a small room in Campina on top of a garage, but he was almost never there, but *na rua* [on the street], either in the taxi, at a meeting – or with a girlfriend.

Luís started doing communitarian work inspired by Borracha, the first president at Conselho dos Moradores. Unlike Roberto, who started when he suddenly got elected for COMUL, Luís' involvement was gradual, peaking with two periods as president in Conselho dos Moradores. Currently, he is a member of COMUL and the committee at Conselho dos Moradores.

Despite their apparent differences, Roberto and Luís have been working closely together for roughly four years. Initially they were opponents but according to Roberto, Luís changed his mind: "In the beginning, Luís didn't have a clear sight of things. He thought that the municipality was right [...] so I said to him: 'Look, your position gives people the impression that you defend the municipality'. 'No, I don't…'; 'All right then, the process is like this…'. So he reached the same understanding that I have". It is Roberto, who defines the general objectives, while Luís secures the *respaldo* [backing] in the community. Luís explained that "[Roberto's] knowledge is more general, while mine is about the community. [...] The community level I understand, but not contracts and all that. I prefer to *brincar* [to party]".

Bosomy, loud, 30 year old Teresa was the novice among the leaders. As a single mother of two small children, she has not had time to become involved in communitarian issues until April 2001, when she started as a voluntary accountant at Centro Social. Being extremely dissatisfied with the way things were managed there, she started discussing things with Roberto at Paulinho's, the main bar in Marineira. According to Teresa, Roberto opened her eyes by saying "things that no one had said before". Roberto is equally enthusiastic about Teresa, "her willingness to learn" and her "open mind". Unlike Luís, Teresa did not hesitate to argue violently with Roberto. More than once, she has declared their collaboration over because of yet another big discussion.

Sarti claims that the hierarchical structure of the Brazilian family is based on the principle that the subordinate receives protection (1995:125). Being the family's breadwinner, the man has the highest authority. He mediates between the family and the public sphere by providing food and housing (op.cit.124). Male authority is therefore primarily based on a social representation of the man as "the head of the family" (ibid). Neighborhood leadership incarnates the quali-

ties of these male virtues. The leader acts as the 'breadwinner' positioned between the community (family) and the public sphere; always *na rua* [on the streets] taking care of business. Nearly all neighborhood leaders in Milagres are men. I only know of three women who have acted as political leaders in the past, and currently only Teresa holds that position. In Milagres, women risk losing status if they display what is perceived as male virtues. It is accepted and even expected that men have several mistresses. This is not the case for women, who are expected to remain faithful irrespective of the man's infidelity. Chíco, a Campina leader, told me that "the man is like a dog. Any man has the right to ten women. The woman only has the right to one man and the *fogão* [stove]".

As an ex-prostitute, Teresa's social position in Milagres was already ambiguous before she started as a neighborhood leader. Prostitutes are marginalized in the community because they do not comply with the public expectations to female conduct. The prostitutes are their own breadwinners and have changing sexual partners and these aspects are generally perceived as male virtues. I think that because of Teresa's ambiguous social position, it was in fact easier for her to become a political neighborhood leader than for other women. She already exhibited several 'male virtues', making her stand aside from other women. During meetings and discussions, she often displayed a 'male' authority by arguing in a loud voice, not accepting the inferior position usually assigned to women. The male leaders were often taken by her aggressive attitude but Luís was sceptical: "Teresa is very explosive. You can't be a leader like that. Even when there are problems, you have to remain calm". Initially Teresa was a threat to Luís who felt that she was trying to break up the collaboration between Roberto and him. Later, though, Luís appeared to accept her position as an equal.

### 2.1.8 The NGOs

Since the fall of the dictatorship several local NGOs have worked with *favela*-related issues in Recife. Currently, five NGOs act as advisors for neighborhood leaders in PREZEIS. The NGO workers are usually trained either as social

workers or lawyers. The organizations in Recife only work locally with narrowly defined issues. Their funding is obtained either through international organizations or through financial agreements with the municipality. The NGO *Cendhec* works with legal matters regarding PREZEIS. The municipality is unequipped to do this legal work alone so it pays Cendhec 7,168 reais per month to assist with the task (URB 2000). This collaboration causes many neighborhood leaders involved in PREZEIS to argue that Cendhec's position as neutral advisor is compromised.

In sum, I have shown in this section how neighborhood leadership arose in Milagres in the last phase of the dictatorship. While Comissão Central was important in the initial phase, it was Conselho dos Moradores which subsequently became the main neighborhood association. I have described how the differences in social conditions between Campina and Marineira have led to a social hierarchization between the areas. This has created conflicts among the neighborhood leaders. These conflicts worsened after the municipal election which led to the takeover by PT of the city government. Only the Marineira leaders, Roberto and Luís, supported PT while the Campina leaders, who supported right-wing politicians, were badly disappointed.

## 2.2 Methods

### 2.2.1 An overview of the fieldwork activities

My wife and I arrived in Recife at the end of January 2001. In February and March I worked with the NGO Cendhec. In the initial phase I thought that I would continue to work at Cendhec, and so did the workers there. Consequently, they started treating me as a volunteer, and invited me to confidential meetings. This produced invaluable information about the ways in which NGOs perceive and act towards neighborhood leaders. Through the workers at Cendhec I met Roberto, who introduced me to the residents of Milagres and made it possible for me to do fieldwork in the community on a daily basis. In April 2001 I made a small and very non-scientific survey among the resident of three subareas in Milagres in order to make myself known in the area. Later, I would just show up and talk to the people hanging out in the streets or else I would go directly to the homes of the neighborhood leaders to make interviews[22].

All through my fieldwork I studied PREZEIS through participant observation at meetings. The neighborhood leaders from the ZEIS areas have monthly meetings where municipal and NGO workers are not allowed to participate. In the beginning I was not invited either. This changed after a trip to Brasilia with all the neighborhood leaders in May 2001. The reason for the journey was a demonstration against the possible privatization of water rights, but I went along in order to get to know the leaders better. This turned out to be a success. Afterwards, I was constantly referred to by the neighborhood leaders as part of *segmento popular* [the group of neighborhood leaders participating in PREZEIS]. Subsequently it was possible for me to attend all meeting reserved for *segmento popular*. This gave me new insights into the workings of neighborhood leadership which were often at odds with my findings from Cendhec.

[22] I made 41 interviews which were all recorded on mini-disc. The duration of each interview was approximately 90 minutes. I made several interviews with Roberto, Luís and Teresa. I recorded ten meetings at PREZEIS and a whole two-day seminar about the reformulation of the PREZEIS law. I did participant observation at approximately three meetings a week in PREZEIS and in Milagres. I furthermore made a small survey with 15 residents in Milagres. I was in Milagres on a daily basis talking to residents and neighborhood leaders from Campina and Marineira. I later transcribed these small conversations according to memory.

### 2.2.2 When alcohol becomes a methodical problem

During the first month in Recife, my wife and I were invited to a party held by a local anthropologist. One of the guests told me that “Brazil is an alcoholic country. People drink to forget the misery they’re in”. I was still unfamiliar with the local setting, and did not pay much attention to his statement. Later, though, I would often recall it. Before embarking on the fieldwork, I had read extensively about the Brazilian context, but this had not prepared me for the extensive drinking in the poor urban areas. Much of my time was spent on the streets in Campina talking to people. This involved the consumption of large quantities of alcohol, primarily beer and *cachaça* [sugar cane rum]. Likewise, after all meetings in Milagres or elsewhere in Recife, we went to have a drink, and it was always assumed that I would drink as well. This turned out to be a problem. Not that I refused to drink, but after a couple of beers, it became increasingly hard to remember the contents of the conversations. The problem was worsened by the fact that the conversations at bars often yielded extremely important information. I tried several strategies to avoid drinking. I said no when offered a drink, but this was always rejected as a silly whim. Other times I filled my glass and let it stand on the table. But in Milagres, you never buy one beer per person; you buy a large bottle to share. So when people discovered that my beer was lukewarm (i.e. non-drinkable) they threw it out and poured me another glass.

I never solved this problem of drinking and it remained an obstacle to my daily work. Towards the end of my fieldwork I was so tired of trying to avoid drinking that I several times declined an offer to go to a bar with some of the neighborhood leaders. Jokingly, I was referred to as *muito mole* [very weak], but a serious consequence of my refusal to drink was that I felt a slight increase in the distance between my informants and me.

### 2.2.3 Trench warfare

The major methodical and ethical problem of my fieldwork was my position in regards to the different groups I was studying. The relations between these groups were marked by mistrust, mutual accusations and attempts at undermin-

ing the opposition's legitimacy. I started working at Cendhec, and later focused on neighborhood leadership in Milagres. The relationship between NGOs and neighborhood leaders was an unstable amalgam of mutual dependencies and antagonism. Without the neighborhood leaders, it would have been impossible for the NGOs to make projects in the *favelas*. The leaders therefore said that the NGOs took advantage of them by applying for international funds without giving them proper credit in the form of financial support. The NGOs, in turn, accuse the neighborhood leaders of participating in PREZEIS only to get the *jetom* [payment], to acquire important positions, and to establish *assistencialismo* relations with local politicians. Sergio, a lawyer at Cendhec, noted that "PREZEIS has created a small elite of neighborhood leaders who use PREZEIS. These people support [local right-wing] politicians". So when I left Cendhec to focus on Milagres, my position became problematic. The workers at Cendhec stopped inviting me to closed meetings and when I overheard conversations among them about neighborhood leaders' alleged wrongdoings, they always reminded me not to communicate any of this to the leaders, despite my previous assurances of total confidentiality.

In Milagres, the relationships between groups were even more problematic. Starting with Luís's disclosure of the conflicts between Marineira and Campina (see section 2.1.5), the antagonistic relations between the leaders became a primary issue in my work. This turned into a methodical problem as well. I entered the community through Roberto and therefore the Marineira leaders became my key informants. Still, it was important to hang out with and interview Campina leaders in order to get a broader perspective on the agonistic field. Paradoxically, even though the Campina leaders knew of my friendship with the Marineira leaders, they never stopped criticizing or plotting against them - even in my presence. I always assured them of my neutral stance, and I felt that this was respected. This was made clear during the secret meeting described in Part Five. I had never imagined that I would be invited to the meeting and when I was sitting there, I was too nervous to attempt to take notes. This was solved when they needed someone to keep the minutes. Edvaldo argued that I was always busy taking notes any way, so I would be excellent for the job.

Later, Chíco wanted to be sure of my neutrality. He said that ”someone told me to be aware of the Dane because he's connected to Roberto and Luís, but I told him that he's making a survey and he won't be able to proceed with that if he reveals anything to them”[23]. Gradually, as my friendship with the Marineira leaders grew stronger, my 'neutrality' became hard to maintain. During an interview with Severino, a former president of Conselho dos Moradores, he voiced his suspicion towards me: ”No one's neutral, Martins [the Brazilian translation of Morten], not even you. *Sempre fecha com alguem* [you're always connected to somebody]. You're not just a student. I think that you have relations to Cendhec or another NGO or something like that”. Towards the end of my fieldwork, I chose to be specific about my position, and made it clear I 'was with' the Marineira leaders. This made it easier to hang out with the Marineira leaders at a point where I felt that I had all the data I wanted from the Campina leaders.

Among the neighborhood leaders in Milagres, I often felt that my status vacillated between that of a friend, a source of 'symbolic capital'[24], as object of criticism and a potential weapon in their mutual conflicts. When all the neighborhood leaders went to Brasilia, Teresa also wanted to come. Since she was not officially participating in PREZEIS, this was impossible. However, somehow Roberto arranged for her participation as well. This was something the other neighborhood leaders in Milagres were not supposed to know, since it would undoubtedly lead to future criticism. Therefore Roberto told them – without my knowledge – that it was I who had paid for Teresa. When the Campina leaders later confronted me with this fact, I had to go along with Roberto's story. Likewise, towards the end of our stay in Recife, my wife and I wanted to donate all our furniture to people in the *favelas* where we had been working. Chíco knew about this and told a woman living in a barrack I had visited that I would donate our bed to her. Unfortunately, I had never promised her the bed, and it

[23] This further shows that the neighborhood leaders were aware of the methodical 'rules of the game': If I compromised my neutrality, my work would be severely damaged.

[24] I define symbolic capital as the form of appearance of the three basic types of capital, economic, cultural and social, when filtered through a perceptional matrix (Bourdieu 2001:104). In this context, the symbolic appearance of social capital is ”the sum of existing or potential resources, which is available for the individual or the group in a network of stabile relations” (op.cit.105).

had, in fact, already been given to another person. I was left in difficult position. Chíco included me in a temporary *assistencialismo* relationship which I would not engage in. I felt that if I played the role of a patron, any hope of remaining neutral would be lost forever. When he realized this, Chíco became extremely upset and criticized me to other neighborhood leaders in Milagres.

Johannes Fabian states that ”the problem posed by secrecy is (at least) twofold: One is how to get the information that is secret; the other is what to do with it” (1996:249). Both sides of this dilemma were always present in my mind during my fieldwork. The relationship between the municipal workers and the neighborhood leaders was problematic. The municipal workers believed that the neighborhood leaders used PREZEIS for personal objectives while the leaders accused the municipality of neglecting to solve the *favela* problem in a constructive way. When I started doing interviews at the municipality, the workers already knew of my involvement in Milagres, so they did not allow any taped recordings of our conversations. I did not respect this demand. At the first interview, I sensed that the information was so valuable that I decided to record the rest of the interviews in secret. My understanding of Portuguese was fairly good even in the beginning, but I was convinced that I would miss important data if I had to rely on written notes. Consequently I put a tape recorder inside my trousers and secured the microphone to my stomach. It was never discovered, but the interviews were nerve-wracking experiences. Likewise, I never hesitated to write fieldnotes in toilets. I quickly sensed that my notebook attracted attention – especially in bars. The consequence was toilet scribbling. I tried to be specific about my objectives, but of course, as time passed things got muddled. It became impossible to distinguish friends from informants and still I continued to do toilet scribbling, never forgetting the instrumental aspect of my relations with the people in Recife.

Following Fabian, I hold that secrecy, far from being non-communication, is a cultural practice of communication (1996:249). Much of my data from Milagres is problematic because of the secrecy surrounding its production. When the groups plotted against each other I was present and promised not to reveal anything to the opponent. However, the neighborhood leaders were all aware

that I would use the gathered material for my thesis. I have decided to analyze even the secret meeting described in Part Five based on this knowledge.

The ethical correctness of my methodical decisions can be discussed. Perhaps I was too cynical. Perhaps I should have accepted my informants' wishes and perhaps it would have been more correct of me not to do any toilet scribbling, but I did. While I was doing my fieldwork I sensed that I was experiencing something unique. I therefore made the methodical decisions I did in order to get the valuable data. When I decided to be specific about my position it was based on a feeling that if I continued to have a foot in both camps, I would eventually end up being denied access to crucial information altogether. So even though I perhaps made methodical decisions which can be discussed, I am convinced that the data I have makes possible a broader and more "thick" description of the setting I studied. In other words, if I had not made the methodical decisions I did, the conclusions of my thesis would have been based on a much weaker empirical data.

### 2.2.4 Relevance of my study

In recent years, the increased focus on *participation* in Brazil has generated a large body of work, especially because of PT's radical participatory politics (Abers 2000, Gadotti & Perreira 1989, Jacobi 1999, Keck 1992). These studies focus on the process of implementing participatory politics, whereas the problems inherent in the ideology of participation are rarely discussed. Furthermore, neighborhood leadership is generally defined only in terms of *assistencialismo* leaving aside the performative complexities. I feel that the understanding of neighborhood leadership can be augmented by taking underlying moralities as a point of departure. My thesis treats the almost imperceptible but real changes in the normative understandings, which have a decisive influence on the practices of neighborhood leaders. Through my personal interactions with the neighborhood leaders in Milagres I became aware of the frustration, disillusionment and conflicts that participation engendered. These findings could be useful to future planning of participatory projects by showing that the implementation of the ideology of participation in poor urban areas is highly problematic. Participa-

tory projects affect not only local political structures but they also alter underlying, broader moral understandings.

# Part Three

## 3.1 Interpretations of the communitarian ethic

### 3.1.1 The communitarian ethic

Roberto stood up from his plate with greasy chicken, rice and *farinha* [flour]. We had been sitting in Teresa's house for some time discussing the late Borracha, who had been the first president of Conselho dos Moradores. Suddenly Roberto felt the need to impersonate him: "We would be sitting at a bar drinking. A moment later Borracha would get up and walk to and fro, saying: 'Roberto, write this down'". Roberto walked back and forth between the kitchen and the living room while imitating the gestures of Borracha. "And I wrote it all down", Roberto said as he once again seated himself at the table. "Borracha never studied, so he was illiterate, but still he was super-intelligent. [...] We drank a lot together".

The neighborhood associations derive their strength from the individual leader, i.e. a strong and charismatic leader in the Weberian sense is the basis of a potent neighborhood association. According to Weber, a charismatic leader is a person "treated as endowed with [...] exceptional powers or qualities [...] regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a leader" (Weber 1947:358-359). Borracha was that kind of a leader. Born a *Bahiano* [a person from the state of Bahia], he came to Milagres in 1964, where he quickly rose to fame because of his ability to get things done. As an electrician, he installed electricity in the *palafitas* in Campina and managed to get the municipality to put up public telephones several places in that area. Borracha became friends with Gustavo Krause, the mayor in Recife from 1979 to 1982, who sought the backing of neighborhood leaders, and later Borracha would do promotion for Krause at every election. In return, it became much easier to negotiate with the municipality, now personified by Krause.

Borracha set a precedent for future neighborhood leaders and in many ways still represents 'the ideal leader' in Milagres. Roberto explains: "Borracha

was right wing, but he *trazia coisas pra a comunidade* [brought stuff to the community]. [...] His candidate was Gustavo Krause, whose party, PFL, did all the work in the community. So I didn't vote for ideological reasons, but because of what was being done [...] With Borracha, it was always a joint effort". Through Borracha, the other leaders learned this *jeito* [manner of doing things]. Luís admits that "in the beginning I didn't understand anything. Borracha talked, while I observed". Edvaldo concurs: "Borracha lived for a while in my mother's house. So we listened and listened and there we started to *pegar gosto de política* [acquire a taste for politics]".

Borracha personifies a moral ideal stating the precedence of the community over the individual. What determines whether or not a person performs morally acceptable leadership is the extent to which he can *trazer melhoria pra a comunidade* [bring betterments to the community], with the corollary that the *means* by which this is done are secondary. Jarbas was clear on this:

> "Jarbas: My ideology was to *trazer melhor pra a comunidade* independent of party politics. It doesn't matter who's governing, whether it's the Left or the Right. What matters is that they bring some stuff to the community. The one who brings is my politician. If he needs me, I'll be at his side to help. I always worked like that.
> Me: So let's imagine that João Paulo [the PT-mayor] tomorrow says to you…
> Jarbas: (interrupts) …then he can be my candidate.
> Me: If he…
> Jarbas: (interrupts) …gives that help to the community of Milagres, then I'll be at his side".

According to this moral understanding, the neighborhood leader's objectives are equivalent to those of the community. Consequently, the leader who is assumed only to seek personal profit loses legitimacy in the eyes of the other leaders and residents in Milagres. Describing an instance when a former president of Conselho dos Moradores alleged that it was he who had managed to get a street asphalted, Isabella, the president of Comissão Central, noted with overt irritation that "he has no objectives, no *consciência* [moral sense]". The leaders were well aware of the possibility of losing legitimacy, which is why they constantly stressed their *communitarian ethic*. Chíco, a Campina leader, solemnly described his vision of future associativism: "Let's forget about the "*eu que fiz*" [I who did it] so the associations can stand united". However, according to other leaders, Chíco incarnated the individual approach. "We'll never change the heads of that group *de lá* [from over there] - Chíco, Noel, Edvaldo and Félix -

because they only think in terms of ”*eu*” [”I”], Roberto resignedly concluded after discussing the conflict between the leaders from Marineira and Campina. According to Roberto, this conflict is generated because of the Campina leaders' continuous involvement in *assistencialismo* practices with local right-wing politicians. Roberto made this clear to me: “The Right was never in tune with the population's wishes. It [the Right] only took small measures, palliatives, but never measures aimed at changing the quality of life. […] I never sold myself. I always worked for José Carlos because I believe in what he does – not for me – but for the community”. It is *assistencialismo* which creates the tensions among the leaders. All neighborhood leaders agree that the *communitarian ethic* is the ideal, but it is the diverging attitudes towards the primary *means* [i.e. *assistencialismo*] by which this norm is realized that generates conflicts.

### 3.1.2 Doing ”assistencialismo”

In order to grasp the logic of *assistencialismo,* it is necessary to focus on the politicians' room for manoeuvring. It is the mayor's office, which defines most public policies, thus leaving the city council's members with few formal powers (Wampler 2000:9). As a consequence, they devise other strategies to provide concrete results for their constituents. A part of the city councilor's annual budget has until recently been given without later settlement[25]. These funds are spent on ”small goods” for the population that will be remembered at election time (op.cit.11). Considering this process somewhat cynically, one can agree with Valeria, the coordinator at Cendhec, when she said that ”an election here is expensive because you buy your votes”.

The neighborhood leaders are crucial for the distribution of the ”small goods”, inasmuch as they “know the needs of the community” (Fontes 1995:129), and are directly linked to the local politicians. A relationship between a neighborhood leader and a politician at the city council imposes obligations on

[25] Until PT took over power in November 2000, the individual city councilor's office had a discretionary fund. The actual amount of this was a 'black-box' (Wampler 2000:18). Currently, city councilors have to account for all expenses.

both parties. The city councilor has to supply the community with various small goods, the most important being the *cesta básica* [a basket of foodstuffs], which is intended for the alleviation of pressing needs. On his part, the neighborhood leader has to promote the politician in the community, primarily during election periods[26]. However, elections only take place every fourth year. The leader attempts to preserve the importance of the politician's name in the interim, as Félix, the president of Centro Social, told me: "You have to keep mentioning the politician. It's like a plant you have to water". Cosmo, a PREZEIS participant from another *favela* in Recife, revealed some of the subtleties involved in this: "If a project is supported both by PREZEIS and a city councilor, then we can spread the word that it was the city councilor who supported it". And these strategies bear fruit. Robert Gay did a study of clientilist politics in a *favela* in Rio de Janeiro (1990). Of all the people in that area voting for the same candidate, 52% said that they gave him their vote because of the neighborhood leader's recommendations (op.cit.662). Interviewing the residents of Milagres, I got the same impression. Old, cheerful Denise told me that "earlier I voted for 25[27]. Now I vote for 3. They [the neighborhood leaders] said, 'Don't vote for him. Vote for the other one'".

### 3.1.3 "Assistencialismo" carrying a wage

While overt *assistencialismo* usually involves no direct financial arrangements between the neighborhood leader and the politician, a new kind of relationship has emerged within the last decade which carries a regular wage. I became aware of this, when Roberto took me and my wife to Olinda in his old beat-up Citroën. Noticing a streamer with José Carlos' name in the rear window, I asked Roberto if they were friends. "He's a *vereador* and an old friend. I'm his *assessor parlamentar* [parliamentary advisor] [...]. Each month he pays me 600 reais to do this job". Since I had initially thought that *assistencialismo* was the only

[26] Local politicians in Brazil enjoy less access to the media than candidates running for national seats, such as senator and governor (Gay 1990:664). For the former, the cultivation of *assistencialismo* is therefore an effective way of becoming known among the urban poor.
[27] Each politician has a number on the ballot paper. 25 is the number of the previous mayor, Roberto Magalhães; 3 is João Paulo's number.

way for a leader to be connected to a politician, I became curious and investigated this further. I found that several leaders held positions as *assessor parlamentar*, but it was more difficult to figure out exactly what this job entailed. Basically, the *assessor parlamentar* acts as an investigator for the politician. He tries to get an overall view of the situation in his area; i.e. what the pressing problems are, and subsequently reports back to the politician, who can raise these issues in the city council. No doubt, the leader has access to a well of information that the city councilor needs in the pursuit of political objectives. The significance of this was described to me by Cosmo, a neighborhood leader from another area than Milagres, who previously was *assessor parlamentar*: ”In six months, I presented approximately 200 of the area’s problems, so he [the city councilor] said: ’This guy here is a community man. This is what we need’”.

As previously mentioned, the ideal for neighborhood leaders is the *communitarian ethic*, which also became clear when discussing the job of the *assessor parlamentar*.

> “Me: So how did this relationship with José Carlos start?
> Roberto: It… no, I always had this relationship with José Carlos
> Me: When did you start then as assessor?
> Roberto: Now, this year. [...] I always supported José Carlos for what he did in the community. [...] Besides, even though I’m not affiliated with PCdoB [the Communist Party], everyone who knows me identifies me with them. [...] I was always thinking of the collective, not about myself. [...] So it is because of this that I support José Carlos”.

Unlike the clientilist practices which Jarbas earlier defined as *ideally* being purely altruistic, the office of *assessor parlamentar* is based on an individual agreement, carrying a paid salary and therefore implies personal gains. The rationality of the *assessor parlamentar’s* position therefore risks running counter to the communitarian ideal which stresses the altruistic work for the community. No wonder that Roberto avoids mentioning the instrumental aspect of the relationship; i.e. that he also has to secure votes for José Carlos during election time. Just before the last election, Roberto was hired to secure José Carlos’s seat in the city council, which he did. Chíco works as *assessor parlamentar* for André Campus, a right-wing politician. Contrary to Roberto, he admitted to his gain from the agreement, but noted that ”I work one day for him [i.e. election day], but all year for the community”.

In sum, both *assistencialismo* and *assessor parlamentar* handle the canalization of goods to the communities[28]. In this process, the leader can 'instrumentalize' the needs of the community (Fontes 1990:129), meaning that the prudent[29] leader, like Cosmo, can use the community's needs as a tool to boost his own position. We are thus faced with an apparent paradox: The individual leader is expected to act in accordance with the *communitarian ethic*, but he often tries to improve his social and economic situation through relationships of *assistencialismo*. It is clear that we are dealing with two contrasting, but simultaneous moral configurations: A *communitarian ethic* and a personalistic morality. Below, I examine this opposition.

### 3.1.4 When personalism threatens the community spirit

DaMatta examines the Brazilian "moral ethos" through a symbolic differentiation between two complementary and co-existing moral domains: The *House* and the *Street* (1995:273-274). The *House* is an intimate sphere where the person's room for manoeuvring is determined by the personal social networks in which he is embedded (1984:209). One is a *person* in the *House*, a "somebody" at home, where one is "embedded in ongoing and inalienable relationships, rights, and duties based on birth and family, as these are mediated by the 'natural' hierarchies of age and gender" (Scheper-Hughes 1992:86). In contrast, one is an *individual*, but actually an "anybody" in the *Street* which is governed by impersonal factors, such as the legal system (DaMatta 1984:211). The *individuals* who are dependent on the legal system lack the safety given by personal relations. The rule of the *Street* is to take advantage of others so it is always a clear advantage to "personalize" the law. This can be done through a mediator or a patron who knows how to get through or circumvent the bureaucracies of the government, the police station or the legal system. Without the patron or the

[28] It is possible that we are witnessing the beginning formalization of *assistencialismo* through the office of *assessor parlamentar*. However, it is still too early to conclude anything definite about this. The contrary development is equally possible, i.e. that *assessor parlamentar* will gradually be perceived as a sub-strategy of *assistencialismo.*

[29] In this thesis I define *prudence* as the practical virtue of choosing between different moral resources *in situ*. In the absence of objective guidelines for action, the agent makes his value judgments based on his interpretation of the context.

mediator, the *person* would turn into an *individual*, an anonymous being subject to the universal laws governing the *Street* (op.cit.191).

Relating this to Milagres, I will argue that the *communitarian ethic* resembles the morality of the *Street* by stressing the equal rights of all members of the particular and restricted community. *Assistencialismo* invalidates this moral credo by transforming *individuals* into *persons*[30]. The *communitarian ethic* in Milagres is a double-edged sword. When the community struggles for new sewer pipes for Campina through COMUL, the *communitarian ethic* is promoted, but it is invalidated when the neighborhood leaders use the same forum to secure material improvements for their family and close friends. Hence, there are always 'zones of passage' between the two moral domains (DaMatta 1991:189), making it difficult to determine which moral resources will be applied by the agent in a given situation.

Everything in Milagres gets done through *amizade*[31] [friendship]. Noel, a Campina leader, became "friends" with the people at the municipality when he was president at Centro Social. When this association needed new materials, such as filters or textbooks for the school, Noel activated his relations with the municipal workers. According to Noel, it is through personal connections that a neighborhood leader can *pegar influência* [get influence]. There exist between the neighborhood leader and the residents similar ties of friendship. José Carlos would ask Luís to find suitable workers for short-term jobs in public projects, and Luís always went to people with whom he was close. When I asked him how these people got recruited, he replied: "We call our friends and neighbors".

DaMatta holds that *persons* who belong to different social strata interact through *crosscutting ties* to create temporary relationships (DaMatta 1991:146). Luciano explained how this helps to prevent direct conflicts between the persons: "When you are dependent on a local politician, confrontations become problematic". Osman Perreira, a former NGO-activist, went even further: "This

[30] Along similar lines, Scheper-Hughes describes a "double ethic, one egalitarian and collectivist, the other hierarchical and dyadic" at play in a small village in the Northeast of Brazil (1992:98).

[31] In this context, *friendship* connotes an instrumental personal relationship established between two persons who both seek to benefit from the interaction. The term stresses the personalization or "domestication" (Scheper-Hughes 1992:86) of bureaucratic hierarchies.

*troca de favores* [exchange of favors] keeps the population on a leash". Brazil is a country marked by severe social differences. The average income of the richest 10% is nearly 30 times greater than that of the average income of the poorest 40% (Human Development Report 1996). According to DaMatta, these social differences are prevented from escalating into conflicts through *crosscutting ties* (DaMatta 1991:146). Social relations may begin by being marked by economic considerations, but they soon take on a personal quality. Hence, public services and general improvement of social conditions are generally perceived as donations from *o senhor* [the master]. "You have to have a politician helping [the community]. Here it is regrettably like that", as Edvaldo succinctly summed it up.

On the background of the examination of these *crosscutting ties*, we are in a position to redefine the 'charismatic' aspect of the leader. Pierre Bourdieu defines 'symbolic violence' as the transformation of relations of suppression and dominance into emotional ties (1997a:187-188). In Brazil, this type of symbolic dominance is maintained by a small elite, ruling over "a silent majority" through practices of *assistencialismo* (Fontes 1995:123). As DaMatta puts it: "The Brazilian world is made up of a number of persons located in a rigid hierarchy ruling the life and destiny of a multitude of individuals" (1991:182). In Milagres, charisma is an emotional value attached to the neighborhood leader, to whom the resident feels indebted because of the leader's generosity.

Robert Gay argues that in a context with few economic resources and lacking the political power necessary to obtain them, *assistencialismo* continues to offer the urban poor a rare opportunity for material gain (1990:664). One could add that it is an opportunity for both common and individual gain. All leaders were aware that the *communitarian ethic* could be rejected in practice, which is why the suspicion was prevalent among the neighborhood leaders in Milagres that *tudo mundo rouba* [everybody robs]. This general distrustfulness was supported by the lack of information about other leaders' doings. Given the personal face-to-face character of the *assistencialismo* relations, it was impossible for other leaders and residents in Milagres to know what was going on. Instead, people based their understandings of the neighborhood leaders in ru-

mors and allegations. I heard incessant theories about other leaders' alleged wrongdoings. I met Chíco outside Comissão Central, and we started discussing that association.

> ”Morten: How come the Comissão Central isn't working anymore?
> Chíco: They [Isabella, the president and Roberto, the vice-president] don't have any interest in it. But they get paid for the two billboards standing on their ground. There are companies putting up ads and they pay at least 800 reais each.
> Me: Who gets that money?
> Chíco: *They* do [Isabella and Roberto]”.

In the last section, I outlined the main reasons for the struggles between the leaders: the social differences between Campina and Marineira and the last municipal election. These reasons can now be expanded on. *Assistencialismo* offers opportunities for the community's material improvement, but also for the leader's personal gain. Among the neighborhood leaders there is constant competition for resources, both for the community's best, but also to secure a clientele which subsequently becomes a bargaining counter during negotiations with a donor (Fontes 1999:216). Through these relationships, the position of the neighborhood leader is strengthened both financially and socially. No one admits this in public, but everybody suspects it, insinuating and making covert accusations. ”Everything is done *por trás* [in secret]”, Teresa told me conspiratorially. The individual leader always stresses the *communitarian ethic*, and implicitly accentuates his moral purity by accusing other leaders of breaking the norm, as Noel, a Campina leader, made clear: “Everything they [the Marineira leaders] do is political. They say that it is José Carlos who solves everything. We [the Campina leaders] don't accept this. We also have our politicians, but we don't use their names[32]. Everything we do is for the community. Politics doesn't solve anything and still they [the Marineira leaders] make political propaganda”.

### 3.1.5 The active leader

The neighborhood leader functions as a *gatekeeper* between the residents and the politician. In terms of working politically to improve the conditions in the community, both neighborhood leaders and residents agree that the former

[32] To 'use a politician's name' signifies making propaganda in the area for the politician.

constitute the *active* part in the dyad. An investigation carried out by Fontes (1999) among *favela* residents in Recife supports this assumption. 55% of his respondents asserted that they saw the leaders' principal mission as solving the residents' immediate problems (op.cit.202). Walter, a resident of Campina, explains in more details: "The municipality doesn't listen to us. It's a good thing that we have them [the leaders]". Carlos, the owner of a small bar in Campina, concurs: "I spoke with Luís and Roberto when I wanted to open this bar. They managed to secure the lot for me". The leaders were equally aware of the importance of maintaining their individual positions as intermediaries. While inspecting the sewage system with a municipal engineer, Luís told him in a confidential tone: "It's better that you call me than calling Nelson [the president of Conselho dos Moradores]".

An important factor determining the popularity of the neighborhood leader among the residents is the extent to which the leader has made any *ações* [a piece of work] in the community. Edvaldo describes an *ação*: "If the roof's falling down, then we organize. We'll make a bingo or a raffle. We'll go to the timber merchants… always trying to help the person. And another [leader] will go to his politician [...] there has to be somebody to do this job, because they [the residents] can't do it on their own". In this statement, the resident is relegated to a passive role. The interaction is purely instrumental; i.e. the leader facilitates the distribution of goods to needy residents. As stated by Weber, if the leader fails to do this, his charismatic influence diminishes (1947:369). Isabella contextualizes this argument: "There are a lot of people who resent the leaders, because they want lamp light outside their house, but [if] it's impossible, what do they do? They think that he [the leader] doesn't like them, [...] and then it starts getting personal". Edvaldo summed up: "What [the residents] want is *ação*. They want to see [the leader] working". Consequently, the neighborhood leaders are very keen on presenting work already done, in order to consolidate a clientele (Fontes 1999:205).

The dyad of neighborhood leader and resident is imbued with mutual moral obligations. The distributed goods or the *ação* obligate the recipient to reciprocate. Mauss notes that the giver has power over the receiver through the

given object until it is reciprocated (2000 [1923-24]:27-28). Hence, it is the *interval* between the time of giving and the time of reciprocation which not only makes the gift appear as free but also establishes a power relation with the giver as the dominant party (Bourdieu 1972:6-7). Teresa explains: ”normally there’s an obligation to give something in return. If I give something, the people I give it to will say: ’Don’t speak badly about Teresa, because she gives a lot’”. In Bailey’s terms, Teresa has a high ’credit rating’ (Bailey 1969:44). The ’credit rating’ indicates the degree to which followers are favorably disposed towards their leader. Bailey states that if the relationship between a leader and a follower has a positive moral character, the leader’s ’credit’ is high (op.cit.48). The donor avoids criticism and assumes a superior moral position. This is a general aspect of Brazilian social life, as DaMatta explains: ”[E]verything from above is sacred and pure; it is something with an indisputable legitimacy and to be taken ‘very seriously’” (1991:185).

In sum, whereas a donor assumes moral superiority by giving, a leader acquires moral dominance by actively making *ações*. The high ‘credit’ thus achieved does not last indefinitely; the leader has to remain active in the community. It becomes problematic for the leader to maintain a high ‘credit’ rating in the many instances when it is impossible to distribute “small goods”. This occurs in the long periods when the neighborhood leader negotiates with politicians without having a fixed agreement. It is to these problems I now turn.

## 3.2 Stylized leadership

### 3.2.1 Performing leadership

”I want to confess something!” Roberto put his glass of beer on the table and waited for his audience to take their seats. Luís, eager to hear what Roberto had to say, speeded up the process: ”Teresa, are you listening? Roberto wants to confess something”. Teresa was in the toilet, but she soon took her seat at the table alongside Luís, Roberto and me. We were sitting in the patio in the house that my wife and I rented, relaxing with some cool bottles of *Brahma* beer, discussing the conflicts in Milagres. With his audience in position, Roberto continued: ”The PREZEIS coordination picked out some drawings for the children’s contest, and I felt certain that Noel’s son would enter. He had drawn the factory at Rua José Mariano, and shown how polluting it was. Later, when I saw all the drawings it was obvious that Noel’s son’s drawing wasn’t the same as the one I had previously seen. I was *com vergonha* [so embarrassed] when I discovered it[33]”. I said that Noel must have known that Roberto already had seen the drawings. ”Yes”, Roberto replied. ”But they [the Campina leader] think we’re *burros* [lit. donkeys, meaning stupid]. They’re all at that level”.

Goffman defines a *performance* as ”all activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some influence on the observers” (1959:32), and I do not hesitate to define the episode described above as a performance in this sense. Below, I shall expand on this. I will argue that situational and highly stylized performances are crucial for the enactment of leadership in Milagres. In the following, *performance* is understood in accordance with Goffman’s definition[34].

In the preceding section, I described the political positioning of *favela* leadership and showed how neighborhood leaders actively interpret or reject

[33] There were contributions from all areas participating in PREZEIS in the contest and Roberto was embarrassed because he was afraid that other participants would discover than a neighborhood leader from his area had cheated.

[34] I find his definition useful because it stresses the interaction between the performer and the observers. It directs our attention towards the consequences of the performance by stating that it influences the observers.

the *communitarian ethic* through *assistencialismo*. This analysis must now be expanded in order to understand the leaders' practices. The leader acquires a high moral 'credit rating' (Bailey 1969:44), when he succeeds in distributing goods, thus acting as a skillful and prudent gatekeeper. Still, as we have seen, during long periods, this does not occur. As described by Gay, the relationship between politician and community leader is neither static nor stable (1990:657). Both parties try to extract as much as possible from the relationship through continuous negotiations, during which the actual distribution of goods is brought to a halt. Furthermore, many neighborhood leaders negotiate with two politicians at once, playing one off against the other in order to get the most advantageous agreement. Consequently, the ideal of a continuous stream of goods is seldom achieved, which is why the leader must win the trust of the residents in other ways. Trust means believing in events which have not yet occurred (Sørhaug 1996a:22-23). As Mauss argues, it is trusting that the given gift actually will be reciprocated (2000 [1923-24]:61). Putting trust in a leader is therefore a bold action, given the lack of any tangible guarantees of getting the desired outcome (Sørhaug 1996a:22). Sørhaug states that trust paradoxically is its own precondition: To trust a person you have to believe that he is worth trusting (op.cit.23). This belief, however, is not based on actual guarantees of obtaining any benefits. Neighborhood leadership consequently acquires an almost religious status when the resident unconditionally put trust in the charismatic neighborhood leader.

I will argue that neighborhood leaders attain the trust of residents in these periods through stylized performances. Michael Herzfeld argues that "the successful performance of selfhood depends upon an ability to identify the self with larger categories of identity" (1985:10). The stylized performance of neighborhood leadership in Milagres is predicated on a celebration of moral correctness. To the extent that a leader's performance successfully communicates common understandings of right and wrong, it fits the local expectations of neighborhood leadership. The successful communication of moral values presupposes that the leader acts in such a way that other people recognize and understand common moral understandings of right and wrong through the leader's practices

(Sørhaug 1996a:34). In this regard, the leader's *style* serves as a semiotic sign system, which other people use to decode moral values. It is important to be able to trust the signs, i.e. based on the *style*, it should be possible to judge the competence and moral ethic of the leader. Through these performances, leadership implies an *aesthetic*[35] quality: An aesthetic act generates a high moral 'credit rating'. Although the specific definition of aesthetic leadership is based on the implicit agreement of the group, the leader communicates an individual interpretation of the common understandings through his performance (Sørhaug 1996a:34). The correct reading of the leader's actions is therefore a highly debated topic.

In sum, while the *assistencialismo* relationship is the often distant ideal for practice, *style* is an ever-present object for legitimation, evaluation and contestation. Hence, *style* is the symbolic capital *per se* for the leader. Below, I analyze various aesthetic elements which make up a leader's style.

### 3.2.2 Becoming visual

During a demonstration against the privatization of water rights[36], Roberto made an impressive and highly visual appearance. The demonstration was held near the River Capiberibe, where suddenly 15 small motor boats with colorful PREZEIS-banners came sailing. All tied together, they formed a long tail after the leading boat, where Roberto was leading the way. They sailed around for about 30 minutes, after which Roberto ordered the boats to sail away again. During carnival, Roberto made a similar performance. Walking in front of a local carnival group established on his initiative, he strolled through Campina and

[35] Here, *aesthetic* is less an expression of "a pure disposition to beauty rooted in one's inner sensibility" than "a critical and knowing appreciation of the instantaneous strategic mastery of a tangled set of techniques, constraints, and contingencies requiring poise, dexterity, sureness of judgment, and pinpoint accuracy" (Wacquant 1995:506).

[36] While I was in Recife, the privatization of national water rights was an urgent political issue. The president, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, was trying to pass a law which gave the states the opportunity to privatize the water rights. Jarbas Vasconcelos, the governor of Pernambuco made it clear that he was positive to such a possibility. At the time of writing, the law proposal was still being debated. If it passes, the consequences for the squatters will be devastating, since they cannot afford the extra expense.

Milagres, smiling at all bystanders, giving thumbs up and dancing a few *frevo*[37] steps.

These examples point to the *visual* aspect of leadership, which is one of its most important stylistic elements. Sørhaug argues that in many social contexts, becoming visual is crucial for acquiring a social identity (Sørhaug 1996b:117). In Milagres, neighborhood leadership is contingent upon the visibility of the leader. Noel explains: ”If you isolate yourself, people will forget you. They have to see you every day; at parties and at the bars”. Edvaldo agrees: ”People will follow the person who *destaca* [is prominent]”. Apart from Roberto’s attempts at being seen, there are various ways of becoming visual. When Nelson, the president of Conselho dos Moradores, tried to distance himself from direct *assistencialismo*, he implicitly described how he became visual: ”The only thing I ever received was a liter of Johnny Walker, and I don’t even drink[38]. It was the boys from the barracks who drank it. I turned on the music, they came, bought coconut milk and drank”. In this way, Nelson maintains the *communitarian ethic* and makes his leadership visual. When I asked the residents which leaders they speak to, they supported the assumption that visibility is crucial: ”I talk to Roberto when he passes“ Maria da Silva replied. Marcus uttered his dissatisfaction with the leaders: “I don’t talk to them [the neighborhood leaders], because I don’t see them here”. Marcus confirms the importance of visual leadership by deploring the absence of the leaders.

At the inauguration party for the new committee at Centro Social, Noel, a Campina leader, brought ’his’ politician, Eriberto. All during the festivities, Noel did not leave the politician’s side. When Eriberto finally had to leave, they slowly walked down between the rows of seats, smiling and shaking hands with people still seated. Cosmo, a PREZEIS participant, explains this practice: ”You have to make propaganda [...] in order for the people to recognize your work. If you

[37] *Frevo* is a wild jumping carnival dance.
[38] Nelson was the only neighborhood leader who did not drink and he was also the most marginalized. Although his marginal position, according to other neighborhood leaders, was caused by a general indifference to the community needs, his refraining from drinking prevented him from participating in many social activities where the consumption of alcohol was perceived as obvious. This may indicate that in order for a leader to become respected, he has to participate in social activities which involve the consumption of alkohol.

don't make a campaign, then bye-bye, they don't vote for you". Chíco agrees: "At inaugurations or parties, the politician has to be there". This version of visual leadership is the most contested. Isabella, the president of Comissão Central, uttered her indignation: "They want to *aparecer* [be noticeable] and then they use this *arma* [weapon] in order to become popular in the community".

Both leaders and residents agree about the importance of becoming visible. Through being seen, the leader fulfills his moral obligations to *give* to the community: He brings a politician or listens to residents' complaints. By putting on a show, he communicates his concern for his fellows, thus adhering to and reinforcing the *communitarian ethic*. The performative practices indicate a self-referentiality of aesthetic leadership (Sørhaug 1996a:36). It is the aesthetic performance *as such* which legitimizes individual leadership. Standing in the leading boat, Roberto communicates the essence of strong leadership and for the moment further action is unnecessary.

### 3.2.3 Idealizing the communitarian ethic while drinking

Drinking at bars was always a good opportunity to confirm the *communitarian ethic* and declare one's good intentions. Goffman notes that agents who use a particular setting as part of their performance cannot begin their act until they have arrived at the appropriate place (Goffman 1959:32-33). The setting contains important elements which allow the performance to succeed. The bar, a temporal 'hideout' standing apart from regular daily practices, is an apt setting for idealizations.

The preferred 'hideout' for the Marineira leaders was Paulinho's, located in Marineira. During weekend nights it was always filled with people coming in to have a drink. A nearby square served as the meeting place for the youth in Marineira, adding a lively, vibrant feeling to the mood at the bar. Sitting at Paulinho's, I witnessed countless performative idealizations. While discussing the Campina leaders, Roberto thus accused Chíco: "He has participated for a long time, but he has never worked for the community. The other [leaders] are like that". The Dutch historian Johan Huizinga states that for the contesters in a game, boasting quickly turns into a slandering of opponents (1993:72). The

same argument is found in Marshall Sahlins's depiction of the Melanesian big man, whose "every public action is designed to make a competitive and invidious comparison with others, to show a standing above the masses that is a product of his own personal manufacture" (1963:289). This resembles the neighborhood leader in Milagres who, I will argue, consolidates his own position by criticizing other leaders. During my time in Milagres, I heard so much negative criticism of other leaders that I became convinced that criticism served another purpose than simply blaming the opponents for their alleged wrongdoings. By accusing other neighborhood leaders, the individual leader confirmed his adherence to the *communitarian ethic* and therefore laid claim to a superior moral position. After an *Orçamento Participativo* meeting where Chíco voted against the other leaders, we had a drink and discussed the meeting. Roberto started: "Those leaders [the Campina leaders] have no *confiança* [reliability], or ethic". Luciano agreed: "From now on I'm against him [Chíco] in all matters". Finally, Roberto concluded with a grandiose promise: "When Chíco says something, I'll say: *You* aren't allowed to talk, because you caused damage to the community".

Bolyanantz (1994) studied leadership among the Sursurunga of New Ireland, Melanesia. At weekly meetings, the community leaders (i.e. big men) staged a performance, where they chastised adolescent boys for disobeying common rules (op.cit.55). The boys were largely unresponsive to the leaders' instructions. According to Bolyanantz, this indicates that the performance served another purpose than correcting the boys' conduct. A leader who forbids something, risks being ridiculed if the boys ignore the prohibition. But if the leader publicly blames the boys, using assertive rhetoric, he occupies high moral ground (op.cit.61). Hence, the performance serves to remind the community that the big men are the antithesis of the adolescents, and merit the authority that they enjoy.

Bolyanantz's study shows that the leader's performance is made up of a hierarchy of subordinate acts. Following Ricoeur, the performance may be divided into two acts: The 'locutionary act' is the act *of* saying (1979:76). The 'perlocutionary act' in contrast is what is done *by* saying. Referring to Bolyanantz's

study, the locutionary act is the actual chastisement, whereas the perlocutionary act is the implicit attempt to win the community's trust and consolidate one's authority. Returning to the discussions at the bars in Milagres, we find the same quality. Apart from being criticism, the utterances implicitly serve to show to the person with whom the neighborhood leader is talking and to the people passing by (i.e. the community) that the speaker is upholding the *communitarian ethic* and therefore is qualified to lead[39].

### 3.2.4 Doing groundwork

For some time I had wondered what *fazendo base* meant, so I had Luís explain it to me: "*Fazendo base* [doing groundwork] means working in the community with specific issues. Problems with lighting, with clogged sewers. [...] It is being in the community, sensing what *o povo* [the people] wants". Whereas the performances described above aim at the visual and rhetorical idealization of leadership, *fazendo base* is about putting leadership into practice. It is what the leaders practically *do* in the community. Doing it well equals good leadership. Primarily, *fazendo base* is concerned with the daily practicalities; such as ordering the repair of a broken lamp post or inspecting the sewerage system with a municipal worker. Making *porta a porta* [going from door to door], the leader informs the residents about coming activities and meetings. Before an *Orçamento Participativo* meeting, Luís went through Campina inviting people to participate and urging them to vote for the priorities already chosen by Roberto. There was a nice atmosphere in the area. It was almost sunset, and everyone had returned to the community from their daily doings. Luís went through the streets, joking with the people he met. Every time he invited a person to participate in the meeting, he concluded by asking: "Who wins tomorrow, Sport or Náutico [local football clubs]?". One of the residents Luís invited did not have any official documents showing his identity. Luís promised to make a photocopy

[39] In this respect, the leader resembles the Kabylian 'man of honor', described by Bourdieu, who "always sees himself through the eyes of others, who has need of others in order to exist, because his self-image is inseparable from the image of himself that he receives back from others" (Bourdieu 1979:113, see also Arendt 1998 on human recognition).

of the invitation list, thus proving that the man was living in Milagres. ”Just say that you got it from a neighborhood leader”, Luís concluded. Later, we met two women, upset about rumors of a future relocation. ”No”, Luís reassured them in a soft tone. ”It is only Roberto and myself who have that kind of information”. Confronted by demands, the leader tries to ’disarm’ the resident. Luís explains: ”The residents *vem armado* [come armed]. You have to disarm them. You have to let them complain. Afterwards you have to say: ’You know it doesn’t depend on me. If it did, this thing would already have been solved, but we continue to fight’. If you tell them not to complain, it doesn’t work. When they approach you, they’re annoyed, but you have to speak in a low voice. If you yell, your popularity decreases. You have to give them information they can understand”.

At the *Orçamento Participativo* meeting, the tone was sharper than when ‘disarming’ the residents. It took place at the community crèche, with all participants seated in a circle. Before the meeting, Luís talked to the people he had invited, making sure they would vote as agreed. Afterwards, he leaned towards me and whispered conspiratorially: ”Those sitting to the right I can control, but those on the other side *já foi articulado* [have already been persuaded]”. Luís referred to Chíco, who was also present trying to convince people to vote for *his* priorities. Rosangela, the municipal worker, described the various priorities: ”Asphaltation has several criteria: The streets have to be wide [...]”. Luís stood beside her and looked at ’his’ participants, shouting[40]: ”Did you get that?” Teresa came up and whispered to Lindalva, a former leader, who from time to time supports the Milagres leaders at public meetings: ”You have to persuade those from *Beira Rio*”. ”What about the one in the blue pants?” Lindalva wanted to know. ”Chíco has already talked to her”, Teresa replied.

*Fazendo base* refers to the direct relationship between leader and resident. It is the practices through which this connection is established and reproduced. As such it does not entail *assistencialismo*, but this can be a consequence of *fazendo base*, as Edvaldo explains: ”We make the people like us, so

[40] We can compare this instance with Luís description of how neighborhood leaders ’disarm’ the residents. When disarming the residents, the leader maintains a familiar tone in order to stress the moral superiority of personalism. At the meetings, the context is set by the *communitarian ethic*. Consequently, it is important to speak to the community as a whole without giving any one person precedence on behalf of others.

when political problems arise, we can go ask the person to… you know[41]?". *Fazendo base* determines the popularity of a leader, which is crucial primarily during election periods. I asked Luís if he would run for COMUL at the next election: "I have to consult my base. I'm going to do some research to see if those people saying that they'll vote for me will actually do so. If I stand to lose, I won't run". Luís was very aware of his position 'close to the base'. This became apparent when we discussed his collaboration with Roberto: "I am more at the base [...] the work I do helps him. It is powerful work". Several times I accompanied the two, when they were inspecting public works in Milagres. Roberto would talk to the municipal engineer, while Luís went around chatting with the people hanging out in the streets.

### 3.2.5 Having a "feel for the game"

Pierre Bourdieu introduces the concept *illusio* in his analysis of practice (1990, 1997a, 2000, Bourdieu & Wacquant 2001). It refers to the relationship an agent has to a game, when there is congruence between the mental dispositions of individuals and the objective structures of the social world (1997a:152). *Game* is here a metaphor for a *social field* with its own tautological logic, as in art, where art constitutes its own purpose (1997a:161, Bourdieu & Wacquant 2001:84). A game designates an activity, which, without necessarily being the product of obedience to rules, obeys certain regularities (1986:113)[42]. Below, I will use the term 'game' to refer to a social field

*Illusio* is the belief that the game is worth playing, i.e. that the agent has an interest in investing in the game (1997a:153). An agent only has an interest in investing if his mental dispositions are adjusted to the regularities of the game (2000:213). According to Bourdieu, the mental dispositions are the agent's *habi-*

[41] It is interesting to note that Edvaldo does not conclude the sentence. Had he concluded the sentence with "…support us" it would have indicated that he draws individual advantages from personal relations, which is immoral according to the communitarian ethic.
[42] In this regard, a field differs from a game of sports, which is a conscious construction with explicit rules (Bourdieu & Wacquant 2001:85).

*tus* as ”a sense of the game incarnate” (1986:113)[43]. The habituated sense, or *feel* for the game is produced by experience of the game, and of the objective structures within which it is played out (1990:66). It is what gives to the game subjectivity when the agent invests in it, but also objectivity, because the feel for the game is the basis of ”sensible practices” concordant with the “objective structures” in the field.

Investment in a game is associated with a certain degree of uncertainty (Bourdieu 2000:213). The agent can never be sure if he will win so he takes a risk when entering the game. There is, however, not only an element of indeterminacy, but also the possibility of knowledge about the probable outcome. The habituated agent has a capacity for practical anticipation of the ”forthcoming” future contained in the present (2000:208-213). It is what happens when the doer and the deed become one, like the football player shooting the ball to the left, when seeing that the opponent is about to run to the right. Here, the player has internalized the regularities of the game, and does what is necessary without formulating any goals (op.cit.181). Through embodiment of the game the agent acquires a practical sense, which makes possible the adaptation of the agent’s practices to innumerable situations (Bourdieu 1986:112). He is, in Dreyfuss & Dreyfuss’s sense, an ’expert’ relying on an intuitive sense[44]. This sense “releases a picture of problem, goal, plan, decision, and action in one instant” (2000:60, Flyvbjerg 2001:21). This process does not preclude, but actually presupposes constant improvisation in order for the agent to adapt to situations that are infinitely varied (Bourdieu 1986:112-113). ”It is all a matter of style, which means in this case timing and choice of occasion” (1972:6), Bourdieu argues. Improvisation is possible, when the game is embodied as a ”permanent disposition, embedded in the agents’ very bodies in the form of mental dispositions [i.e. *habitus*] [...] and also at a deeper level, in the form of bodily postures and stances, ways of standing, sitting, looking, speaking, or walking” (1972:15). There is then equivalence between the physical and social

[43] *Habitus* is the embodied knowledge arising out of mutual interpenetration of being and world (Wacquant 2001:3). When the agent “takes the world seriously” by perceiving it as meaningful, the habitus is internalized as mental dispositions for actions (Bourdieu 2000:168).
[44] Intuition is “the ability to draw directly on one’s own experience and to recognize similarities between these [former occurrences] and new situations” (Flyvbjerg 2001:21).

space, rooting the most fundamental social structures in the primary experiences of the body (1990:71).

I will argue that the performance of stylized, aesthetic leadership is only possible for the habituated leader with a strong 'feel for the game'. When 'disarming' the residents, Luís knew exactly how to react to aggressive residents. By lowering the tone of his voice and standing close to his interlocutor, he redirected the complaints, controlling the parameters of the interaction. At the *Orçamento Participativo* meeting he stood beside the municipal worker, 'borrowing' her authority. Taking over her discourse with a "did you get that?", his leadership and thus the priorities that he wanted approved gained a strong authority that was difficult to question. Likewise, Roberto always had the upper hand during discussions at Paulinho's[45]. Somehow he managed to infuse the discussions with moral correctness, thus assuming the superior position. In a loud, firm voice, never facing the other person, it seemed as if Roberto spoke out into an open rhetorical space, which was gradually filled with his interpretation of the *communitarian ethic*.

These performances were 'read' by the audience[46]. During a discussion between Roberto and Luciano outside DAC, the domino club in Campina, Teresa leaned toward me: "See the power he has, compared to the others. He is so much more macho". This points to the fact that a performance leaves a "trace", which goes beyond the initial situation (Ricoeur 1979:84-85). When the statements are disembedded from the context in which they were uttered, they can be interpreted anew. Thus, through Teresa's interpretation, Roberto's statements become detached signs of his leadership which, however, can be contested.

It is important to note that Luís and Roberto have habituated the game differently. Because of their different experiences, their dispositions (or *habitus*)

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[45] If we compare Roberto's outburst with Luís's 'disarming' of the resident, we can detect a rhetorical difference: Luís stress the personal ethic and therefore he speaks in a soft low voice, whereas Roberto directs his statements at the community as such. In this instance, it becomes important to communicate strong leadership which adheres to the *communitarian ethic*.

[46] Along similar lines, Bourdieu argues that "…every stance of the body becomes a sign pregnant with meaning that the opponent has to grasp while it is still incipient" (Bourdieu 1972:11).

vary. I have described how Luís preferred doing groundwork, talking to residents, while Roberto incarnated strong leadership when accompanying municipal workers, working with PREZEIS, or idealizing leadership at bars. These are consequences of their subjective approaches to leadership, which have been formed through their lifelong experience of living in Milagres. Bourdieu reminds us that *habitus* is the presence of the past in the present which makes possible the presence of the future in the present (2000:210). Hence, it is the leaders' prior experiences which allow the anticipation in practice of a probable future, which has previously – and individually – been classified as *good* or *bad* (op.cit.211).

In sum, it is through stylized aesthetic performances that the habituated neighborhood leaders attain the trust of the residents. Depending on the context, their performance yields important information about the status of the leader, which the residents decode and react to, through their acceptance or rejection of the individual leader's claim to legitimacy. Furthermore, the performances have a *moral* character which varies depending on the context. Below, I discuss this element of leadership practices.

## 3.3 Moral interchangeability

### 3.3.1 Ubiquitous moral discrepancies

In this section I discuss the way neighborhood leaders shift between different moralities during their stylized performances. I argue that in a context as unstable, socially and economically as in Milagres, the neighborhood leader cannot afford to uphold the *communitarian ethic* at all times. Instead, we see a co-existence of different moralities, each with its own tautological logic[47]. *Moral interchangeability* is the use of several moralities in stylized performances.

I often wondered about what appeared to be blatant self-contradictions in the neighborhood leaders' statements. During conversations, at meetings or sitting in bars I would often hear statements that seemed in blatant contradiction with other statements that had previously been said by the same leader often just a few minutes earlier. Thus, when I discussed the conflicts between the leaders with Chíco, he claimed that in the past ”we [leaders from both Campina and Marineira] discussed everything at meetings”, only to assert a few minutes later that ”in the past nothing was discussed [with the Campina leaders], it was only COMUL[48], and that was it. Now they [the Marineira leaders] have to open up the space because of me. I am a pebble in their shoe and I know how to fight for the community”. Likewise, after an intense meeting about a land rights conflict, we went for a drink and discussed the process. Roberto's solution had been rejected at a voting, as Chíco reminded him. ”That's what's wrong with you”, Roberto replied with a raised voice. ”You only speak about who loses and who wins. I never lost anything in my life, I only expressed my opinion”. A few days later, the same topic came up at a COMUL meeting. In the interim, Roberto had apparently reconsidered his stance, claiming that ”I lost the voting. It was Noel who won”.

These examples seem self-contradictory. It appears as if the leaders are somehow misleading their interlocutors by rapidly changing standpoint. I will

[47] I refer to the logic of a morality as tautological when it is rational only when perceived from within the individual morality. The logic of the communitarian ethic is irrational if used in a context defined by the personalistic credo and vice versa.
[48] The committee established in an areas participating in PREZEIS.

argue, however, that it is only analytically that these examples contradict each other, when comprehended within a single logico-moral framework. I argue that depending on the context, the individual leader defines a moral framework, suitable for the practices upon which he is about to embark. Different context open up moral domains that often stand in stark contrast to each other. *Context* is here understood as a temporary fixation of meaning[49] (Bateson 1979:15). It is that which tells the agent not to use the same sort of thinking when interpreting what is within, and what is outside the context (Bateson 1972:187). Indeed, the context can change even within the same statement if only the agents explicitly or implicitly agree that the context has been altered.

Following Bourdieu, I argued in the preceding section that the habituated leader can act skillfully in highly variable situations, if he has internalized the regularities of the game[50] (Bourdieu 1997a:181). I now want to expand on this assumption. In his "The Nicomachean Ethics" (1976), Aristotle defines *prudence* [phronesis]:

> "We may grasp the nature of prudence if we consider what sort of people we call prudent. It is thought to be the mark of a prudent man to be able to deliberate rightly about what is good and advantageous [...] But nobody deliberates about things that are invariable [...] [Prudence] is concerned with *conduct*, and conduct has its sphere in *particular circumstances*" (cited from Flyvbjerg 2001:56, italics added).

*Prudence* is the ability of the moral agent to choose between conflicting value-orientations in situations *where no a priori universal standards can be invoked* (Ferrara 1987/88:251). In the absence of general guidelines or criteria, the agent makes his value judgments based on his interpretation of the context. *Prudence* focuses on what is variable and therefore requires consideration, judgment and choice (Flyvbjerg 2001:57). It is the ability which enables the agent not only to act, but to act well by choosing between good and bad things

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[49] In "Mind and Nature" (1979) Bateson describes the temporal context: "What is a story that it may connect the As and Bs, its parts? And is it true that the general fact that parts are connected in this way is at the very root of what it is to be alive? I offer you the notion of *context*, of *pattern through time.* What happens when, for example, I go to a Freudian psychoanalyst? I walk into and create something which we will call a *context* that is at least symbolically (as a piece of the world of ideas) limited and isolated by closing the door. The geography of the room and the door is used as a representation of some strange, nongeographic message" (op.cit.14).

[50] I do not argue, however, that the practices of neighborhood leadership are consistent in all contexts, only that the leader with a strong feel for the game knows how to respond to changing situations.

*in situ* (Ferrara 1987/88:259). This means that prudence is a virtue which allows the agent to make moral judgments in situations where a certain degree of vagueness regarding the outcome of the action prevails. When there is no question about the outcome, prudence becomes irrelevant[51]. If we combine Aristotle's notion of prudence with Bourdieu's *illusio*, it is possible to elaborate an understanding of the habituated leader. Bourdieu states that the agent with a strong feel for the game knows intuitively how to respond to constantly changing situations (1997a:56). With Aristotle in mind, we can further argue that depending on the context, the agent defines a framework *in situ* for the moral interpretation of the situation.

The agent engages in diverse contexts which lead him to change his moral framework[52]. However, it is not given in advance which moralities will be used in a given context but the prudent leader knows how to respond to an altered context by intuitively interchanging the moralities. In this thesis I focus on the following moralities[53]:

1. The communitarian ethic
2. Personalism
3. The will to struggle[54].

The *communitarian ethic* is the ideal when speaking in general about correct neighborhood leadership. The personalistic credo is used when *doing groundwork* emphasizing the personal relationship between the neighborhood leader and the resident. In many instances a third moral resource was used, which in some ways is similar to the aristocratic ethic of the *Übermensch* described by

[51] It is irrelevant to deliberate about the structure of a DNA-string, but it can be extremely fruitful to deliberate about the way we want our society to work.
[52] In order to examine my material I have worked with three broad contextual categories: 1. Personal interaction between leader and resident; 2. Public appearances; 3. Conflicts. However, these are based on my interpretation of the practices in Milagres and other scholars might divide the practices into other contextual categories.
[53] These are not the only moral resources used by the neighborhood leaders in Milagres, but they were the most salient. In future analyses it could be interesting to examine moralities regarding gender, strangers or the outcasts, such as glue-sniffing street kids or prostitutes.
[54] In Part Five I also examine a forth morality, which I describe as a *dispositif*, i.e.the *ethic of responsibility*.

Nietzsche (1999 [1887])[55]. The *Übermensch* is the hero of the nihilistic age, to whom struggle is the essence of the heroic (Thiele 1990:909). The moral logic of the *will to struggle* emphasizes that goodness is the equivalent of boldness or bravery (op.cit.911, Raffnsøe 2001:40-41). It is personal traits such as physical strength, health or charisma which are positively laden. Teresa's comment during a discussion that Roberto was 'more macho' than the other discussant points to the ethic of the *Übermensch*. As Teresa saw the matter, Roberto's rhetoric force legitimated his argumentation, and made the opponent appear defeated.

Nietzsche states that the *Übermensch* naturally assumes the right to lead, when he experiences that he distinguishes himself (Nietzsche 1999 [1887]:26-28). This morality was manifest when the neighborhood leaders in Milagres spoke about the residents. At Roberto's birthday party, Roberto discussed PREZEIS with Rauliani, a friend of his. She wanted to make a pamphlet containing technical terms used in PREZEIS. This idea was rejected by Roberto: "The people would never understand those words. It has to be phrased in much simpler language". Likewise, Edvaldo, a Campina leader, argued that "there are a lot of people who don't understand the [political] process […] we [the neighborhood leaders] resolve the problems for the people […] the people prefer the person with a capacity for resolving stuff". These examples indicate that when the neighborhood leader uses the *will to struggle,* he assumes a morally superior position that seems naturally given.

As stated above, DaMatta argued that the fundamental Brazilian "ethos" is constituted by two simultaneous and contrasting moral domains, the *House* and the *Street*, between which the agent oscillates (1984:209). I argue that this reading simplifies reality. It is not sufficient to define two relatively stable moral domains, conjuring up a picture of a predetermined path between preset moral domains. Where DaMatta perceives the *House* and the *Street* as the constituent parts of a Brazilian moral structure, I argue that we have to understand moralities as *processual*. Analytically, we can draw a picture of different moral do-

[55] I am well aware that the *Übermensch* is an ideal figure for Nietzsche; one he uses as a contrast to the 'slave moral' of the present. Still, in this connection, I find it useful to describe the practices of the leaders.

mains. These, however, are only static or frozen imitations of the reality in which they presumably take effect. Thus, instead of perceiving moralities as static domains, they must be understood as processual moral resources used in practice. This means that the moral resource which is used in a given situation will only remain stable as long as it is deemed necessary. When the context changes, the neighborhood leader intuitively uses the appropriate moral resource which may be the same as the one previously used but may just as well change. This active use of moralities is what I define *moral interchangeability*

Returning to Chíco's two descriptions of the neighborhood associations, both statements were framed by the conflictive relationship between Campina and Marineira, but Chico intuitively made use of different moral resources[56]. In the first statement (where Chico asserted that in the past the leaders discussed everything together) Chico used the *communitarian ethic* to idealize the past for maintaining this norm. The second statement (where Chico argued that in the past COMUL was the only forum for discussions) is anchored both in the *will to struggle* and the *communitarian ethic*. Chíco is a Campina leader, and feels that PREZEIS and COMUL neglect the needs of the residents of Campina[57]. According to his statement, COMUL was a forum only for the leaders from Marineira. The community, i.e. Campina, was consequently being ignored. Chico also accentuates how his fights for the community have changed the situation. Thus, in the same statement, Chico positively ladens his struggle with value and stresses the moral precedence of the *communitarian ethic*.

If we return to Roberto's outburst at the beginning of this section, it is possible to gain a deeper understanding of the moralities at play. I interpret Roberto's irritated outburst as an attempt to delegitimize the active use of the *will to struggle* described above[58]. This indicates that the leaders not only use moral resources. They also challenge and defy moralities at play[59]. At the

[56] Another neighborhood leader might have made other intuitive decisions. We can imagine that a leader would have used the same moral ressource in both contexts.
[57] Two thirds of the COMUL members are Marineira leaders. The third participant in COMUL is Noel, a Campina leader, but his influence is extremely marginal.
[58] This was manifest in Roberto's reply to Chíco: "That's what's wrong with you. You only speak about who loses and who wins".
[59] In Part Five I examine this in detail how moralities can be contested.

COMUL meeting the discussion was framed by a conflict over a plot in Milagres between the municipality and the leaders in Milagres. It was important to manifest unanimity among the leaders, who, in that context stood as a united group opposed to the municipality. By stating that he lost the voting, Roberto implicitly conforms to the *communitarian ethic*. He agrees that Noel's proposition was the best for the community.

In sum, neighborhood leaders who have internalized 'the regularities of the game' are capable of using moral resources *in situ* through a process of *moral interchangeability*. The result is a dynamic performance which seem contradictory[60].

### 3.3.2 The paradox of surviving between several moralities

In this section I examine broader causes for the interchange of moralities and argue that *moral interchangeability* is a survival strategy among the urban poor.

Driving to pick up Roberto's son, Joãozinho, at a public school in the centre of Recife, I asked Roberto why Joãozinho was studying at this school and not at Centro Social in Milagres: "The level there is very weak", Roberto replied. "This school is very respected. I know some people at the municipality, who made it possible for Joãozinho to study here". As previously stated, Roberto several times criticized personalism, but in this instance, he seems to adhere to the personalistic morality. In order to make it possible for Joãozinho to study at the school, Roberto made a *jeitinho*, which is "an efficient way of accomplishing a goal by breaking a universalistic rule and using instead one's informal social or personal resources" (Barbosa 1995:36). As Barbosa explains, *jeitinho* is a flexible mechanism allowing adjustment to the "social and economic conditions of Brazilian society"[61] (op.cit.37). I interpret *jeitinho* as a survival strategy used by the poor to get around poverty, bureaucracy, and government control. In Mi-

[60] In "The Heart Is Unknown Country" (1999:72-76) Rebhun gives a wonderful example of a stylized performance where an informant oscillates between the moralities of the gift-exchange economy that obtains in social networks and the commodity economy that is present among unrelated people.

[61] In her analysis of the Brazilian *jeitinho,* Rebhun states that "Brazil is a society like a sieve, in which members are constantly escaping through loopholes" (1999:69).

lagres it was used to give priority to personal objectives at the expense of equal rights within the community. This interchange of moralities, is not a phenomenon uniquely reserved for the leaders, but rather a general tendency among the people I knew in Milagres. I therefore argue that the *moral interchangeability* of the neighborhood leaders is a subspecies of a widespread survival strategy in the poor neighborhood.

Out of 1,854 individuals responsible for household income in Milagres, 682 (36.8%) had a monthly income of up to one minimum wage (181 reais or 633 DKK). The average wage for those people who had a paid job was 380 reais (1330 DKK) (IBGE, 2000). By contrast, in Boa Vista, a neighboring middle-class area, the average wage is 1,737 reais (6080 DKK) and only 232 out of 4,894 (4.7%) individuals had an income of no more than one minimum wage; and while the unemployment rate in Boa Vista is 4.4%, in Milagres it is 18.3%. Living conditions in Milagres are thus far below those of an average middle-class neighborhood. Because of these social conditions, survival depends on a plurality of work activities. Marcus plays guitar at a restaurant in the weekends and works as a *biscateiro* [odd-job man] during the week. Nelson, the president of Conselho dos Moradores, is a self-appointed car park attendant in the centre of Recife. He receives 50 centavos or maybe a real to arrange for a parking lot when people arrive at a parking space. While the car owner is away, Nelson acts as a security guard. When Luís is not at a meeting or doing *porta á porta* in Milagres, he sits in his taxi in the immense line of cars outside Tacaruna Shopping Centre waiting for one of the five or six trips he takes a day. To supplement his meager income, he opened a small diner close to Tacaruna Shopping Centre where taxi-drivers can eat, installing Carla, his 21-year old girlfriend, to do the daily work. Even though he participates in PREZEIS and Orçamento Participativo which publicly rejects *assistencialismo*, Luís gets 200 reais under the table by José Carlos to do political promotion during election periods[62].

Since they are not paid for their job as neighborhood leaders, survival becomes a problem, as Edvaldo explains, referring to Nelson, who was president

[62] It is interesting to note that José Carlos in all public fora denounced the personalistic credo and *assistencialismo* and still he is involved in the same kinds of practices.

of Conselho dos Moradores in 2001: ”He doesn’t get paid, so how can he spend all his time on the Conselho dos Moradores? What is he to eat? How is he to feed his children? [...] He has to work or starve or steal”. *Assistencialismo* is, among other things, a way of securing one’s own survival. As Isabella describes it: ”Sometimes the people are very *imediatista* [thinking of their immediate needs]. Let’s suppose they can choose between you and me. If you come with a kilo of beans, then the tendency is that they’ll say: ’Martins is helping me, and he’s helping me with what? He’s helping me with what I need immediately, which is to kill my hunger'. So they’ll choose you because of their individual necessities”. In other words, Isabella is saying that the *communitarian ethic* is undermined by the need to survive. As she succinctly stated: “*necessity* speaks with the loudest voice”. Most of the work activities that the people in Milagres engage in are very unstable. One day sitting in Luís’ car, he pulled out eight reais (32 DKK). We had just been at his ex-wife’s house where Luís paid her the monthly maintenance. “This is all there’s left”, Luís said with a smile. I thought that he was joking, but Luís assured me that those eight reais constituted all his cash in hand. Luís was never sure how much he would get from the taxi trips so he was always speculating about how to maintain an acceptable standard of living. For persons living under such insecure conditions, the unconditional maintenance of the *communitarian ethic* is a privilege they cannot afford. *Assistencialismo* becomes ”a tactic” aimed at ”surviving and getting an important job”, as Osman Perreira, a former NGO-worker put it. Noel agrees: ”I achieved things through the politicians. You did what you had to do to get something to eat”. The consequence is a co-existence of different moralities. Whenever possible, the leader works for the community, thus reactivating the *communitarian ethic*. However, the same practices are also used for personal strategies. In these instances, the moralities are interchanged.

Summing up, I will argue that in a local world marked by severe social, economic and political constraints, the interchange of moralities is what makes possible a constant faith in the possibilities of the present. Bourdieu holds that “[o]nly a virtuoso with a perfect command of his ‘art of living’ can play on all the resources inherent in the ambiguities and uncertainties of behavior and situation

in order to produce the actions appropriate to each case, to do that of which people will say 'There was nothing else to be done', and do it the right way" (1972:8). Expanding on these statements, I argue that the prudent leader with a habituated 'command of his art of living' is indeed a virtuoso because he intuitively knows how to use available moral resources in order to survive. The *moral interchangeability* is among the "weapons of the weak" (Scott 1985) used by the prudent leader who becomes a *poacher* "accepting the chance offerings of the moment, and seize[ing] on the wing the possibilities that offer themselves at any given moment" (de Certeau 1984:37).

### 3.3.3 Moral interchangeability as an overarching dispositif

In concluding this part of the thesis, I wish to consider the local social field of neighborhood leadership in Milagres from a more general perspective, returning to Michel Foucault's notion of *dispositif.* I argue that we can gain a deeper understanding of *moral interchangeability* if we consider it as a *dispositif*.

The concept *dispositif* is translated into English either as apparatus, disposition or deployment (Mahon 1992:202). Dreyfuss and Rabinow opt for "grid of intelligibility" (1982:120-121) and I consider this translation as the most appropriate[63]. With the concept of *dispositif*, Foucault is trying to isolate precisely the kind of *intelligibility* that different kinds of practices have. The objective of 'dispositional analysis' is to locate and understand a set of coherent practices which organize social reality without having to refer to a constituting subject or to objective laws (op.cit. 121). Foucault explains the logic of the *dispositif* by refering to the French industrialization (1980a:202-204). During the first part of the 19th Century, the heavy industries tried to bind the workers to their workplaces by pressuring people to marry, providing housing, etc. These experiments became generalised by way of institutions and societies advocating 'programmes for the moralisation' of the working class, such as the duty to marry. Between different sites – homes, factories, schools, churches,

[63] However, I use the French term in my thesis in order to avoid misunderstandings in the translation.

and municipalities - emerged a coherent strategy, whose "logic [i.e. the *dispositif*] is perfectly clear, the aims decipherable, and yet it is often the case that no one is there to have invented them" (1998:101).

Returning to the Brazilian context, I argue that the *moral interchangeability* characterizing social interactions in Milagres can be understood as a *dispositif*[64]. I have described how situations which seem contradictory are pervaded by the same normative logic, i.e. *moral interchangeability*. Across diverse social contexts we can detect this moral 'undercurrent' which has a decisive effect on all social practices in Milagres. I have further argued that *moral interchangeability* serves as a survival strategy among the urban poor. Foucault argues that the *dispositif* always has a strategic function of responding to an 'urgent need' (1980:195, Raffnsøe 2002:69). In Foucault's historical example above, the strategic function was to assimilate a working population found to be burdensome by a mercantilist economy. Referring to the Brazilian context, *moral interchangeability* responds to the urban poor's 'urgent need' of survival. *Moral interchangeability* is an underlying morality which enables the individual to dispose of several moral resources and thereby manage to survive both literally and socially in an unstable social world. Shields describes a *dispositif* as "the conceptual and practical line along which apparently unconnected things can all be unified in the mind" (Shields 1995:44). This holds true for the Brazilian context. The apparent incomparability of diverse moralities is surpassed by an overarching dispositional logic[65]. Consequently, a *dispositif* emerges when a cluster of practices based on shared normative understandings aim toward the same set of targets, such that a functional system is formed (Brenner 1994:691). This means that a *dispositif* can be understood as a so-

[64] It can be argued that Bourdieu's notion of *field* would be well-suited to describe the *moral interchangeability* given my prior use of his theoretical framework. However, I will argue that *dispositif* is a more fruitful term for the discussion in this and the next part of my thesis because of the situational rootedness of the *dispositif*. In Part Five I also analyze the contingent historical character of the *dispositif.* These aspects are apparent only implicitly in Bourdieu's work but they are crucial for the dispositional analysis.

[65] This resembles Dumont's definition of hierarchy as the "encompassing of the contrary" (1980:239). On the superior level there is unity; on the inferior level there is distinction (op.cit.242).

cially established normative logic that forms a 'grid of intelligibility' between diverse heterogeneous contexts which at first sight may seem incoherent.[66].

In Milagres, the *moral interchangeability* influenced the interactions I witnessed or engaged in. In the previous section I described how contradictions can be perceived as a salient feature of *moral interchangeability*. However, the normative logic of *moral interchangeability* often asserted itself indirectly. All COMUL meetings were chaotic with participants constantly going out to make calls which apparently were too important to postpone until after the meeting. At public meetings in Milagres the chaos was even worse. People would come and sit down for a short while only to get up and walk around the room to talk to other residents attending the meeting. No doubt these events served as social gatherings for the residents in Milagres, but they also functioned as 'information centers' where neighborhood leaders could gather information about other peoples doings. At meetings, Campina leaders would engage in long conversations with Marineira leaders despite their political differences. I asked Teresa why political opponents bothered talking to each other: "You can't stop talking to them [the Campina leaders]", Teresa replied. "You have to know what they are doing". When people constantly interchange moralities, it is impossible to know how people will act. It is therefore important continuously to stay informed about the activities of both friends and opponents. Hence the incessant phone calls and the high level of physical activities at meetings.

The ubiquitousness of the *dispositif* makes it in a sense an exercise of power by bringing into effect a certain tendency or disposition towards particular

[66] If we understand the *dispositif* as a network or a 'grid of intelligibility', it corresponds in some ways to Geertz's idea of 'symbol systems' (1973). Geertz argues that "man is an animal suspended in *webs of significance* he himself has spun" (op.cit.5, italics added). It is by virtue of these *webs* or symbol systems that agents interpret and make sense of their surrounding world. The production of meaning is a primary condition of human existence and so it occurs constantly. Assigning meaning is not something that happens in private or in "insular individual heads" (Rapport 1997:60). It is dependent on an exchange of common symbols (Geertz 1973:45) and, according to Geertz, it must therefore be defined as a public act "out in the world" (1983:151). The strength of the dispositional analysis, however, is its emphasis on the fragility of the normative logic, which constantly is being displaced by the practices in which it takes effect.

kinds of social outcome[67]. The *dispositif* is asserting itself across diverse local contexts in Milagres as a moral 'undercurrent', which makes it probable that people will interchange moralities when interacting with each other. As Foucault argues, the *dispositif* acts as "grids for the perception and evaluation of things", with a decisive influence on the social outcome of practice (Foucault 1991:81). However, Foucault is not arguing that agents *will* act in accordance with the dispositional logic, only that a specific normative logic is asserting itself across dissimilar local contexts (Raffnsøe 2002:75). In Milagres, *moral interchangeability* is a normative logic that people ideally can reject. However, because the dispositional logic affect almost all social interactions, people cannot avoid having to respond to it. If neighborhood leaders anticipate that other people will act in accordance with the *moral interchangeability* they have to adjust their practices to the dispositional logic.

In sum, the *dispositif* is a socially established normative logic which generates meaning. It is the *dispositif* that creates the *illusio*, as a deep belief in the importance of our life pursuits. In the local context of Milagres, the *dispositif* of *moral interchangeability* induces the practices of the neighborhood leaders with meaning and establishes neighborhood leadership as a moral category.

[67] Foucault states that the exercise of power consists in "guiding the possibility of conduct and putting in order the possible outcome" (1982:221).

# Part Four

## Participation

### 4.1 The genealogy of the "ethic of responsibility"

In this section, I examine the emergence of a new dispositional normative logic, which contests the *dispositif* of *moral interchangeability* described in the preceding section. This contesting normative logic emphasizes the active role of the *responsible* resident. It can therefore be described as an *ethic of responsibility* which is the notion I will use here. This ethic has been introduced into the Brazilian context through different participatory initiatives which threaten the status of neighborhood leadership. Through an exploration of its historical trajectory I end up describing its fragmented and unstable character.

I have described a *dispositif* as a moral configuration stemming from practice, but also determining practice as an underlying normative logic. In order to determine the character of the *dispositif*, it is necessary to focus on the moments, or *events*, which change its logic. Foucault describes this analytical operation:

> "Eventalization means rediscovering the connections, encounters, supports, blockages, plays of forces, strategies and so on which at a given moment establish what subsequently counts as being self-evident" (1991:76).

An *event* is an action which makes a difference in relation to previous occurrences (Raffnsøe 2002:21). A *dispositif* has a genesis, which must, according to Foucault, be genealogically reconstructed in order to determine its inherent normative logic (Foucault 1991:77). Events have to be recorded in their singularity "outside of any monotonous finality, [they must be sought] in the most unpromising places, in what we tend to feel is without history" (Foucault 1984:76). This idea originated with Nietzsche's genealogy of morality (1999 [1887]). According to Nietzsche, all values are created from an act of will. It is impossible to establish an originating moment for the cultural and social phenomena which constitute our surrounding world. Searching for the origin of ideas, we only find acts of will and nothing else (Mahon 1992:83). We therefore have to acknowl-

edge that the values and truisms in our surrounding world are created in agonistic fights between struggling wills to power, each interpreting the social world according to its own objectives (Foucault 1984:79).

These points are crucial for an understanding of the *dispositif*. This makes it clear that history progresses through events which constantly change the underlying normative logics (Foucault 1984:76). In a sense, the events make us what we are. However, the acts of will which at any given moment recreate the normative values continue to act, so previous events are reinterpreted, thereby disguising their genesis (Nietzsche 1999 [1887]:80-82). This is what makes possible the faith in things ”as they are”. Below, I describe the genealogy and emergence of participatory politics in the Brazilian context and conclude by analyzing an *event* which, I argue, generated an infinite but serious change of the dispositional morality of participation, i.e. the *ethic of responsibility.* Changes such as these have implications for the ways that neighborhood leaders in Milagres understand participation.

### 4.2 Structural adjustment and participation

*Participation* has never enjoyed as much official legitimacy as today (Stiefel & Wolfe 1994:220). NGOs, international lending institutions and local governments all praise the potential of a popular participatory approach, which ideally changes local power relations and creates a representative democracy through open political discussion, where citizens have a certain amount of control (Abers 2000:7,10). *Participation* was recognized as integral to official development programmes in the 1970’s (Woost 1997:231). The concept was perceived as the ‘missing ingredient’ in development programmes, which had so far failed to solve basic problems of poverty and human survival (Stiefel & Wolfe 1994:26,221). By incorporating the beneficiaries in the planning and implementation of initiatives designed to assist them, the aid projects, it was argued, would function in a better way.

During the 1980's, international lending institutions, such as the World Bank and IDB[68] became aware of the potential of popular participation for their structural adjustment programmes (UNRISD 2002:4). According to the economic theory which guides the practices of the lending institutions, any country facing a serious economic imbalance has to adjust, either through direct income and monetary measures, or through overarching policies which regulate the process (Cornia et al. 1987:49). If a country cannot solve these problems itself, international lending institutions, such as the World Bank and IDB, often intervene with large loans through *structural adjustment programmes*. This strategy entails a restructuring of a country's economy by decentralizing administration, privatization, downward transfer of state responsibilities and restrictions on the public sector (Stiefel & Wolfe 1994:197, 211). In the early 1980's, adjustment was justified by the argument that external deficits were unsustainable, and that countries had to live within their means (UNRISD 2002:3). Towards the end of that decade, the lending institutions realized that adjustment programmes were unsustainable without sufficient attention to their social dimensions. There were simply too many instances where adjustment had led to social crisis and economic deterioration (Stiefel & Wolfe 1994:222). With this changed focus, the economic advantages of a healthy workforce became obvious. If productivity and consequently economic efficiency were to increase, the 'human capital' could not be allowed to 'depreciate' during the adjustment period (UNRISD 2002:4). But this created a paradox. The intention was to increase social support while reducing overall expenditures. These are contradictory objectives. One answer to the dilemma was *targeting*; i.e. allocation of expenditures to those groups most in need and most likely to benefit from them (ibid). In order to make targeting work, the target groups themselves would be expected to define their needs through *participation*. This kind of participation has several crucial advantages: It reduces administration costs; it insures that the projects are really desired by their beneficiaries, it encourages local organization and it reduces the opposition from groups opposed to adjustment programmes (op.cit.10, 6). In sum, large loans often require a participatory component

[68] Inter-American Development Bank

(Abers 2000:4), but only because projects have been ineffective without it (Stiefel & Wolfe 1994:221). Economic adjustment is primary, and participation is needed in order for this to succeed,.

### 4.3 Participation enters the Brazilian context

Between the 1940's and the 1970's, rapid growth turned Brazil, a hitherto largely agrarian country, into a major industrial power (Weyland 1996:189). In the 1980's, however, Brazil suffered from a profound economic crisis caused by a second oil shock, increasing international interest rates, and declining commercial lending (Cornia et al. 1987:107). This situation sparked off still ongoing adjustment programmes, initially with the IMF as the lending institution but soon followed by the World Bank and the IDB[69]. The adjustment strategies implied the implementation of a market-based economy, where the primary objectives included the improval of public finance and a redefinition of the social role of the state (Ayres 1995:36). The latter involved a 43% cut in the federal budget (including public investment) (Chossudovsky 1996:183). Instead, IMF and the Brazilian government created 'the Social Emergency Fund' (SEF). SEF promoted *targeting* policies for "managing poverty" and attenuating social unrest at minimal costs for the creditors[70] (op.cit.185). SEF legitimized the withdrawal of the state from the social sector. Instead, local NGOs funded by international aid organizations have gradually taken over the functions of the municipal governments, whose funding has been frozen as a result of the structural adjustment programmes (op.cit.187). During this process, community-based ~~training and employment~~ programmes were set up nation-wide. They ensured

[69] The current status regarding the relationship to the international lending institutions is that the World Bank has worked with Brazil since 1949 and has granted 250 loans amounting to more than $24 billion (Vianna Jr. 2000:458). IDB has since its founding in 1959 loaned more than $12.5 billion and participated in more than 175 projects. Brazil is among the largest clients for both. The country ranks fifth in total value of loans received from the World Bank and is the first borrower from the IDB. Furthermore, Brazil is a major shareholder in the IDB, which contributes to consolidating the links to that institution (ibid).

[70] One of these policies was the "Citizens' campaign against famine". One of the results of the campaign was that poverty and famine were portrayed in the tabloid press as concerning only a social minority. Therefore selective targeting could be legitimated (op.cit.187). The campaign did not deal with the negative effects of adjustment policies; i.e. an increase in the informal sector because of an overall decline in mean income (Rocha 1995:383) and the creation of a new social class of urban poor consisting of white-collar employees recently fallen from middleclass status (Chossudovsky 1995:185).

employment programmes were set up nation-wide. They ensured that residents of local-level communities were secured a meager income, and, according to Chossudovsky, they helped to contain the risk of social unrest by making the residents dependent on the programmes (ibid). It is worth noting that IDB and the World Bank consider consultation with NGOs to be sufficient for participation to happen (Tussie & Tuozzo 2000:9). Generally, NGOs are conceived as a 'proxy' for civil society (Nelson 2000:417): Only organizations are invited to the consultations, while the opinions of target groups are only indirectly represented through the NGOs. While interviewing the coordinator at Cendhec, it was clear that the same logic defines the relationship between the NGO and the target groups. Only the employees at Cendhec participate in the definition of the projects that the NGO will implement. This means that the community based training and employment programmes run the risk of being restricted to individuals chosen by the NGOs.

### 4.4 Participation - the Brazilian way

I have described how participation entered the Brazilian context through the international lending institutions' strategies. I now shift focus to the Brazilian transition from dictatorship to democracy in order to show how the current local context in Milagres is affected by different readings of participation.

When political liberalization limited repression in the late 1970's, a new oppositional movement consisting of the urban poor, workers and social organizations arose (Weyland 1996:197). Tightly controlled under the military regime, these groups had concentrated their organizational efforts on 'the shop-floor and in the neighborhoods', but towards the end of the 1970's they mobilized on a large scale (ibid). This mobilization was further driven by the crisis that shook Brazil in the early 1980's. An unprecedented wave of strikes took place during that decade (Abers 2000:47). It started off in São Paulo among the metalworkers, but soon snowballed to include most of the country's regions. Many union leaders were dissatisfied with the poor support from the opposition party during the first wave of strikes, so they decided that an autonomous workers' party would be formed (Abers 2000:47). Hence, in 1980, PT, *Partido dos Trabalha-*

*dores* [the Workers Party] was created. Since then, an ideological core issue for the party has been the emphasis on direct popular participation. PT's popularity has expanded since the initial phase. In 1988, 36 cities elected PT-candidates for mayors. Currently, more than 300 cities throughout Brazil are run by PT and in October 2002, the leader of PT, Luis *Lula* Ignácio da Silva, became the new president of Brazil.

### 4.5 Paving the way for direct participation in Recife

To conclude my analysis of the emergence of participatory politics in Brazil, I return to the local context of Recife in order to describe a last important element of the fragmented rationality of *participation* which currently affects neighborhood leadership in Milagres.

In 1978, during dictatorship, a massive mobilization among the residents of the *favela* Brasilia Termosa forced a change in the bus line so that it entered the settlement. That experience changed the way the squatters viewed political struggles in general. Osmar Perreira, a former NGO activist who lived in Brasilia Termosa during that period, says that "…with that experience of struggle by the residents of Brasilia Termosa, people acquired a taste for struggle [...] that victory nourished the exercise of citizenship".

Shortly afterwards, the municipality drew up a plan to "humanize" Brasilia Termosa, but the residents rejected the proposal (Assies 1991:131). The municipality then suggested that the residents themselves come up with an alternative, which they did. Collaborating with *Comissão de Justiça e Paz,* a commission established by the Catholic Church, they created the project *Brasilia Teimosinho*, which included various wide-ranging demands: The legalization of land through leasing contracts, relocation only within the neighborhood and special laws to effectuate the process of legalization and urbanization (op.cit.133).

The project was accepted in 1980 (op.cit.163). By then, the overall idea behind the legalization process was defined as "priority of dwelling rights over ownership rights", making the leasehold arrangement to be the catapult for implementing this strategy. In order to proceed with the legalization, a commission

was established, consisting of representatives of the municipality, the neighborhood association and *Comissão Justiça e Paz* (Moura 1990:41). The objective of the commission was to accompany the legalization process and to judge disputes about land claims.

### 4.6 PREZEIS - recreating the urban structure

While all of this was going on, *Projeto Recife* was being promoted by Gustavo Krause, the mayor from 1978-1981 (ETAPAS 1999:22). Supported by the World Bank, this project officially promised to benefit 29 low income areas in the city by improving infrastructure and housing (Assies 1991:146-148). This objective was soon altered, and instead one focused on the revitalization of the Capiberibe riverside for the attraction of tourists. A legal framework was needed for the implementation of *Projeto Recife* and so the LUOS law[71] was enacted (ETAPAS 1999:30). LUOS divided the urban area into six zones[72], of which the ZEIS[73] are of particular interest here. These were described as consolidated areas of spontaneous settlement where special "urban norms" were to be applied in view of the social interest of promoting their legal regularization and integration into the urban structure (Alfonsin 1997:166-167). 29 zones were defined as ZEIS. This selection was instantly criticized by the *Comissão de Justiça e Paz*, who suspected that when only 29 zones were prioritized, all other squatter areas in the city could potentially be eradicated. Neighborhood organizations in concert with the *Comissão de Justiça e Paz* therefore drew up an alternative law proposal, which became PREZEIS.

*Comissão de Justiça e Paz* and the neighborhood organizations turned to the experiences from *Brasilia Teimosinho* in order to establish the law. All the elements of *Brasilia Teimosinho* described above were incorporated in the PREZEIS-proposal with the general aim of prioritizing the right to *moradia* [shel-

[71] *Lei de Uso e Ocupação do Solo* [the law of the use and occupation of land]
[72] Residential zones, zones of multiple activity, special zones, industrial, green and institutional zones (Assies 1991:147).
[73] *Zonas Especiais de Interesse Social* [Special Zones of Social Interest].

ter] over ownership rights and the condemnation of land speculation (Law nº 16.113/95, Art. 4º).

The PREZEIS proposal required the formation of COMULs[74] in each ZEIS (Alfonsin 1997:165). Inspired by the commissions of *Brasilia Teimosinho*, the participants were two representatives of the municipality, two representatives of the area and one representative from a NGO acting as advisor for the ZEIS. COMUL was according to Osmar Perreira perceived as "…a space of discussion, of democracy, a democratic space, where the population could decide about their areas".

To the surprise of the *Comissão de Justiça e Paz* and the neighborhood associations, the city council passed the law in 1987 and PREZEIS has since functioned as a participatory project (Assies 1991:270). The participants meet monthly at URB[75] to discuss general problems regarding the ZEIS and the PREZEIS-structure. This takes place in *Fórum do PREZEIS* which is "a space for political articulations and definitions regarding the ZEIS" (FASE 1997:6).

### 4.7 Glimpses of a fragmented dispositif

I will now try to sum up the arguments put forward in this part. I argue that (at least) three readings of participation affect the ways that participatory projects are perceived in Milagres. *Participation* entered the Brazilian context through the strategies of the lending institutions as a political slogan employed in order to counter the negative consequences of adjustment policies, such as poverty, famine and popular resistance. The main object for these institutions was structural adjustment. In contrast, development organizations promoted participation as primary to aid programmes.

Starting from the late 1970's, a third understanding of participation has emerged from the Brazilian civil society. PT and PREZEIS incarnate a turbulent past where groups in civil society were preoccupied with the establishment of

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[74] *Comissão de Urbanização e Regularização* [Commission of Urbanization and Legalization Commission] As institutional channels of participation, they would monitor the process of urbanization and legalization in the area and deliberate which urban projects to implement (FASE 1997:6).

[75] Empresa de Urbanização do Recife (The Municipal Department of Urbanization in Recife)

democracy. In this process, the ideology of participation was perceived as tantamount. Participatory politics were seen as primary, relegating other (e.g. economic) priorities to a secondary status. We can detect several contradictions between the three readings of *participation*: The adjustment programmes produced what Sarah White calls 'nominal participation' (1996:8). This shows that the government is "doing something" and that it has a 'popular base', but the interest in participation is to legitimize its politics. The development organizations promote 'representative participation' (ibid). The idea is to allow the recipients of aid programmes a voice in the character of the project. Participation thus becomes the means through which people can express their own interests. In contrast, PREZEIS and PT promote 'transformative participation' (ibid). The objective is empowerment of local social groups, in the practical sense of involving them in making decisions and taking collective action. With empowerment as the objective, participation is both the means and the end.

The contested local field of significance that is established with the introduction of *participation* is marked by several overlapping rationalities. I argue that if we consider this field as a *dispositif,* it is possible to reach an understanding of its complexity. According to Foucault, a *dispositif* is made up of heterogeneous elements, between which there is an interplay of shifting positions and modifications of function (Foucault 1980:194-195). An element can figure at one time as the programme of an institution and at another as a means of masking a practice which itself remains silent[76] (op.cit.95-96). This dynamic is what gives the *dispositif* its solidity and suppleness (Foucault 1991:81). These arguments have consequences for our understanding of how *participation* affects the perception and practice of neighborhood leadership in Milagres. The different elements I have described above do not appear to be as rigidly separated to the neighborhood leaders as I depict them here. To the neighborhood leaders affected by participatory initiatives, *participation* constitutes a social, normative morality that they increasingly have to take into consideration when performing

[76] In the Western world, the legal system originally functioned as an overarching dispositif, only later to be subjugated to other more covert types of dominations (Foucault 1979). In Part Five I show how the ideology of *participation* in Milagres became a moral ressource subjugated to the logic of the *moral interchangeability*.

leadership. It is not perceived as divided up into nominal, transformative, and representative participation but rather as one normative logic, which, however, is extremely fragmented.

Below, I describe an *event* where the lending institutions' interpretation got entangled with the reading of the Brazilian civil society. By doing this, I show how the *ethic of responsibility* is displaced in practice and explain some of the reasons for the ambiguous attitudes of the neighborhood leaders' to *participation.*

### 4.8 Displacing the "ethic of responsibility"

Habitar-BID was outlined at two successive meetings at *Fórum do PREZEIS*. Habitar-BID was a project based on loans obtained through IDB. The objective was to "elevate the standard of living of those dwelling in subnormal settlements" (SEDU 2000:3, my translation). The practical objective, as described at the meeting, was to construct houses in the ZEIS for a total amount of 22 million reais. To decide which areas should benefit, a workgroup consisting of NGO-workers and the coordination group in PREZEIS defined a range of criteria in advance: The areas with the best infrastructure got a higher rating, since it would be easier to implement a housing project there[77]. The degree of poverty was also considered using three degrees; poor, very poor and critical. Nora, a municipal worker, presented the criteria which were quickly approved of through a show of hands. Bismarck, one of the neighborhood leaders in the coordination group then said that the chosen areas would be announced. None of the participants knew at that point that the areas had already been chosen, nor how this decision-making process had proceeded. Loud protests broke out, but to no avail. The list was shown on an overhead projector, followed by even louder protests. João, a neighborhood leader, grabbed the microphone: "I don't understand the difference between poor, very poor and…" Bismarck interrupted: "Critical is when you live in the mud!" This remark ignited protests once again,

[77] The criteria comprised sewer systems, pavement and drainage. Every area was given a score from 1-3 depending on the standard of these factors.

making Renato, an NGO-worker at Cendhec and a member of the coordination group try to explain the logic behind the evaluations: “I won’t defend [the evaluations]. We hadn’t got time to make an investigation of our own. Therefore we used a survey made at the university to define the criteria and evaluate the areas”. This ended the discussion of Habitar-BID.

The following month, another project was presented at *Fórum do PREZEIS*. Basically the objective of this new project was similar to Habitar-BID, but in contrast to the latter, it was funded by the federal government, making it an internal PREZEIS-project. What needs to be emphasized is that the participatory formula from Habitar-BID was adapted to the new project: The same workgroup defined the criteria and the areas, relegating *participation* to a mere compulsive show of hands.

I think we might say that when the participatory formula of Habitar-BID was adopted by PREZEIS, the *ethic of responsibility* was displaced. After the first meeting where Habitar-BID was presented, the neighborhood leaders were extremely dissatisfied with the process, arguing that the municipality had once more showed a lack of recognition of their [the neighborhood leaders’] status. To the latter, *participation* became a symbol of the dominator’s rule over the dominated. When using the participatory approach of Habitar-BID in PREZEIS, the logic anchoring PREZEIS went through a micro-transformation creating almost imperceptible, but real normative changes. Once *participation* has been perceived as a negative emblem of oppressive relationships, any subsequent positive recognition of the concept by the oppressed becomes problematic.

In the course of this process, the understanding of participation stemming from the Brazilian transition from dictatorship to democracy got entangled with the interpretation made by the IDB, which states that participation equals consultation. At the same time, development organizations continue to promote ‘representative participation’ through various programmes. The result is a fragmented normative logic creating ambiguous attitudes towards participation among the neighborhood leaders. Severino, a former president of Conselho dos Moradores in Milagres, asserted that PREZEIS is ”a play with marked cards. Today, PREZEIS has another function than when it started. This other function

is to *amarrar* [tie down] the neighborhood associations. If I participated in PREZEIS, unemployed and without a political vision, I would surely accept the municipality's policy". Edvaldo, a Campina leader, expressed a similar scepticism when I asked him about *Orçamento Participativo*:

> "Edvaldo: During the campaign, he [João Paulo, the PT-mayor] asserted that the people should decide, and now he says that if they [the city government] have the opportunity, they do it [i.e. realize the chosen priorities], if not, they will wait until the opportunity arises. There it became clear that this is not the people's government. They are going to do it when they can… it's the same as with the other governments.
> Morten: How come they created the Orçamento Participativo; if in fact they don't realize it, if it doesn't change anything?
> Edvaldo: To mislead the people, to be able to say that the people are with them (...) Promises, [they] promised a lot of things".

In sum, *participation* covers a field of overlapping and contrasting normative elements, which in the local context generate ambiguous positions towards participatory undertakings. For neighborhood leaders, it becomes problematic to support the politicians who promote participation and it becomes increasingly hard to convince the residents of the advantages of participating.

In Part Five I analyze an empirical case which shows how the ambiguous stances towards participation are manifested in practice. I furthermore analyze the room for manoeuvring established by participatory projects. This clarifies how there are *zones of passage* (DaMatta 1991:189) between the two *dispositifs*; i.e. *moral interchangeability* and *ethic of responsibility*, making possible the manipulation of both moralities.

# Part Five

## The secret meeting at Chíco's

### 5.1 The 'apostate' of moral interchangeability

Thanks to participatory projects, the neighborhood leaders' room for manoeuvring is considerably enlarged and they have increasing opportunities for influencing the political processes which determine the future of *favelas*. However, neighborhood leaders, such as Roberto, who in all public forums embrace the *ethic of responsibility* promoted by participatory projects, are also exposed to potentially devastating critique. Publicly they denounce the *moral interchangeability*, which has hitherto been the prevalent strategy among neighborhood leaders. Johan Huizinga quotes Paul Valéry as saying that "to the rules of a game, no scepticism is possible" (1993:19). The player who scorns the rules of a game deprives it of its illusion (op.cit.20). The frail foundation of the *illusio* is exposed to the world, which makes it difficult for the involved parties to continue playing the game. Consequently the 'apostate' must be put out of action in order to prevent the game from falling apart. In all public forums, Roberto was the 'apostate' of *moral interchangeability* in as much as he stressed the overall need for participation and the rejection of personalism. Other neighborhood leaders who felt threatened by Roberto, did everything they could to undermine his position by exposing the fragmented structure of the *ethic of responsibility* and revealing Roberto's continued practice of *moral interchangeability*.

Below I analyze neighborhood leaders' altered room for manoeuvring that has been established by participatory initiatives. I furthermore examine the continuous manipulations of both *moral interchangeability* and the *ethic of responsibility*. In sum, this part clarifies the consequences of introducing participatory politics for the understanding and performance of moral neighborhood leadership in Milagres.

### 5.2 The secret meeting at Chíco's – Part One

PT came to power in Recife in November 2000, and already in April 2001, the first Orçamento Participativo meetings were held. At the first regional assembly meeting in each neighborhood, people registered as individual citizens or as members of an association, such as a neighborhood association. The registration becomes important at the following meeting, where the members of the registered associations meet in groups to choose delegates for the Regional Budget Forums (RBF), which supervise the year-long process of implementing the chosen priorities in the neighborhood. As described in Part Two, the system is simple. For every 10 members of a group, 1 delegate is chosen. This means that for a neighborhood association seeking influence, it becomes important to gather many people for the first regional assembly meeting, in order to get a large number of delegates at the next meeting where only the members of the association meet. At a subsequent second regional assembly, the chosen delegates vote for two councilors per micro-region[78] to sit on the Municipal Budget Council (MDC). MDC handles the practical organization of the Orçamento Participativo city-wide and discusses the project in general. The position as councilor is therefore extremely coveted by the participants[79].

The first regional assembly meeting in Milagres was set for June 1, 2001. Roughly a month before, several neighborhood leaders were gathered at Centro Social, and the approaching Orçamento Participativo meeting came up. Teresa was very enthusiastic: "The interesting thing is to come as a group. We have to mobilize people to come, because those who bring the highest number [of people] can decide the priorities. *É massa* [it's the greatest]!" Roberto promised to make an informative meeting for all the leaders on May 11. He would borrow transparency sheets at the municipality and explain all about Orçamento Participativo. The meeting was to take place at Centro Social at 20:00. Chíco, Edvaldo, Teresa, Nelson, Noel and I showed up at that time, but an hour later Roberto had still not appeared, so we headed for a nearby bar to have a drink.

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[78] Recife is divided into 18 *micro-regiões* [micro-regions]. The neighborhoods of Milagres, Coque and Ilha Joana Bezerra constitute *micro-região* 1.3.
[79] See Appendix Five for further explanation of the process

Then came Roberto. All the leaders recognized his car, but only Teresa and I waited. Roberto followed us to the bar, where I asked him if he considered holding the meeting the next day. ”No”, Roberto answered. ”I don’t think that I want to do it any longer”. Roberto was irritated because none of the leaders bothered to wait for him. I said that maybe the problem was that the other leaders did not want to be educated by him, to which Roberto only smiled.

As the date for the first regional assembly got closer, frustration increased. On May 27 Teresa, Luís and I accompanied Roberto to a PREZEIS election in Mangueria de Torre, another *favela* in the centre of Recife, which Roberto was in charge of. Sitting outside the election room, Teresa voiced her concern with the still non-existing information campaign about the Orçamento Participativo meeting: ”The [Campina] leaders don’t know anything about the process of Orçamento Participativo. They don’t want to know”. Roberto joined us, quickly sensing Teresa’s troubled mood: ”Hi, *companheira* [comrade], how are you doing?”. ”Fine”, Teresa replied. ”I just think that we have to find a way to convoke people for the meeting on Friday”. Roberto became irritated: ”I’ve already tried to arrange a meeting, but they [the Campina leaders] didn’t want to participate [...] Chíco later tried to get information [about Orçamento Participativo] at the municipality, but he didn’t succeed”. When Roberto again resumed his work managing the election, Teresa explained why Roberto ought to arrange the information campaign: ”It’s only Roberto who knows about Orçamento Participativo, about PREZEIS; who knows how to order a *carro do som* [a van with loudspeakers driving around making public announcements]. You heard yourself that Chíco wasn’t able to get any information, and neither can Luís nor me”. Luís agreed: ”It has to be Roberto who does it. He is ahead of things. He’s the one who knows about Orçamento Participativo”.

The following day it became known in Milagres that the Orçamento Participativo meeting would be held at the créche in Marineira. Usually all big events in Milagres take place at Centro Social or at the Hospital Dom Pedro II, both located in Campina. Initially the idea was to hold the meeting at Hospital Dom Pedro II, but the municipality had changed the location. Teresa told me over the phone that Severino had gone to the municipality to try to stop the

meeting from taking place. ”They [the Campina leaders] think that it will be held there [in Marineira] just to damage them [the Campina leaders]”, Teresa told me with a laugh.

The next morning I went to Campina to find out what was going on. Edvaldo, a Campina leader, was relaxing in the shade outside his house. I asked him if he was going to the Orçamento Participativo meeting. ”Why does it [the Orçamento Participativo meeting] have to be held at the créche, when there is a much more suitable place [i.e. Centro Social]?”, Edvaldo said. “Chíco is at the municipality right now trying to find out why it is being held there. If they don’t change the locality, we’ll try to prevent the meeting from taking place”. The next day was Thursday May 31. Once more I was in Campina where I met Luís, who was making *porta a porta* [going from door to door] to inform the residents about the meeting the following day. ”They [the Campina leaders] held a secret meeting yesterday”, Luís exclaimed. ”The municipality doesn’t want to hold the meeting at Centro Social because it would disturb the classes. But they [the Campina leaders] think that *we* moved it to the créche to give an advantage to Marineira[80]

I had arranged an interview with Edvaldo at 19:00, but when I got to his house he was about to leave for yet another ’secret’ meeting only for the Campina leaders at Chíco’s house. He invited me to join him, which I did. When we got there, Chíco was waiting outside his house with Joares, a friend of Severino’s, Celso, who manages the local public radio station in Campina; Claudio, a friend of Chíco’s and Nenega, the sister of Jarbas, who is a former president of Conselho dos Moradores. Chíco explained the reason for this secret meeting: ”We have to arrange what to do tomorrow. Roberto and Luís moved the meeting knowing that they don’t have any support in Campina. We [the Campina leaders] want to work together, but they want to *rasgar* [split up the group]. If that’s what they want, that’s how it’ll be!” We went into the patio in front of his house to wait for Félix, the president of Centro Social, and Nelson, the president of Conselho dos Moradores. With their arrival, the meeting began.

[80] Luís was referring to the fact that if the meeting was held in Marineira, more people from that area would show up, thus making possible a higher number of delegates from Marineira.

Edvaldo started: ”Luís and Roberto haven’t shown any interest in informing people about Orçamento Participativo. They have an interest in holding the meeting at the créche because then it’ll be their people who show up. We have to mobilize our people or back out”. Claudio took over: ”We can’t just refuse to act. We also have to show that it is wrong. They [the municipality] have to know that they made a mistake”. Nelson was becoming excited: ”Let’s go to the front! We need a *carro do som* [a van with speakers] in order to explain to the residents why the place [the créche] isn’t adequate. We have to explain why we mobilize”. Claudio agreed: ”People will be outraged. They’ll say ’what *is* this?’”. Joares wanted to focus on the meeting: ”But our objective still is to *levar*[81] [bring] our people tomorrow”. Edvaldo disagreed: ”Why should we bring anyone, when we don’t agree with the process?” Not being able to reach agreement whether or not to bring any residents, they returned to the discussion about the *carro do som*, which resulted in Celso phoning Eriberto, the politician connected to Noel and Félix. ”We need a *carro do som*”, Celso told him. ”We’re all here. Is it possible? This is serious”. Eriberto explained that the vans at his disposal were booked, but that he would try to find another one. Counting on Eriberto, the participants at the secret meeting agreed to position the van outside the créche from 18:00 the following day. The idea was to inform all appearing residents about the Marineira leaders’ ”manipulation”. With this item settled, they again began to discuss whether or not to bring any residents to the meeting. Edvaldo would go the meeting, but he did not want to bring anyone. Joares was in total disagreement, arguing that ”if we show up without any residents, they’ll [the Marineira leaders] say that we are just agitators. If we don’t bring anyone, they’ll hold the meeting anyway and they’ll [the Marineira leaders] get all the delegates”. They agreed to solve the dispute by a voting. Only Claudio and Joares voted for the bringing of residents, and so the decision was to show up without any residents.

[81] When the leaders talk about ’bringing’ the residents, the implied meaning is indirectly bringing the residents by making *porta a porta* [going door to door] informing about the meeting. This entails that the Campina leaders try to convince the residents to vote for the priorities that they [the Campina leaders] prefer, and to register as members of the associations in Campina, primarily Centro Social.

The Orçamento Participativo meeting was set to 19:00, but people started to register at the computers lined up at the entrance an hour before. Chíco, Nelson, Celso and Edvaldo were standing in the large dining hall inside the créche, so I approached them with a ”tudo bem [is everything OK]?” ”No” Chíco bursted out. ”It’s not OK. We’re being ignored!” I did not feel at ease standing in their crowd. I sensed that Chíco’s shouting also attracted attention to my person, so I went to buy a mineral water. When I got back, Chíco and Nelson were standing outside the créche arguing loudly with José Carlos, the politician and city councilor from the Communist Party, who had just arrived. Chíco directly accused Roberto for moving the meeting to the créche and made innuendos of José Carlos’ involvement in the ”manipulation”. José Carlos became agitated, arguing that he had always worked for the community, and not for individuals. Luís and Roberto came shortly after, followed by Chíco who also entered the créche. When passing, he gave Roberto’s arm a gentle squeeze before proceeding towards the other end of the entrance where he started to speak with his brother Isténio in a low voice. When Teresa came, Roberto took her and Luís outside. ”Our strategy is as follows”, Roberto explained. ”After the presentation, five residents will be given the floor. It is important that we speak; that we explain what priorities to chose”. Back in the créche, Roberto was uncertain how they should register, but decided to register as member of Comissão Central, encouraging other residents to do the same. The actual meeting took place in the large yard behind the building. Rows of seats were arranged opposite a long panel, where the people from Orçamento Participativo were sitting. The Campina leaders were standing behind the rows of seats in a small crowd. When João Costa, the coordinator of Orçamento Participativo made his presentation, only half of the seats were taken. The coordinator then announced that five residents would be given the opportunity to voice their opinions. Roberto, who was sitting at the front row, got up and shouted: ”Roberto, Luís and Teresa”. Severino also stated his name. Luís was first up. He stressed the need to vote for habitation, sanitation and employment. Next one was Roberto. Besides talking about priorities, he emphasized the relationship between José Carlos and Milagres: ”I just want to say that José Carlos isn’t just a politician. He’s our friend, who’s

our friend, who's always fought for us". Then Severino took the floor: "As a spokesman for a local group [i.e. the Campina leaders], I want to mention a problem concerning the realization of this meeting. It has been said that the meeting should be held at Hospital Dom Pedro II, but eventually it was moved to the créche. The créche hasn't got a tradition for this kind of arrangement. We've always held arrangements at Centro Social because it can house more people. [...] We can see now that the seats are only half taken, so we'll end up choosing only 25 delegates because of lacking information". Teresa was the last one to speak: "I just want to answer Severino. I agree that Centro Social is a more suitable locality, but the municipality chose the créche. It is the associations who have no interest in informing about the meeting; *they* have no commitment to the community". After the voting on budget priorities, I went out to the entrance to get the results from one of the people working the computers. Out of 245 participants, 142 voted, giving the highest score to 'employment', 'habitation' and 'sanitation'. 74 residents registered as members of the Comissão Central, meaning that on the subsequent meeting restricted only to these members, Comissão Central could potentially chose 7 delegates. When the meeting ended, I went with Roberto, Teresa and Luís to Lindalva's bar in Marineira to discuss the events of the evening.

### 5.3 Neighborhood leaders' altered room for manoeuvring

In order to grasp the course of events described above, it is important to examine the local understandings of neighborhood leaders' altered room for manoeuvring generated by participatory projects. The Campina leaders accuse Roberto of arranging the move of the meeting from Hospital Dom. Pedro II to the créche to secure more votes for his priorities and also for Comissão Central, subsequently making possible the election of Roberto for councilor at the Municipal Budget Council. Noel later argued that "Roberto chose the place he wanted and the day he wanted. He preferred to hold it at the créche to get the majority of the votes so he could become councilor". Edvaldo agrees: "He [Roberto] only wanted to do it his way. [...] Now the community loses because of them [the Marineira leaders]". However, no one knew for certain if Roberto had

anything to do with the moving of the meeting. Tian Sørhaug argues that a leader creates desires among his followers or colleagues (1996a:30) – and, we might add, among his opponents and competitors. The strength of these desires transfers to the leader the capacities necessary to satisfy them. Instead of perceiving the leader as a normal person, people see their own expectations and fantasies about the leader. The leader becomes a *fantastical object*. This puts him in a vulnerable position, since it can be hard to live up to the collective fantasies created around him. Roberto is a *fantastical object,* a *fantastical leader* in Sørhaug's sense[82]. To people in Milagres he is neither real nor fantasy, but positioned in-between. This ambiguous position is established through his involvement in participatory projects. The other neighborhood leaders in Milagres were convinced that Roberto had an almost unlimited room for manoeuvring because of his involvement in the projects. Still, the majority of the leaders had no exact understanding of the scope of the room for manoeuvring. Instead they created fantasies about it which conjured up a picture of Roberto as a *fantastical leader*. After the meeting I talked to Noel: "Roberto can call the municipality directly", Noel said. "We don't have access to those things. [...] He has the mayor in the palm of his hand. He can do whatever he wants, but he doesn't do anything". Participatory projects do not yield immediate concrete results the way *assistencialismo* does. A leader involved in *assistencialismo* relationships can prove his political abilities by referring to "small goods" distributed by him. In contrast, Orçamento Participativo does not yield any results until the following year when the chosen priorities are implemented – and even then it can be difficult to determine if the *fantastical leader* played a decisive role in the process because of the participatory character of the project. The other neighborhood leaders therefore had no exact knowledge of Roberto's political capabilities. It was interesting, though, that through stylized performances, Roberto indicated an almost unlimited room for manoeuvring. An important element of these performances is the symbolic meaning of his mobile telephone. At all meetings,

[82] I distinguish between the *charismatic* leader described in Part Three and the *fantastical leader*. While the former acquires his charisma because of the possibilities created by *assistencialismo* relationships, the latter becomes fantastic by virtue of the room for manoeuvring created by participatory projects.

Roberto put his telephone on the table, spinning it around again and again on its curved back, implicitly forcing other people to look at it. He always picked it up when it rang, no matter the importance of the meeting, leaving the proceedings suspended until he finished the phone call. The phone acquired significance in other instances as well. During carnival, Roberto phoned the municipality and arranged for a group of musicians to parade the streets of Milagres. Roberto told me that this was only possible with the new city government (PT). Roberto several times recounted the same story to describe the initial phase of his leadership:

> ”Shortly after I got elected [for COMUL], a resident showed up at my door. ’The sewer at my street is clogged’, he said. I replied that ’what I can do, my friend, is this’. I had a telephone, so I called COMPESA [the public cleaning company]. I told them what was happening, the street name, and so forth. And then the guy at COMPESA arranged the service”.

Stylized performances like the ones described above gave rise to fantasies of unlimited possibilities realized through the use of the telephone. In this way Roberto participated in the creation of collective fantasies where the telephone became a symbol of his capacities.

Prudent leaders, such as Roberto, with a strong ’feel for the game’ knew how to support the idea of the unlimited possibilities of this room for manoeuvring through stylized performances. However, as the strength of the fantasies increases, so does the risk of devastating criticism, because the *fantastical leader* is almost always unable to satisfy the enormous desires of his followers. In other words, the better the stylized performance, the greater the risk of criticism.

We must not forget that compared to other neighborhood leaders, Roberto’s room for manoeuvring *is* indeed very large. In order to get things done, the neighborhood leaders generally activate unilateral *assistencialismo* relationships with politicians[83]. In contrast, the neighborhood leader involved in participatory projects is located in several overlapping social networks. Through PREZEIS, Roberto participates in CDU[84], which is the most important forum in Recife for urban planning. As the representative of PREZEIS, the other partici-

[83] At the secret meeting at Chíco’s, Celso used this strategy to organize a *carro do som*.
[84] *Conselho de Desenvolvimento Urbano* [The Committee for Urban Development]

pants have to respect his opinion, and often some of them seek his support. Roberto furthermore participates in meetings at the municipality which treat PREZEIS and Orçamento Participativo. PREZEIS is closely connected to Orçamento Participativo, since the two projects cover many of the same political areas, such as infrastructural improvement.

The projects of the NGOs, such as Cendhec, often depend on close collaboration with neighborhood leaders. All the workers at Cendhec are from the middle class and have no direct access to the *favelas*. Therefore they need the neighborhood leaders. Sergio, a lawyer at Cendhec, argued that ”we [at Cendhec] don’t know the area, but Roberto and Luís do. They play an important role”. At a meeting at Cendhec, Sergio expanded on this: ”We are extremely connected to the leaders. If we didn’t have PREZEIS, we wouldn’t have any relations with the communities”.

Through PREZEIS, Orçamento Participativo, and forums like CDU and NGOs like Cendhec, the neighborhood leader becomes enmeshed in social networks in which he has an important position. This significant position makes it possible for the leader to influence the political process in a profounder way than through *assistencialismo*. The fantasies about the *fantastical leader* are buttressed when he succeeds in using his position to improve the conditions of his area.

### 5.4 Introducing an ethic of responsibility

Another reason for the importance of Roberto to the NGOs and Orçamento Participativo is his constant promotion of *participation* in public. Adelmo, a journalist working at the NGO FASE, stated that ”because of Roberto, Milagres is a good area regarding participation”. At a COMUL meeting in Milagres, a resident from Marineira accused PREZEIS of not helping her when she needed it. Roberto replied that ”COMUL doesn’t fight for single individuals. We have always fought as a collective”. Likewise, sitting outside DAC, the domino league in Campina, Roberto was confronted by Mauricio, a young man complaining about his unlucky situation as unemployed. ”It is your responsibility to arrange something”, Mauricio argued. ”I’m in your hands”. Roberto was sitting beside Mauricio

without facing the latter. When Roberto replied, it seemed as if he was talking to the entire crowd present and not only to Mauricio. ”I am elected, but I don’t work like that”, Roberto said in a loud sharp voice. ”People have to participate. Once, Luís dragged a lamp post [to help getting street lighting] and everybody thought that it was cool, but not me. We pay taxes so the municipality has to solve those things. [...] It is not sufficient just to pass your request to José Carlos and then you’ll get work. People have to participate in the political process”. If we compare this instance with statements made by João Costa, the coordinator at Orçamento Participativo, we can detect a similarity in the use of words. At a public meeting in Boa Vista, a neighborhood in the centre of Recife, João Costa said that ”now the city asks you to participate. [...] It is also possible to criticize, but it starts with participation [...] the government understands that participation is crucial”. I argue that neighborhood leaders like Roberto are important to the municipality and the NGOs, because they use the same rhetoric as these institutions. The neighborhood leaders promote the ideas that anchor the practice of the NGOs and Orçamento Participativo. In other words, they act as extensions of these institutions.

Here we notice the difference between the leadership described in Part Three and the leadership publicly promoted by Roberto. Most of the neighborhood leaders in Milagres derive their legitimacy from stylized performances, one of which is making *ações* [pieces of work], such as fixing a broken lamp post or sealing the cracks in the floor of a barrack. In contrast, Roberto argues that the residents themselves are responsible for the improvement of their conditions: ”You’ll never see me cleaning the sewers, because that’s not my job as a representative”, Roberto argued. ”My job is to inform and discuss political issues and make things work in collaboration with the community”. Hence, the resident is given the role as *active* agent who ideally anchors all practices in a single morality of responsibility. According to this moral understanding, it is immoral to make personal agreements through *assistencialismo*. Transparency and clarity are positively laden with value. The consequence for the neighborhood leader is that he becomes a distributor of *information* to all interested parties. Participatory projects furthermore stress the equal participation of all citizens. This

means that the *communitarian ethic*, with its emphasis on the superior moral status of the restricted community, is immoral as well. Below, I have outlined the basic traits of the two *dispositifs* which I analyze in this thesis in order to visualize their contrasting moralities. I must stress that this scheme is an *ideal* depiction of the functioning of the dispositional normativities. As stated in Part Four, *participation* constitutes a fragmented normative logic which impedes the ideal functioning of this *dispositif*. Still, this does not change the fact that it is the normative logic as an ideal which participatory projects promote.

| **Moral interchangeability** | **Ethic of responsibility** |
|---|---|
| Ambiguity | Clarity |
| Different moralities | One morality |
| Decisions based on individual interpretations of the context | Decisions based on the ethic of responsibility |
| The leader as the active agent | The resident as the active agent |
| The *restricted community* has the highest moral value | The *open society* has the highest moral value |
| Participation by the prudent neighborhood leader | Participation of all interested parties |

### 5.5 Defying visibility – promoting clarity

In Part Three I argued that visibility is vital for the performance of neighborhood leadership. The *ethic of responsibility* introduced through participatory projects defies this visuality. It is impossible for the neighborhood leader involved in PREZEIS or Orçamento Participativo to be seen in the neighborhood on a daily basis; there are simply too many meetings. Instead, the visual leader becomes a leader *in writing*. At URB [the municipal department working with PREZEIS], all PREZEIS participants use a special note pad. On the bottom of every page it says "*É bom evitar comunicações verbais. Comunicar sempre por escrito*" [It is desirable to avoid verbal communication. Always communicate in writing]. At a meeting at Fórum do PREZEIS, this rule was emphasized. A participant wanted

to make a verbal complaint, to which Heúnar, one of the coordinators replied: “Make a document. We do serious work here!”

The visual leader solves most of his problems *na rua* [on the street] through personal contacts. This was made clear at a meeting in Centro Social. Teresa, who was working as an accountant, presented the monthly balance sheet to the committee. It showed that Isténio, Chíco’s brother, owed the association 250 reais. Chíco stated that “I’ll discuss it with him”, to which Félix, the president of Centro Social, commented that “these discussions are reserved for the street”. If we compare this instance with a different meeting also occurring in Milagres we can identify the difference between *moral interchangeability* and the *ethic of responsibility*. This meeting was about a local conflict over an individual plot in Milagres. Roberto was accused of having known about the illegal augmentation of the plot without reporting it. At the meeting Roberto defended himself: “The people who don’t participate like to insinuate. It would be better if you sought the correct information in order to avoid insinuating. I do serious work and if anybody thinks that… I think that you should say it to my face and afterwards we’ll go to the court to try the case”. In the latter example Roberto rejects the possibility of solving the matter *na rua* and instead radically suggests that they take it to court. In other words, the possible manipulation of several moral resources is no longer possible. Instead, the *ethic of responsibility* becomes ubiquitous.

The lack of visibility has consequences for the relationship with the residents. Marcus Antonio stated that “I never speak with them [the neighborhood leaders], because I never see them”. Maria Dulce concurred: “I don’t see him [Roberto] around here”. Roberto was well aware of this problem: “When I started as coordinator [for PREZEIS] I became distanced from the community because of the magnitude of the workload”. Roberto argued that his absence in Milagres caused rumors about him: “I am distant from the community, so these people with polluted minds [i.e. the Campina leaders] are left alone. [...] These *fofoquinhas* [small rumors] are caused by this distanciation”. In short, the absence of the visual leader is interpreted as a sign of a lack of commitment to the

community, in spite of the possible positive results of his involvement in participatory projects.

### 5.6 Information is crucial

The normative understanding promoted by participatory projects such as PREZEIS defines the role of the neighborhood leader as a distributor of information to all interested parties. However, the level of knowledge of PREZEIS among residents in the *favelas* affected by the project is low. According to a survey made by several NGOs in 2000, only 486 (15%) out of 3,294 respondents in 32 ZEIS areas in Recife knew about PREZEIS (Centro Josué de Castro 2000:9). This indicates that the neighborhood leaders do not fulfill their obligations. Renato, a social worker at Cendhec, argued that ”information is the key. The leaders pass on information according to their personal understandings. This is a huge problem for PREZEIS”. Circe, a municipal worker involved with PREZEIS, expressed a similar opinion: ”The leaders want to keep the power, so they don’t communicate anything”. Thelma, another municipal worker, expanded on this: ”If you keep the information to yourself, then you can act as you please”. Roberto was constantly criticized for keeping information to himself in order to ’act as he pleases’. Nelson, the president of Conselho dos Moradores, argued that ”he [Roberto] doesn’t communicate anything, and when he does, it’s always too late. [He waits until the last moment] because he doesn’t want to work with the community, he only wants to work with his own people”. I witnessed several instances where Roberto did not communicate important information until the last moment. When ETAPAS, an NGO, gave a course on computers, Roberto communicated the information on the day of enrolment. Consequently, only Luís, Teresa and himself participated. Chíco was frustrated about this incident: ”They [the Marineira leaders] only make positions available for their friends [...] I’m against their way of working. Everything I know, I pass on to the community”. One can also wonder why Roberto was late the night he was supposed to give information about the Orçamento Participativo meeting. By being late he avoided communicating anything to the other

leaders while still adhering to the *communitarian ethic* by accusing them for not wanting to participate.

### 5.7 Manipulating the two dispositifs

According to interacting agents (other neighborhood leaders, workers at NGOs and the municipality), leaders involved in participatory projects, such as Roberto, possess information which they are obliged to share with the community. The *fantastical leader* becomes exposed to criticism when perceived as failing to fulfill these obligations. This disappointment leads other neighborhood leaders to see the *fantastical leader* as adhering to the *moral interchangeability.* Luciano, the president of the domino league, argued that ”Roberto is close to the city government [because of his job as *assessor parlamentar* for José Carlos], so he can’t be in opposition to them [...] He is dependent on José Carlos”. Edvaldo was just as sceptical of Roberto’s connection to the politician: ”José Carlos finds jobs for people through the municipality, but Roberto and Luís only give them to their friends [...] Roberto doesn’t work for the community. His first priority is the politician”. Both these leaders seem to argue that Roberto displays an adherence to the personalistic morality described in Part Three. Even though Roberto *publicly* promotes the *ethic of responsibility*, his real intentions are perceived as anchored in the normative logic of *moral interchangeability*.

Neighborhood leaders, such as Roberto, do not just enter the participatory projects as ’tabula rasae’. They are habituated agents acting according to established normative understandings. Bourdieu specifically emphasizes that it is extremely difficult to alter practical knowledge, because it is an *embodied* understanding of the social world (1997b:99). When it does occur, Bourdieu argues that it is equivalent to a second birth (1990:69). The neighborhood leader acts according to internalized dispositions for actions which make possible the manipulation of several moral resources. The *ethic of responsibility* did not simply erase the *moral interchangeability*. In the Brazilian context, the *ethic of responsibility* is added to the already existing repertoire of moral resources. This created ambiguous stances towards leaders involved in participatory projects. Noel voiced his frustration: ”He [Roberto] doesn’t work according to *assisten-*

*cialismo*. But when he needs people, doesn't he go to their door? My friend Roberto doesn't work with *assistencialismo*, but people only see him before an election".

In "Algeria 1960" (1979) Bourdieu describes an Algerian sub-proletariat incapable of acquiring a *habitus* corresponding to the current economic and political situation (op.cit. 66). Without the means to control their situation, they cannot do the calculation and forecasting demanded by an expanding economic system. In the new urban context, they are deprived of the security given by the traditions of a village community. The consequence is a "fatalistic resignation" where "a parasitic existence becomes natural and then habitual" (op.cit.67). The contextual differences notwithstanding, we can use Bourdieu's analysis to understand the social reality in Milagres. As described in Part Three, neighborhood leaders use their leadership as a survival strategy. I argue that it is utopian to consider their practices as purely selfless concern for the community. When they *can*, they work for the community, but many times they have to concentrate on individual needs. The *ethic of responsibility* focuses on the conscious moral citizen. This ideal is still a goal set too high for people living in highly unstable and insecure social conditions. Isabella, the president of Comissão Central described the situation to me:

> "The standard of living limits the scope of action for many people. Look at the guy who makes a living doing odd jobs, who works a bit here, works a bit there, who has six kids and a wife cleaning other people's houses. He doesn't know if he will have money tomorrow to buy bread for his children, but he knows that if he doesn't buy any, they'll starve. How can you raise his political awareness? How can you convince him that it's a good thing to participate?"

The leaders therefore constantly use available moral resources, of which *ethic of responsibility* is only one. Like the Algerian sub-proletariat, they are positioned between different moral domains with the consequence being a generally sceptical attitude towards the ideal of responsible participation and the neighborhood leaders' promotion of it. This scepticism was further supported by the fragmented structure of the morality described in Part Four.

### 5.8 The secret meeting at Chíco's – Part Two

Prior to the secret meeting, the Campina leaders already perceived Roberto according to the *moral interchangeability*. The 'manipulation' with the location of the meeting was simply another manifestation of the interchangeability of moralities. To other neighborhood leaders, Roberto incarnates the ambiguities surrounding *participation*. Publicly he promotes the ideal of responsible participation in all contexts and rejects the continuous adherence to *moral interchangeability*. This implies a focus on transparent communication of information to all interested parties as opposed to restricted personal relations. However, the unproblematic functioning of this ideal is partly thwarted by the fragmented structure of the *dispositif* itself, partly by expectations set too high and partly by the threat it constitutes to the status of the neighborhood leaders. When these factors are added to an understanding of Roberto as adhering to the *moral interchangeability*, a different reading of the *ethic of responsibility* is created. It is no longer a potential overarching normative logic eliminating the *moral interchangeability*. It is yet another moral resource, in line with personalism, the *communitarian ethic* and the *will to struggle*. In sum, I argue that the *ethic of responsibility* has the character of a new *dispositif* but currently we are witnessing a process where it seems to be incorporated into the *moral interchangeability*[85].

Through stylized performances, Roberto stressed the *ethic of responsibility*. Still, we saw in Part Two and Part Three that he made use of personalism: In Part Two I described how Roberto activated personal relations in order to make it possible for Teresa to travel Brasilia with the other neighborhood leaders in PREZEIS and in Part Three I examined how he activated personal contacts at the municipality in order to change his son's school. In Part Five I showed how Roberto made use of the *will to struggle* when he threatened to take personal disputes with other leaders to the court. I will therefore argue that

[85] However, I do not argue that this is a general tendency. I only speak about the process in Milagres.

prudent leaders, like Roberto, interchange several moralities, one of which is the *ethic of responsibility*.

The meeting brought about an intensification of the conflicts between the neighborhoods leaders in Milagres. A couple of days later Teresa met Severino at Centro Social. He started reproaching Teresa for her speech at the Orçamento Participativo meeting, accusing her for ”throwing the associations out with the trash” because of her criticism of the Campina leaders. The next period was marked by intense struggles to secure enough delegates to get a position as councilor at the Municipal Budget Council. At the first meeting, people had registered as members of 11 different associations, which all met individually at subsequent meetings. Due to the increasing conflict, all 11 associations sided with either the Campina or the Marineira leaders. The candidate for the latter group was Roberto, while the candidate for the former was Severino. However, because of the small number of participants at the first meeting, Milagres was outnumbered by Coque[86] at the second regional assembly meeting, so Milagres did not get any seats at the Municipal Budget Council.

The result of the process was a loss for the community. Without any seats at the Municipal Budget Council, Milagres had fewer possibilities of influencing the development of the project. The potential collaboration across the borders of Marineira and Campina which could have resulted from the work with Orçamento Participativo was once more rendered impossible. The neighborhood leaders reassumed their ‘trench warfare’ of accusations and mutual attempts at eroding status and legitimacy. This development peaked during the period prior to the election of the new president for Conselho dos Moradores in March 2002 with the writing of a handout which accused Roberto of his obsession with ’important positions’ and preferential treatment of family and friends (See Appendix Six). As described in Part Three, accusations of other leaders’ wrongdoings are usually made *por trás* [in secret]. In the handout Roberto is publicly accused of extorting António, the manager of the créche, and favoring family members.

[86] A neighborhood in the same micro-region as Milagres.

# Part Six

## Conclusion

### 6.1 A summary of the main arguments

I have described neighborhood leadership in Milagres by focusing on the moral aspects of leaders' stylized performances. I suggested that the performance of leadership entails an active use of different moral resources. I have defined this practice as *moral interchangeability*. The ideal of neighborhood leadership is the *communitarian ethic* which gives moral superiority to the solidarious, restricted community. Due to the unstable social conditions in the *favelas* where the neighborhood leaders live, this ideal is impossible to uphold. The consequence is the active manipulation of moral resources of which I have focused on the *communitarian ethic,* the *ethic of responsibility* and the *will to struggle*.

I have shown how *moral interchangeability* is contested by an *ethic of responsibility* promoted through participatory projects. The latter reject the active use of different moral resources by stressing the superiority of *one* normative understanding. However, I have suggested that the *ethic of responsibility* is problematic in itself because it covers a field of contrasting moral elements. The promotion and acceptance of this morality is therefore equally problematic.

The leaders who promote an *ethic of responsibility* risk being exposed to criticism because they threaten the position of neighborhood leaders by stressing the active involvement of responsible residents. Furthermore, participatory projects create unprecedented room for manoeuvring for the leader. Fantasies about the scope of this activity generate desires among residents and other leaders which are difficult to fulfill for the person involved in the participatory projects.

The leaders do not just enter participatory projects as 'tabula rasae'. They are already habituated individuals who act according to *moral interchangeabil-*

*ity*. The consequence is a situation where the *ethic of responsibility,* rather than eliminating the *moral interchangeability,* becomes yet another moral resource for the prudent leader.

### 6.2 Morality as a resource

Throughout this thesis I have attempted to describe morality as a processual and fragile social configuration. I argue that for the neighborhood leaders, moralities are present *only* in practice as moral resources. I have used the concept of *dispositif* in an attempt to highlight the contingent nature of moralities in my description of neighborhood leadership. As such, *dispositif* is nothing but a theoretical metaphor used in an attempt to describe social change. The danger of using this concept is that everything can appear to find its place in a *dispositif*. I have tried to avoid this danger by defining *dispositifs* as local moral configurations which are constantly being displaced by the practices in which they assert themselves.

### 6.3 The future of participatory politics in Brazil

Roberto DaMatta tells the story of Pedro Honorato, an honest Brazilian politician, who was elected as mayor in a small village in the interior due to his high moral standards (1996). However, as a mayor he was expected to find jobs for family and friends, which he refused to do. Honorato was therefore perceived as a "bandit, [...] not reciprocating what he had been given" (op.cit.64). His honesty was the reason for his loss of contact with close friends and family members and he ended up gloomy and disillusioned.

In some ways, Roberto resembles Honorato. Towards the end of my fieldwork, Roberto began talking about leaving the participatory projects to focus on communitarian work in Milagres. He argued that his task as coordinator of PREZEIS created a distance between him and the community. "This gap is filled by the people who are against collective work, they interfere to… invent things [i.e. to criticize Roberto behind his back] but when I'm present these

*cabras safado* [immoral idiots] don't have the courage [to criticize me]". Like Honorato who do not act like other politicians, Roberto differs from the neighborhood leaders in Milagres[87]. His way of performing leadership is both perceived as a threat to the status of neighborhood leaders but it also promises to fulfill more needs than it can possibly satisfy. The consequence is a field of agonistic relations which undermine political work for the improvement of the community's social conditions. Roberto was aware of this and therefore considered abandoning the participatory projects.

I have suggested that my analysis can be perceived as a *critical case* (Flyvbjerg 2001:79) which yields general information about problems of poverty in Brazil (see section 1.3). I will therefore make some tentative suggestions about the broader implications of the conclusions in my thesis. DaMatta argues that what is needed for a democracy to function is the general adherence to *one* set of moral principles (1996:64). The constant oscillation between a personalistic credo and a *communitarian ethic* is not fruitful for a stable democracy based on equal universal rights. However, as argued above, the promotion of one normative framework is extremely problematic, not least because the demands it makes on poor citizens are impossible to fulfill. When the residents of the poor neighborhoods are urged to adhere to one moral ethic which in itself is fragmented, it is almost given in advance that the result will be scepticism, dissention and critique. Residents in poor areas will rather vote in accordance with the wishes of a neighborhood leader who promises immediate improvals than entering the political process themselves. The total results of all regional assembly meetings in Recife show that the neighborhood associations are still decisive for the residents' political involvement. Of the 26,257 persons who participated, 15,229 (58%) registered as members of neighborhood associations (Prefeitura do Recife 2001). If we consider Milagres, it may indicate that most of these residents voted according to the priorities defined by the neighborhood leaders. Hence, in Milagres, the ideal of the responsible involvement of all citizens is still far from realized.

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[87] Of course, Roberto also differs from Honorato in several ways. Roberto's public adherence to the *ethic of responsibility* is supported by a nation-wide project. In contrast, Honorato defies the local moralities only through his individual practices.

André, a municipal worker at Orçamento Participativo, argued that the neighborhood leaders are becoming 'irrelevant' to the political processes. Based on my findings I have to disagree. The strength of the leaders is apparent, not only in the results of the Orçamento Participativo meetings but also in the case of Roberto. His possible resignation can be seen as a sign of the strength of the *moral interchangeability* that is still active in Milagres. I will argue that if participatory projects are to succeed, the moralities at work in the poor areas must be grasped. In the daily struggles to find the means to survive, the call for political participation and the prioritization of one moral understanding are often written off as a waste of time by residents and many neighborhood leaders. In order for participatory projects to work, it is not enough simply to promote an ideal of participation. Bourdieu states that "only those with a future before them can undertake to master it" (1979:74). Hence, the people who are being urged to participate must have the knowledge, skills, and material *means* necessary to practice this ideal.

In October 2002, Luís *Lula* Ignácio da Silva, the leader of PT, became the new Brazilian president. Although he has promised to continue the economic adjustment programmes, it is likely that the Brazilian population will experience radical changes. With the new president, we can only hope that the poorest segments of society will be given a real chance to participate by improving their economic and social conditions. I will argue that until then, *moral interchangeability* will remain and so will the strong, charismatic neighborhood leader.

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Gifted dancers intuitively adapt to different styles of dances. They become bodily involved in the dance without having to think about the individual steps – they simply follow the rhythm of the music. While Luís was sceptical about the *salsa*, Roberto never missed an chance to dance an intimate *brega.* That was perhaps the biggest difference between the two.

# Summary

This thesis is an examination of how participatory politics affect the practices and local understandings of neighborhood leadership in a poor urban area in the Northeast of Brazil. The focus is on the moral aspects of the leaders' performances and the ways they are being contested as a consequence of participatory projects.

For the last 150 years, the urban context in Recife, which is the capital of Pernambuco in the Northeast of Brazil, has been marked by an increasing numbers of *favelas* [squatter settlements]. Currently, more than half of the city's 1.6 million inhabitants live in squatter areas which often lack basic social necessities, such as drainage, sewers and acceptable housing. Until the mid-1980's, the municipality refused to acknowledge the *favelas* as permanent settlements. The needs of the squatters were therefore not treated as serious political issues because the areas would probably be eradicated in the future. In the struggle to prevent eradication and to improve the conditions, neighborhood leaders have played an important role as intermediaries between the residents of their areas and various political agents.

Milagres is a *favela* corresponding to the description above. There are approximately 20 neighborhood leaders working with political issues in the area. The relationship between the neighborhood leaders of Milagres is marked by continuous conflicts between two sub-areas, Campina and Marineira. The social conditions of Marineira are superior to those of Campina and so a social hierarchy exists with Campina as the inferior part. These differences have determined the grouping of the leaders, who are divided in two groups; the 'Campina-leaders' and the 'Marineira-leaders'.

In this thesis I suggest that the performance of neighborhood leadership entails an active use of different moral resources. I have defined this practice as *moral interchangeability*. The ideal of neighborhood leadership is the *communitarian ethic* which gives moral superiority to the restricted community. Due to the unstable social conditions in the *favelas* where the neighborhood leaders

live, this ideal is impossible to maintain. The neighborhood leader works for the community when he can, but often he has to secure a basic subsistence level for himself and his family. The consequence is the active manipulation of moral resources: In public, the leader adheres to the *communitarian ethic*, but simultaneously, through personal relations with local politicians, he obtains financial or material support. In return, he has to make political propaganda for the politician in election periods. This manipulation of moralities is a contested issue among the leaders, who all – in public - adhere to the *communitarian ethic*.

I examine how the *moral interchangeability* is being contested by an *ethic of responsibility* promoted through participatory projects which reject the active use of different moral resources by stressing the superiority of *one* normative understanding. The *ethic of responsibility* gives moral precedence to the conduct of the responsible, informed citizen. Participation has gained foothold in the Brazilian context as a through international and national processes. International lending institutions promote participation to alleviate the negative consequences of radical economic structural adjustment programmes. Simultaneously, since last phase of the dictatorship which lasted from 1964-1985, organizations in the civil society have struggled to implement participatory projects which are at odds with the strategies of the lending institutions. While the Brazilian organizations define participation as a primary prerequisite for political projects, lending institutions perceive participation as the *means* to implement adjustment programmes. Hence, in the local social universe of Milagres, the moral logic which anchors participation is perceived as a tangle of fragmented and contrasting elements. The promotion and acceptance of this moral logic is therefore problematic.

The leaders who promote an *ethic of responsibility* risk being exposed to devastating critique because they threaten the position of neighborhood leaders by stressing the active involvement of the responsible residents. Furthermore, participatory projects create an unprecedented room for manoeuvring for the leader. Fantasies about this scope of activity generate desires among residents and other leaders which are difficult to fulfill for the person involved in the participatory projects.

The leaders do not just enter participatory projects as ‘tabula rasae’. They are already habituated individuals who often act according to the *moral inter-changeability*. The consequence is a situation where the *ethic of responsibility,* rather than eliminating the *moral interchangeability,* becomes yet another moral resource for the prudent leader.

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# Appendices

## Appendix One: Map of Recife


*fonte: Alheiros (1998)*

**Appendix Two: Overview of the neighborhood leader, associations and organizations**

Marineira leaders
Roberto
Luís
Teresa

Leaders supporting the Marineira leaders
Luciano
Isabella
Marcus
Lindalva

Campina Leaders
Chíco
Félix
Noel
Edvaldo

Leaders supporting the Campina leaders
Nelson
Severino
Jarbas
Isténio

Leaders who are ambiguous about their position
António

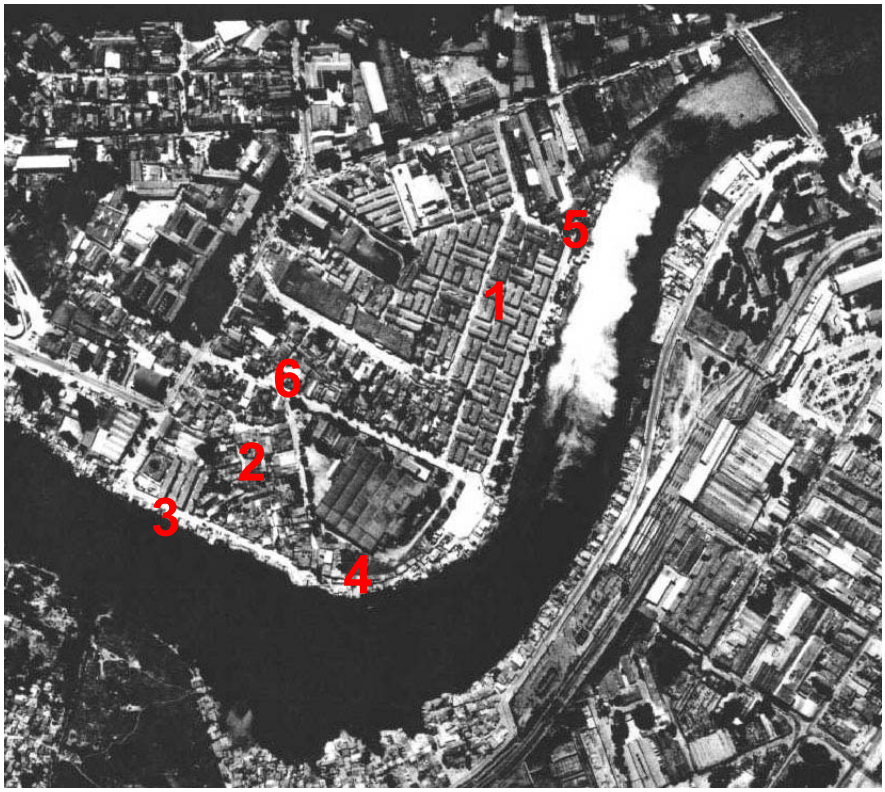
The main associations in Milagres

| | |
|---|---|
| Conselho dos Moradores | The only actual neighborhood association. While I was doing fieldwork in 2001, Nelson was president, but highly contested because of his lacking initiatives. In March 2002, Roberto was elected for president. |
| Centro Social | The Campina leaders are centered around Centro Social by all being part of the committee. Currently Centro Social serves mainly as the public school. The president is Félix. Teresa works as the association's accountant. |
| Comissão Central | During the dictatorship it was active as a forum for political debates. With the death of its founder, Arnaldo Holanda, its activities have dimin- |

| | |
|---|---|
| | ished. The current president is Isabella, and the vice is Roberto. |
| Participatory projects | |
| Orçamento Participativo | Participatory Budgeting. Through public meeting all over Recife, all citizens are invited to participate in the election of prioritizations for the municipal budget plans. |
| PREZEIS | A local project in Recife started in 1987 with the aim of legalizing the hitherto illegal squatter areas. This process takes place with the active participation of the affected squatters. Roberto is one of the coordinators of PREZEIS. |
| COMUL | The committees established in each of the squatter areas participating in PREZEIS. In Milagres, the participants are Luís and Noel. Roberto also participates in the COMUL-meetings due to his status as coordinator for the whole project. |
| Other organizations | |
| Cendhec | A local NGO which focuses on the conflicts regarding urban land rights. |

Neighborhood leaders from other areas participating in PREZEIS
Elaine
Cosmo
Bismarck (coordinator of PREZEIS)

## Appendix Three: Aerial photo of Milagres




Milagres seen from the air

1: Campina with the characteristic Promorar buildings.

2: Marineira

3: Roque Santeiro I-III

4: Beira Rio

5: Vila Nova

6: Beco do Esparadrapo

**Appendix Four: List of all presidents of Conselho dos Moradores**

The presidents of Conselho dos Moradores

| | |
|---|---|
| 1980-1982 | Eronildo Cardoso (Borracha) |
| 1982-1984 | Zé de Masã |
| 1984-1986 /88 | Jarbas |
| 1986-1988 | Severino |
| 1988-1990 or 1990-1992 | Luís |
| 1990-1994 or 1992-1994 | Jarbas |
| 1994-1998 | Arlindo Cunha |
| 1998-2000 | Gel |
| 2000-2002 | Nelson |
| 2002- | Roberto |

**Appendix Five: Overview of the process of Orçamento Participativo**

The process of Orçamento Participativo

| | |
|---|---|
| Regional Assembly Meeting<br>↓ | Budget priorities are chosen. People inscribe as single individuals or as members of an association. |
| Meetings for the associations<br>↓ | All participants meet with their associations in order to elect delegates for the Regional Budget Forums. All the people without an association meet for themselves. |
| Second Regional Assembly Meeting | Delegates vote for two councilors per region to sit on the Municipal Budget Council. This meeting is for the delegates of all the neighborhoods in each regions. Milagres, Coque and Ilha Joana Bezerra constitute *micro-região* [micro-region] 1.3, so at the Second Regional Assembly Meeting all delegates from these neighborhoods meet. |

## Appendix Six: The handout which accuses Roberto of extortion

**Keep your eyes open**

**António's cowardliness and Roberto's extortion**

When an election for Conselho dos Moradores is about to happen, it is normal that persons who are interested in participating and who want to put together an election list seek the support from friends, it is also normal that many errors are committed because of lack of experience or for other motives. What is not normal is that mister 'ROBERTO', the candidate for List Two, extorts António from the créche to join his lists against António's will; because the thing is that António and Roberto never got along very well. Roberto threatened to throw António out of the crèche's committee. With fear, António joined List Two.

**What I want is an important position**

It is certain that List Two isn't occupied with the neighborhood, but very much so with having important positions. Roberto wants to be in the Conselho dos Moradores, in the Orçamento Participativo, COMUL, PREZEIS, Comissão Central, Arco-Íris, the Duvidosas, the Boi Tua Mãe and the Communist Party. Ahh! Speaking of the Communist Party, Roberto is also a parliamentary advisor for the city councilor Paulo José Carlos, who only appears in Milagres every fourth year. This is the neighborhood that they exploit.

**Monkey business and swindle**

And the story about the course for new health workers, right! The community hasn't swallowed that one yet. A sister and a cousin of Roberto's were elected among the many people of the community who studied hard to be able to pass the test for the course. The swindle was stopped by the police. This was the only way to resolve the matter.

**Two years without Muganga**

List One has run the Conselho dos Moradores of Milagres for two years and called their list Muganga. The damned thing is that after two years of rule, the community hasn't seen Muganga yet. It has been two lost years without any struggle. The List One was a nil for the Left.

**Resume the fighting?**

The list Three appears to be better than the others and it is counting on a very strong support from the neighborhood . It is made up by people who first of all want to fight. Their proposal has been distributed in the neighborhood, and the name of their list is "Resume the fighting". Because it is a new person who's the list's candidate, the community ought to supervise his management in case he wins. What is expected of List Three is that the committee organizes and mobilizes the community in order to demand better life conditions for our population. Resume the protesting and direct our neighborhood towards a Government of the Young and the Workers.