

**ORDER.....AND PROGRESS?**

"It was in those days," said *dona* Eunice, "it was at the time of the war." "Ah! You say "at the time of the war."...." Fernando exclaimed, "the war you are talking about is the revolution of 64?!" "That's it, at the time this son of mine was in the army." "Ah!" said Fernando, "The revolution of 64....this is the first time I hear anyone speak of the revolution of 64 as a "war'." "Well, it was a war, wasn't it?" said *dona* Eunice, "my oldy said it was a war."<sup>1</sup>

Though it may have come as a surprise from *dona* Eunice, a washerwoman in her sixties from the Alto Santa Terezinha, the reference to the "Revolution of 64" as a "war" was not that far-fetched. Actually the Armed Forces regarded it in quite the same way in 1964. Inspired by the doctrine of National Security, they turned their attention to the "internal front" and the battle against what they perceived as a Communist threat to Western civilization. It was an aspect of the "new professionalism" of internal security and national development (Stepan, 1973). It provided an ideological justification for the intervention at a time when the Brazilian economy was stagnating and the populist mechanisms of political control seemed to be on the verge of breakdown, and for the subsequent attempt to reformulate the accumulation model in response to the crisis.

In this chapter, I shall discuss the 1964-1979 period, that is the period from the military take-over to the announcement of the *abertura* (opening), the gradual return to civilian government, by General Figueiredo, who became president in 1979. After a brief outline of the period, I shall review the main features of the bureaucratic-authoritarian regime's urban policies and show how they worked out in the case of Recife, focussing on the problems they failed to resolve, exacerbated or created. These problems and strains provide the raw material for the possible responses from the grassroots. In the final part of this chapter, I shall analyze how

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<sup>1</sup> *Dona* Eunice: "Foi nesse tempo, foi no tempo da guerra". Fernando: "Ah! A senhora está dizendo 'no tempo da guerra'....A guerra que a senhora está chamando é a Revolução de 64?!". *Dona* Eunice: "É aquela, agora que esse filho era soldado". Fernando: "Ah! A revolução de 64....É a primeira vez que eu ouço falar na....chamar a revolução de 64 de guerra". *Dona* Eunice: "É uma guerra né? Meu véio dizia que era guerra" (From an interview, October 13, 1988).

these responses were articulated and how in the course of the period under discussion, mostly under the protective wing of the church, new forms of neighborhood associativism emerged.

### 5.1. Love it or leave it: Brazil 1964-1979

Like the subsequent military take-overs in other Latin American countries, the intervention in Brazil showed that the linear relationship between economic growth and democracy predicted by modernization theories failed to materialize. The country became a model for the theorization of bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes (O'Donnell, 1973) and associated dependent development (Cardoso, 1973). In these theories, the rise of this new type of regime and the new accumulation model was linked to the exhaustion of the "easy phase" of import-substituting industrialization and the populist policies it had sustained.<sup>2</sup> The transformation of the post-war model of growth had already started during the Kubitschek administration, when the country became more clearly integrated into the circuits of transnational capital. From 1961 onward, however, Brazil witnessed a crisis of transformation, with declining growth of the GDP from 10.3% in 1961 to 5.3%, 1.5% and 2.4% in 1962, 1963 and 1964 and the increasing mobilization for "basic reforms" (Baer, 1979:79; Singer, 1976:69). The economic growth of the 1950s had exacerbated social, sectoral and spatial disparities and given rise to an increasing gap between the volume of production and the effective demand for the new products. The authoritarian intervention, sustained by a coalition of segments of the internal bourgeoisie, transnational capital and technobureaucrats, including the newly professionalized military, furthered the transition to a new model of accumulation. The shift toward the production of durable consumer goods and the internationalization of the economy were accompanied by a shift toward an "exclusionary model," in contrast to the faltering previous "inclusionary model" of expansion of the internal market for basic consumer goods which had sustained the populist mode of incorporation of the "urban masses." Army intervention broke down the population's defense mechanisms and facilitated a concentration of income that propped the internal market for the products of the new dynamic industries. At the same time, the low wages for the majority of the population were instrumental in creating new forms of integration into the international circuits of capital.

A profound restructuring of the economy and society was under way. Between 1960 and 1980, the share of the primary sector in the Brazilian economy

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<sup>2</sup> Since Brazil served as the model for these theories, we need not concern ourselves with the problems of generalizing the "model" to other Latin American countries (cf. Collier, 1979; Cammack, 1985). The "simple stage model" has been replaced by accounts examining the specifics of various countries.

dropped from 22% to 13%, whereas the secondary sector increased from 25% to 34%. The share of non-durable consumer goods in the production of the transformative industries dropped from 56% in 1959 to 34% in 1980. This process of restructuring was accompanied by a rapid "bureaucratization of society" (Diniz, Boschi & Lessa, 1989:39-42). The proportion of scientific and technical personnel in the economically active population increased from 11% in 1960 to 19% in 1980. The rapidly expanding state apparatuses absorbed a significant part of these new middle classes. Meanwhile, the urban dwellers who accounted for 45% of the Brazilian population in 1960 rose to 68% twenty years later, a process accompanied by a growth of the *favelas* (Santos, 1985; cf. Faria, 1983). The "exclusionary" nature of the process is expressed in the declining share of the poorest 50% of the population in GDP, which dropped from 17% in 1960 to 13% in 1980. The share of the richest 10% rose from 40% to 51%, leaving the country with one of the worst income distributions in the world (Santos, 1985; Smith, 1987). The real minimum wage index fell from 100 in 1960 to 62 in 1980 (Kucinski, 1982: 103).

The performance of the Brazilian economy in the first years after the *coup* remained sluggish, but by the end of the 1960s it entered a period of "miraculous" growth. In 1970, the growth rate of GDP was 8.8% and in 1973 it reached 14%. It was the period of *Brasil Grande*, "Love it or leave it," of "making the cake grow before dividing it," and of huge projects such as the Trans-Amazonian Highway. It was also the period when repression was harshest. Through Institutional Act No. 5 of December 1968, all constitutional guarantees were suspended and the national security regime was installed for an indefinite period in order to cope with student and labor opposition and an uncooperative Congress. Under the presidency of General Garrastazu Médici (1969-1974), the repressive apparatuses had a free hand in dealing with guerrilla movements and any other elements they deemed subversive.

By the mid 1970s, the growth model had started to generate its own tensions, which were exacerbated by the oil crises of 1973 and 1979. The 1975 growth rate of 5.6% compared bleakly to the exuberance of the preceding years. After some fluctuations, Brazil entered the 1980s with a negative GDP growth rate of minus 3.2% in 1981. This recession was triggered by the adjustment policies the Brazilian government adopted, independently of the IMF, in an attempt to cope with the mounting debt problem.

In this context, the *distensão* (decompression) President Geisel had announced in 1974, aimed at the institutionalization of an autocratic but *salonfähig* regime after the mafia practices of the Medici government, acquired a dynamics of its own. Electoral turn-outs in 1974 showed a pronounced increase in votes for the MDB opposition, which took the regime by surprise and encouraged more open opposition. Moreover, groups of entrepreneurs started pressing for a "dialogue," since they feared that economic policies might shift the burden of the downturn to

them, while protecting the state sector whose magnitude had rapidly increased in spite of the military's professed liberalism. Discontent also tended to grow among segments of the new middle classes that had rapidly grown in the context of conservative modernization. The emergence of these new middle classes was accompanied by a rapid growth of professional associations, particularly during the second half of the 1970s (Diniz, Boschi & Lessa, 1989). The discontent they expressed was not only related to the fact that the relatively favored position they had come to occupy during the miracle years was threatened. It was also related to an affirmation of the professional interests and outlooks of sectors of these new middle classes. Professional networks played an important role in the articulation of criticism of the bureaucratic-authoritarian regime. There also was a revival of student politics and there was a campaign for amnesty for political prisoners and exiles. Furthermore, the popular sectors started to stir again. The metal workers' strike in the ABC region of São Paulo in 1978 played an important role, as did the Cost of Living Movement, supported by the Ecclesial Base Communities (CEBs), neighborhood associations and similar organizations. It collected some 1,200,000 signatures on a petition for wage increases, a price freeze and land reform. The "new social movements" had made their entrance (Alves, 1985; Cruz & Martins, 1983; Sader, 1988; Skidmore, 1988). With the coming to power of President Figueiredo (1979-85), *distensão* turned into *abertura*, the gradual return to civilian government discussed in the next chapter.

## 5.2. Urban policies

In the aftermath of the Goulart administration, urban issues had become incorporated into the list of "basic reforms" and some steps were taken towards the formulation of a comprehensive approach, but these initial formulations were abandoned in 1964 to make a "fresh start" (Schmidt & Farret, 1986: 22, 32; Shidlo, 1990:47; Villaschi & Medeiros, 1990). The policies adopted by the new regime were marked by a high degree of political and financial centralization making the Brazilian municipalities dependent on federal and state level administrative apparatuses. After 1964 a National Housing Bank, the BNH, came to play a central role in financing urban development. "Planning," for which these arrangements provided the institutional framework, was *en vogue* under the new bureaucratic-authoritarian regime. All kinds of plans were manufactured to mark the path toward becoming a great nation. In the 1960s the formulation of "integral local development plans" at the municipal level became a requirement and from 1973 onward, an institutional structure aimed at a comprehensive approach to the "urban problem" emerged. In this section I will briefly discuss these developments before turning to the ones in Recife in the 1970s.

### 5.2.1. Administrative and financial centralization

The aspect of administrative centralization is clearly born out in the inaugural speech of Gustavo Krause, one of the last *bidnico* (appointed) mayors (1979-1982) of Recife. The description of what he called his "peregrination of confidence" aptly describes the pecking order at the time:

It began with the indication of my name by Governor Marco Maciel in whom we can glimpse the public vocation and the stature of a ruler -the political hope of Pernambuco and its people.

Thereafter came the homologation by the people of Pernambuco, through the sovereign vote of their representatives in the state legislative.

And now, the installation attended by Recife, in the person of its city councilors, the democratic synthesis of the citizens of this city (Krause, 1979:18).

With the 1966 revision of the electoral system (Institutional Act No. 3), direct elections for the mayors of 202 municipalities, including 25 capitals and cities in other areas considered vital for national security, such as mining centers, were abolished. The mayors were now appointed by the state governors who, in turn, were elected indirectly by state legislatures upon the "suggestion" of the President.<sup>3</sup>

Within the municipalities, the position of the executive -the mayor- was strengthened. Through the Constitution of 1967 and Constitutional Amendment No. 1 of 1969, the mayor was granted the right to submit legislative proposals and veto laws approved by the Municipal Council. Moreover, the budget became the exclusive competency of the executive and the Municipal Council did not have the right to amend it. The Municipal Council was left with the right to control and accept the accounts of the mayor. It was virtually subordinated to the executive and was left with very little to do but trivial pursuits.

The executive, in turn, was strongly subordinated to state and federal organs, partly due to the centralization of fiscal revenues. As a result of the 1966 fiscal reform, the municipalities were left with two direct sources of tax revenues (*recursos próprios*) instead of the previous five (Brasileiro, 1973:38). The municipalities' direct sources of revenue were the *Imposto Predial e Territorial Urbano* (IPTU) and the *Imposto Sobre Serviços* (ISS). These revenues were complemented by constitutionally transferred resources (*receitas de transferência*) consisting firstly of the *Fundo de Participação do Município* (FPM), which was managed at a federal level. This fund covered 17% of the amount collected through the *Imposto de Renda* (IR) and the *Imposto sobre Produtos Industrializados* (IPI). A second

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<sup>3</sup> The only significant elections remaining after 1966 were for a weakened federal congress, for state and municipal legislatures, and for the mayors of mostly small towns and rural municipalities.

source of transferred resources was the *Imposto de Circulação de Mercadorias* (ICM), managed at the state level, 20% of which was shared out among the municipalities.<sup>4</sup> Besides these two sources of revenue, municipalities could apply for transfers through *convênios* for the financing of specific projects. Finally, municipalities, could apply for credit from various agencies. The principal sources of long-term credit and main urban policy instruments were the *Banco Nacional de Habitação* (BNH) and the *Fundo Nacional de Apoio ao Desenvolvimento Urbano* (FNDU) (Dowbor, 1987: 70, 111; cf. Brasileiro, 1973; Schmidt & Farret, 1986:71). Thus the municipalities were strongly subordinated to higher level state apparatuses and came to depend heavily on funding through the BNH and the FNDU for the implementation of municipal plans. In fact the municipalities, the larger ones in particular, became the executors of plans devised at the federal level. Centralization and the elimination of meaningful elections were regarded as beneficial to efficient planning. The private consultancy firm that elaborated the *Plano de Desenvolvimento Local Integrado* (PDLI) for the municipality of Recife in 1970 commented, for instance, that this situation eliminated the friction between the various administrative levels, since the distribution of personnel over these levels could now be realized in a "harmonious way" (PDLI, 1970; cf. Fontes, 1986:339).

### 5.2.2. The National Housing Bank

The *Banco Nacional da Habitação* (BNH), created in 1964 together with the *Sistema Financeiro da Habitação* (SFH), became one of the main agencies for the implementation of urban policies. The central agency of the new housing policy, the BNH, was financed through "compulsory savings" imposed on the working population via the *Fundo de Garantia por Tempo de Serviço* (FGTS) founded in 1966. These funds were complemented by forms of voluntary saving. At the state level, housing policies were executed by the *Companhias de Habitação Popular* (COHABs), contracting private enterprises to do the actual building. The *Serviço Federal de Habitação e Urbanismo* (SERFHAU) was created as a coordinating agency in 1964, to strengthen planning mechanisms and promote technical train-

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<sup>4</sup> Of the total fiscal revenues in 1983, only 5.2% was directly collected by the municipalities against 57.8% by the federal government and 37% by the states. Redistribution of the available resources resulted in 48.8% for the federal government, 35.2% for the states and 16.4% for the municipalities. In the USA, by contrast, municipalities manage about 35% of the public resources (Dowbor, 1987:75, 111; cf. Schmidt & Farret, 1986:70-77).

ing.<sup>5</sup> At first the main aim of these new institutions was to provide housing for the poorer strata of the population in an attempt to legitimize the new regime. At the same time, the policies were intended to boost the construction industry and thus facilitate the economic recuperation from the crisis of the early 1960s (Shidlo, 1990:56).

Such objectives were not easy to reconcile, however. The overall economic policies contributed to a decrease in purchasing power of the minimum wage and thus undercut the possibilities for paying off installments on a house. The BNH, on the other hand, operated like any other commercial bank. The solution was presented by a policy reorientation converting the BNH into a second-line bank, in 1971. Rather than being directly responsible for the financing of housing and the surveillance of individual borrowers, the BNH was now to finance projects implemented by state or municipal agencies that were also made responsible for the surveillance of the borrowers. Simultaneously, attention shifted toward the financing of urban development, and in particular of the urban infrastructure. The share of housing programs in the activities of the BNH dropped from 93% in 1969 to 48% in 1976, after which it was to rise again to about 65%. The applications in urban development rose from 4.1% in 1969 to a high point of 34% in 1976, and stabilized at about 30% in the following two years (Azevedo & Andrade, 1982: 86; Maricato, 1987: 33-41).

Where housing policies are concerned, the initial BNH aim of providing housing for the lower income strata lost its prominence and was replaced by a policy aimed at the middle-income strata, which were in a better position to pay off installments. During a debate on urban policies in Recife in 1983 the BNH ventures in the area of popular housing were summarized as follows:

Initially the idea was to eradicate the *favelas*, but it did not fit with the income level of the inhabitants of the *favelas*. So they came up with the solution of building smaller houses to make them cheaper, but that did not work. So still smaller houses were made, but even then they were too costly in relation to the income level of the people they were built for. So it was diminished still further, and they made the *casa embrião* and that did not work either. So they did not make houses anymore, but started making terrains, so we had the *lotes urbanizados* (sites), the PROFILURB, but the urbanized sites also were expensive. It did not work. So instead of providing sites they turned to the consolidation of *favelas*, the

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<sup>5</sup> According to Bolaffi (1982) the creation of the SERFHAU would have been regarded as a joke, were it not for the tragic circumstances. The motive for its creation was the preoccupation with the effects of the huge number of houses that was supposed to be built with BNH financing. The SERFHAU regulations stipulated that the financing of municipal projects would be dependent on municipal development plans to be drawn up by private consultancy firms. This resulted in a proliferation of costly plans. Bolaffi estimates that between 1965 and 1972/73 about U\$ 200,000,000 was spent on "plans" which actually "were not worth the paper they were printed on."

PROMORAR.....In those eighteen years the *Banco Nacional de Habitação* "got out of the *favela* and returned to the *favela*" (cf. FIDEM, 1983:95).

In 1973 a *Plano Nacional de Habitação Popular* (PLANHAP) had been launched to retrieve the initial aims of the BNH. It was announced that in ten years the housing deficit for families earning between one and three minimum wages was to be eliminated, but the effects were negligible. The target population was redefined in 1975 so as to include people earning between three and five minimum wages, with the result that the poorest groups were excluded again. Other programs aimed at the lowest income groups, such as the *Programa de Financiamento de Lotes Urbanizados* (PROFILURB) launched in 1975 and reformulated in 1977, similarly failed to have much impact.

The *Programa de Erradicação da Sub-Habitação* (PROMORAR), once again aimed at the retrieval of the initial BNH-aims, was launched in 1979 partly in response to the increasing activity of neighborhood associations. The groups that had been marginalized due to the managerial logic of the urban and housing policies of the 1970s started to receive more attention in the context of the "politics of *abertura*." PROMORAR provided funds for the urbanization of *favelas* and rather than aiming at the removal of *favelas*, policies were now turned to the improvement of housing conditions through self-help programs. As we shall see in the next chapter, the PROMORAR-program was extensively propagated, particularly during the run-up to the 1982 elections, which were crucial in the return to civilian government.

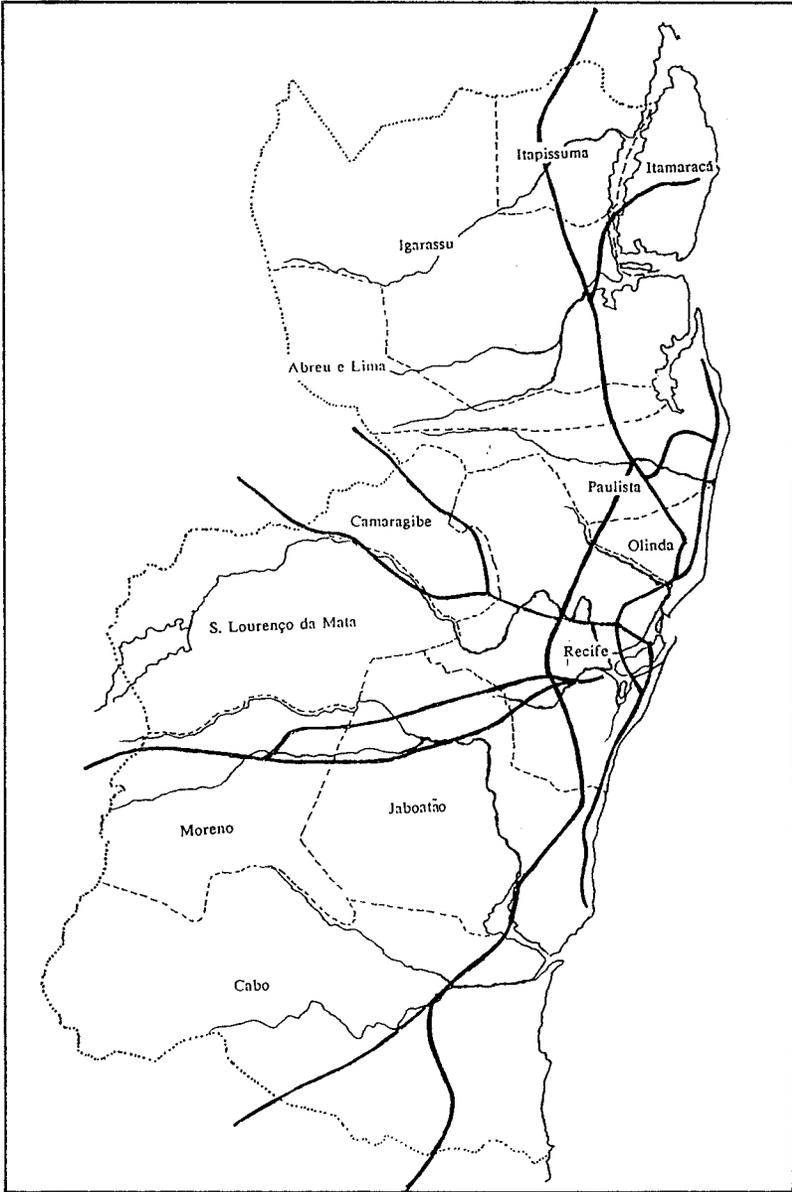
By then the BNH was heading for bankruptcy, however. With the mounting economic crisis and the consequent impoverishment of parts of the middle classes it had come to focus on, the bank was faced with an increasing number of defaulters (cf. Azevedo & Andrade, 1982; Azevedo, 1988; Maricato, 1987; Shidlo, 1990; Valladares, 1981). In 1986, under the *Nova República*, the BNH ceased to exist and its possessions and debts were transferred to the *Caixa Econômica Federal*.

### 5.2.3. Metropolitan planning

A third important feature of the post-1964 urban policies started to take shape in 1973. It marked a shift from sectoral approaches to a more comprehensive approach to spatial policies, the geo-politics for *Brasil Grande*, which also informed the 2nd National Development Plan of 1974. The institutionalization of nine metropolitan regions is one aspect of this shift.<sup>6</sup> The groundwork for the "metropolitan regions"

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<sup>6</sup> São Paulo, Porto Alegre, Curitiba, Belo Horizonte, Salvador, Recife, Fortaleza, and Belém. In 1974 Rio de Janeiro was added to the list.



Metropolitan Region of Recife: Municipalities

had been laid with the promulgation of the Constitution of 1967, which stipulated that the federal government could specify the municipalities to be incorporated in metropolitan regions without consulting either the municipalities concerned or the state legislatures. In June 1973, the metropolitan regions were defined through the *Lei Complementar 14*.

The newly created regions fell under the competencies of the state governments. Decision-making power was vested in Deliberative Councils presided over by the state governor, who also appointed three further members to these Councils. The mayor of the regional capital was also included in the Council, as well as one representative for the remaining municipalities in the region. A Consultative Council, presided over by the state governor, was to consist of the mayors of all the municipalities in the region. A third branch of the metropolitan administrations was the technical organ under the responsibility of the state government. This new institutional structure was to implement "integral planning" for social-economic development (FIDEM, 1983; Schmidt, 1983: 159-175; Schmidt & Farret, 1986: 41-51).<sup>7</sup>

In 1974 the *Serviço Federal de Habitação e Urbanismo* (SERFHAU) was discontinued and replaced by a *Comissão Nacional de Regiões Metropolitanas e Política Urbana* (CNPU), under the Presidential Secretary of Planning. This inter-Ministry commission was to supervise the introduction of the metropolitan regions and to manage the *Fundo Nacional de Apoio ao Desenvolvimento Urbano* (FNDU) as well as a fund for the promotion of public transportation which, was converted in 1976 into the *Empresa Brasileira de Transportes Urbanos* (EBTU) (Schmidt, 1983:118). In 1979 the CNPU was replaced by the *Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Urbano* (CNDU), under the Ministry of the Interior. The aim of this new council was to strengthen the institutional structure of the metropolitan regions and promote the formulation of metropolitan development plans.

Simultaneously, however, due to the fiscal crisis of the Brazilian state in the context of a faltering economy, the financial means for urban investments dwindled rapidly. By 1984 the resources passed through the CNDU were only 12% of those passed by the CNPU in 1976. From 1982 onward, external funding, particularly by the World Bank (BIRD), became increasingly important. These funds were for a special program to promote the "intermediate cities" and for investment in the northeastern metropolitan regions of Salvador, Fortaleza and Recife (Schmidt, 1984; Schmidt & Farret, 1986:48-50; Villaschi & Medeiros, 1990).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Sanitation, water supply, legislation on urban land, transport and roads, the gas supply, water resource management and the restriction of environmental pollution.

<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, an important share of the available resources went into the improvement of urban transport systems, recognized as an important focus of tension after the quebra-quebras in cities like São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Salvador during the latter part of the 1970s.

Thus far I have discussed some of the distinctive features of urban policies as they developed during the period of bureaucratic authoritarianism in Brazil. The process of administrative and financial centralization left little leeway for the municipalities to develop their own policies attuned to local circumstances. The financing policy, mainly implemented through the BNH, mainly benefited large construction companies and the upper strata of the population. These developments were accompanied by a huge institutional build-up of federal, state and municipal agencies, including those concerned with metropolitan planning. In the following sections of this chapter I shall note how these bureaucracies were mounted in Recife and analyze the policies implemented.

### 5.3. A metropolis for distorted development

Since the 1960s the Northeastern economy has been thoroughly restructured, with the SUDENE playing a central role. Urban policies were geared toward facilitating this process and providing an infrastructure for the projected function of Recife as a growth pole and service center for the region.

A main instrument to integrate the Northeast into the national economy, was the "34/18" tax incentive scheme implemented through the SUDENE. The investments promoted by this scheme were characterized by a high level of capital intensity, a high level of integration with enterprises located in the Center-South and concentration around a few urban centers in the Northeast. Goodman (1976:2) characterized the fundamental feature of this process in the Northeast as the selective integration of certain urban sectors and restricted social groups in isolated regional centers into the production system dominated by São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. Cities like Recife, Salvador and Fortaleza thus became the production outposts and commercial entrepôts of this dynamic core region. The restructuring of the Northeastern economy is reflected in the declining importance of agriculture and the growth of the secondary and tertiary sectors.

#### Northeastern gross product by sector (%), 1960-1980

year	agriculture	industry	services
1960	30.4	22.1	47.5
1980	18.6	27.3	54.1

(Source: SUDENE, 1983:172)

Despite the growth of the Northeastern gross product by an annual 7.2% between 1960 and 1980 (SUDENE, 1983, 1984), there were no substantial improvements in

the employment and income situation of the Northeastern workforce (SUDENE, 1984:46; Carvalho, 1986a:14).

In Recife (RMR), which accounts for 70% of Pernambucan production in the secondary sector (FIDEM, 1982:143), this was partly due to the modernization of the textile industry and a growing importance of non-traditional capital-intensive industries.<sup>9</sup> Despite the growth of the secondary sector product it generated very little employment and the process

demonstrated the relative incapacity of the transformative industry to generate employment at a rate sufficiently high to justify any confidence in the process of industrialization in the sense of alleviating the increasing under-utilization of human resources in the urban areas (Jatobá, 1976:30).

The tertiary sector, which was partly "modernized" to be sure, became the main outlet. By the end of the 1970s, this sector absorbed about 70% of the employed population in the Metropolitan Region of Recife (RMR). About 6% of the economically active population in the RMR was openly unemployed. Taking remuneration under the minimum wage as a criteria, 45% of the employed population (*peessoas ocupadas*) was considered underemployed and 72% of the employed population earned under two minimum wages. Out of a sample of 438 children between 4 and 6 years in 1976, 53% was found to be *bastante desnutridas* (FIDEM, 1982:139-166, 254). In the context of the 1980s crisis, the 1980s the situation deteriorated (SUDENE, 1984:46; 79; CONDEPE, 1988).

The SUDENE thus contributed to the reorganization of the Northeastern economy, but hardly lived up to the expectations. When the Northeastern bishops issued their famous statement in 1973 *Eu Ouvi os Clamores do meu Povo* (I Have Heard the Clamour of my People), they wrote:

Now, ten years after the creation of the SUDENE, we should ask ourselves if the agency (*autarquia*) played the role which it had been assigned in the struggle against the underdevelopment of the region and we should question the sense of the modifications which its development policy has undergone (cf. Lima, 1979:180).

The agrarian reform measures that figured in the original plans had not been carried out and the agency had become the victim of the "logic of the system to which it was linked." Urban policies in the city of Recife, designed to become a growth pole in the region, were similarly dominated by the "logic of the system" and geared to the interests of the upper strata.

According to an overview of the urban policies of the municipal administrations governing Recife until 1983 (Prefeitura, 1983), the main characteristics of the planning process at the municipal level were a lack of continuity, systematicity

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<sup>9</sup> This restructuration went hand in hand with a relocation of enterprises toward the peripheral municipalities of the metropolitan region and contributed to the virtually total destruction of the urban trade unionism which had existed in Recife before 1964 (Soares, 1985).

and productivity. Every administration had come with its own plans whereas continuity, as far as it existed, was based on contractual obligations related to external financing. Nevertheless, I shall illustrate the continuity in the agenda, in the elitist aspect of the urban project and in the preoccupation with the providing an infrastructure for the type of economic "development" promoted by the bureaucratic-authoritarian regime.

One feature of this preoccupation was that such a very large share of investments went into the construction of roads, bridges and viaducts. This was not only related to the promotion of automobile transport during the miracle years but also to the provision of an infra-structure for the city's projected function as a regional growth pole for "distorted development" (Goldsmith & Wilson, 1988:37). In the words of the poet Joaquim Cardoso, the city was "nailed to the cross of the new avenues."<sup>10</sup>

A second feature was the preoccupation with upgrading the city center, linked to its assigned role as regional administrative and service center and the overall elitism of the urban project. This prompted constant attempts to remove *favelados* to peripheral areas. After the period of popular administrations the policy of active eviction was taken up again. The eviction efforts were justified with arguments about "their own good," since the people who lived along the riverbank had been victims of floods in 1965, 1966 and 1975.<sup>11</sup> However, the actual direction of such interventions revealed ulterior motives. The efforts usually focused on increasingly valorized areas close to the city center. Barely a day went by without some *mocambos* being demolished. Sometimes the tenants received a small fee for their shacks. Usually they had little choice but to accept whatever indemnity was offered and move elsewhere. The *favelas* of Brasília Teimosa, Coelhos and Coque, also were the targets of persistent removal attempts. The hypocrisy of the alleged concern with the well-being of the *favelados* was underlined by the fact that the bulk of urban infrastructure investments was concentrated in the already privileged areas.

A third feature of the approach to urban issues was the technocratic authoritarian style of policy execution in the context of the repressive climate of the time. In the next chapter, I shall discuss the shift to the "politics of *abertura*"

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<sup>10</sup> "Recife,  
O clamor desta hora noturna e trágica  
Vejo te morto, mutilado, grande,  
Pregado à cruz das novas avenidas..."  
(cf. Diário de Pernambuco, July 28, 1985)

<sup>11</sup> Floods were already reported in 1633 and 1641 and over the centuries, Recife would occasionally be flooded. Due to changing land use in the interior, floods tended to become more frequent and larger. The 1975 flood was particularly devastating (Andrade, 1979:107). During the second half of the 1970s, the Capibaribe river was regulated, resulting in a rapid valorization of some areas near the city centre. Hence the increasing efforts to remove the favelas from these areas.

and the accompanying change in policy style. Here I shall discuss the developments up to 1979. First I review the "spontaneous" and "planned" development of the city, and then turn to the reemergence of urban associativism.

### 5.3.1. Nailed to the cross of the new avenues

It was in the "time of the war"<sup>12</sup> when *dona* Eunice's life companion *seu* Manoel, a retired baker's mate who was in his seventies when I met him in 1988, noticed the new approach to the construction of the urban environment in 1964. They live in a *mocambozinho* in the *Rua do Chafariz* on the Alto Santa Terezinha. The street derives its name from one of the fifty-three controversial *chafarizes* built during the Arraes administration. "Yes," Manoel commented,

the *chafariz* was there. When he (Arraes) became mayor, he constructed six laundry sheds here and up there on the *Alto* he made ten laundry sheds for the women to wash clothes. When they took away his power, they broke down the *chafarizes*, the *chafarizes* were abandoned, it was said they were communist and no good. They undid everything and this is what is left, it is in the same state they left it in....<sup>13</sup>

Manoel vividly remembered how, during the governorship of Eraldo Gueiros (1971-1975), a piped water system was later installed in the area. He had to buy pipes and taps to get connected, though he did get the water for free. And *dona* Eunice added: "Not even a tap or anything, we did not gain anything, only the water" (*Nem torneira nem nada. Nós num ganho nada, só a água*). Other houses in the area were provided with a hydrometer, however. Despite these ambiguities, the logic of commodification and large-scale investment, which had been at stake in the controversy over the *chafarizes*, prevailed after 1964.

"Fresh starts" were made in 1964. Arthur de Lima Cavalcanti, who had been Vice-Mayor of Recife from 1959 until his election as federal deputy in 1962, later related how the archives of 1963 simposiums on urban reform and housing politics, disappeared from his home during a military raid "in search of arms" (FIDEM, 1983:68). On another occasion, he described how he found the maps that went with a plan for a metropolitan region of Recife, worked out in the early 1960s, "aban-

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<sup>12</sup> During the first days after the coup busses of the municipal transport company, created under Pelópidas Silveira's administration in 1959, were attacked (Mendoça & Pereira, 1987: 70) and, aside from other acts of torture, persecution and revenge, the parading of the 63 years old communist Gregório Bezerra through the streets of Recife in his underwear has become a notorious episode of the period.

<sup>13</sup> "Já, pois o chafariz já estava pronto. Quando ele inaugurou, ele fez aqui seis lavanderias, lá no Alto fez dez lavanderias, pras mulher lavar roupa. Quando eles tomaram o poder dele, os chafariz tudo quebraram, acabaram com o chafariz, disse que é comunista num presta. Demanchou tudo, ficou esse, esse tá na relação como derrubaram...." (Interview, October 13, 1988).

done and torn up". "If they were torn up, it was before I entered the prefecture," said Augusto Lucena, who had succeeded Pelópidas Silveira in April 1964 (IAB, 1981: 49, 56).<sup>14</sup>

During Lucena's first mayorship (1964-68), his interventions were not based on any specific plan. They were influenced by the "emergency situations" after the military intervention, the floods of 1965 and 1966 and his "feeling with the people." As a populist-style politician, he was preoccupied with "the humble." Years later, discussing populism, Lucena said: "The two words mean the same thing, populism is popularity and popularity is integration with the people" (IAB, 1982:58). In this light the priority granted to founding a municipal COHAB (subsequently integrated into a state level COHAB), which constructed 1,300 houses during his administration, can be understood. The 1965/66 floods also prompted efforts to construct canals to improve the city's drainage system. Another preoccupation was the road system. During Lucena's first administration, this resulted in the construction of various bridges and the reconstruction of bridges in the 1966 flood. On the whole, however, due the paucity of financial resources during the first years of the military regime, the role of the municipality in urban policies remained modest.

Urban policies had been characterized by a "method of trial and error" during Lucena's first administration, but his successor, Geraldo Magalhães (1969-71) talked about plans for a "New Recife." Popular participation "was no outstanding feature" as the review of urban policies drawn up by the *Prefeitura* in 1983 under the last of the "bionic" mayors, put it rather euphemistically. The approach to the urban question was becoming markedly technocratic and elitist. By that time, more resources were available for *obras de arte*. Recife acquired its first viaducts. Streets and avenues were broadened and new ones projected. It was the "era of the car" and of "great works" such as the *Ginásio de Esportes Geraldo Magalhães*, a "majestic and efficient" construction with a capacity for 12,000 spectators and a parking space for 520 cars, commonly known as the *Geraldão*. In order to deal with the legal problems related to projects of this magnitude, a Legal Department was created during the Magalhães administration.

In 1970, on the advice of the SERFHAU, the consultancy firm Wit-Olaf Prochnik produced a *Plano de Desenvolvimento Local Integrado* (PDLI) for the municipality of Recife. After a study of the "social, economic, territorial, physical and institutional aspects of the problem", some general recommendations were

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<sup>14</sup> At least Lucena could say that in 1963 he had been elected as Vice-Prefect representing the oppositional UDN (see 4.2.), in contrast to his successors who, during a debate organized by the IAB-PE in 1982, turned to rather strange arguments to prove they had been as good as elected. Antônio Farias, mayor between 1975 and 1979 argued that he had been elected state deputy in 1962 and 1966 (IAB, 1982:46, 53, 54, 102, 105, 112). The mayors of the 1964-1979 period were: Augusto Lucena (1964-1969), Geraldo Magalhães de Melo (1969-1971), Augusto Lucena (1971-1975) and Antônio Farias (1975-1979).

formulated, guided by a concern with adapting the city to its economic functions. Legislation on urban land use had to be revised, river beds regulated and the basic drainage structure improved. The road system had to be expanded. "Sub-normal areas" had to be "remanaged," and in this connection the area bordering the rapidly growing upper middle class neighborhood of Boa Viagem was specifically referred to:

The area of the Ponte do Pina, where the picturesque spontaneous settlement called Brasília Teimosa is located, should undergo landscape treatment (*tratamento paisagístico*) to adjust to its future destination as a hotel area (PDLI, 1970:187).

The population of areas of this kind, regarded as an "enormous social group that has still not learned to work and conforms to models of the most aberrant primarism" (cf. Fontes, 1986:340) was to be relocated to the periphery.

In most Pernambucan municipalities the *Planos de Desenvolvimento Local Integrado* were soon forgotten, but in Recife some of the administrative reform and road improvement recommendations were taken into account during Augusto Lucena's second administration (1971-75). Municipal budgeting procedures were reformed and municipal tax collection was computerized (cf. Pires, 1988). A municipal urbanization company (URB) was created in 1973 (Prefeitura, 1983:42; Prefeitura/URB, 1986). The URB was to be a rather "flexible agency" of indirect administration. In some way or another, it became involved in virtually all the plans and projects in the municipality. By the mid-1980s, the URB had become an unwieldy bureaucracy, employing some 2,000 persons due to *empreguismo*, and a prime target for grassroots pressure.

Throughout the 1964-1979 period, the road system and the city center were the main concerns of the Recife municipal administrations. This resulted in a proliferation of large avenues and monumental viaducts. Under the second Lucena administration (1971-1975), large parts of the historical neighborhood of São José were destroyed to broaden the Avenida Dantas Bareto, which links "nothing to nowhere," but provides parking space and serves well for Carnival parades.

When concern with rising petrol prices grew in the course of the 1970s, this served as another justification for investment in the road system to promote the "efficient" use of private cars.<sup>15</sup> During the Antônio Farias administration (1975-1979), work on the road system absorbed between 60% and 80% of the available

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<sup>15</sup> The existing municipal transport company, the CTU, was largely left to fend for itself in competition with private enterprises. The number of CTU diesel and trolley busses in operation dropped from 458 in 1970 to 222 in 1975. The subsequent introduction of luxury busses to attract the high income population only contributed to a further degeneration of the CTU. Public transportation became increasingly chaotic (Mendonça & Pereira, 1987). During his second administration, Lucena proposed the installation of a metrô superficial, an electric monorail with trains "nearly like flying carpets," but the project met with a ministerial veto (IAB, 1982:57). A surface metro with connections to Jaboatão and the Terminal Integrado de Cargas e Passageiros was built in the early 1980s.

municipality resources. Nearly 60% of the investments by the municipal Roads and Works Department went to already privileged areas. Investment in *muros de arrimo*, walls to protect the inhabitants of the *morros* from landslides, by contrast, only represented 1.1% of the budget (Fontes, 1986:346-349; IAB, 1982:115).

The link between the transportation policy and the upgrading of the city center was clearly expressed in the title of the Farias administration policy document: *A Estrutura Urbana; As diretrizes de um Sistema Integrado de Transportes, a Revitalização da Cidade*. Part of the city center was declared a pedestrian area. Informal trade was to be "regulated," an initiative that could rely on enthusiast approval of the Commercial Association and the Club of Shopowners (FIDEM/UFPE, 1986:20). The document actually licenced police action against informal traders. Sidewalks were to be paved and provided with "urban furniture" and lighting was to be improved, including the illumination of historical monuments. These revitalization plans linked up with the plans for an "integrated transportation system", with an integrated traffic terminal on Ilha Joana Bezerra. The large-scale removal of inhabitants, the *favela* of Coque, was required to make way for a terminal for road traffic, railways and boat transport on the Capibaribe as well as an airport, a parking lot, a shopping center and a hotel area. Only a parking lot and a metro station would eventually materialize. Nevertheless, all this illustrates the continuous attempts at relocating the low-income population towards the periphery, as also was the case with the population of other areas along the Capibaribe River.<sup>16</sup> The preoccupation with incorporating these areas into the adjacent privileged parts of town increased after the Capibaribe was regulated and the riverbanks became even more rapidly valorized at the end of the 1970s.

Another area once again focussed on by the Farias administration was the old "bone of contention," the *favela* of Brasília Teimosa. A plan was elaborated to convert it into an area for housing and tourism. Most of the inhabitants, with the exception of a few picturesque fishermen, were to be relocated to make way for hotels, a Seaquarium "like the one in Miami," a shopping mall, facilities for a boat connection to the city center, bars, restaurants and boutiques. In the housing section, high-rise buildings were to contain 1,800 units for people who would contribute to the *nobreza* of the area. This project triggered one of the main movements opposed to the urban policies of the bureaucratic-authoritarian municipality (see 5.5.2).

The conclusion of this review of municipal plans and projects in the 1964-1979 period can only be that, in contrast to the evaluation by the *Prefeitura* (1983), there was a large measure of continuity and a rather systematic obsession with the

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<sup>16</sup> Another notable case is the *favela* of Coelhos in Boa Vista, which was also to be turned into a parking lot and along with Coque and Brasília Teimosa, became an early core of resistance to policies of this kind (cf. FASE, 1980).

road system and the upgrading of the city center to make it fit for the upper strata and for its assigned role in the context of the regional division of labor.

The assigned role also informed the planning on the metropolitan level. In 1968 the borders of the metropolitan region to be created had been defined by Federal law. Three years later, the *Conselho de Desenvolvimento de Pernambuco* (CONDEPE) set to work on a preliminary diagnostic of the area. In 1973, the metropolitan region was legally established and in the next year a Deliberative and a Consultative Council were created. In 1975 the CONDEPE, which had produced a relatively critical "Preliminary Diagnostic" of the region informed by pre-1964 views, was relieved of its responsibility for the metropolitan region (cf. FIDEM, 1987). This function was taken over by the new *Fundação de Desenvolvimento da Região Metropolitana do Recife* (FIDEM). In contrast to the municipal URB, the FIDEM was more of an insulated bureaucracy, not directly involved in the execution of works and the attendant wheeling and dealing. It presented plans based on the directives of the National Development Plans and set the parameters for policies at the municipal level. For their financing, the city was dependent on the fiat of the FIDEM bureaucracy (FIDEM/UFPE, 1986:19; FIDEM, 1987:51; cf. Fontes, 1986:360; Zancheti, 1986).

In 1976, the FIDEM presented a *Plano de Desenvolvimento Integrado* (PDI-RMR, 1976) for the metropolitan region of Recife. It foresaw the development of four functionally differentiated *nucleações*. The central municipalities of Recife and Olinda were to concentrate on specialized services like banking, shopping and leisure. Westward, the axis formed by the municipalities of Moreno, Jaboatão and São Lourenço was to constitute a second metropolitan pole, specialized in transport services, wholesale supply and public administration. Here a *Terminal Integrado de Cargas e Passageiros* (TIP), "one of the largest in the world" (Zancheti, 1986), would be constructed. Southward, a third pole would consist of the municipality of Cabo. Here the industrial harbor complex of SUAPE, highly controversial due to the expected ecological and employment effects, was to be located (FIDEM/UFPE, 1986). Northward, the Paulista-Igarassu connection was to be the fourth axis, designed as a site for industries. Of course the various nuclei would be interconnected by an "efficient road system." Together with large scale sanitation infrastructure to serve the central nucleus, the roads were to absorb over half the investments foreseen in the plan.

One look at maps of the municipality of Recife is enough to see that the pattern outlined in this plan was actually taking shape thanks to the interaction of "spontaneous" developments and the "plans." In the municipality one can observe the formation of three relatively affluent "corridors" going north, south and west out of the city center. The areas to the northwest (Casa Amarela) and southwest (Ibura), which partly consist of *morros*, are characterized by the concentration of low-income housing.

### 5.3.2. The "logic of the system"

The "spontaneous" tendencies of urban growth and the "planned" interventions both followed a segregative logic, and tended to dislocate the low-income population. This generated much of the tension underlying the urban conflicts that became increasingly visible in the second half of the 1970s. The principal causes of these dislocations were the conversion of residential areas into commercial or service areas, as in the central part of the city and along some of the main roads. In the area of Boa Viagem, speculation and the eradication of *mocambos* contributed to dislocations. Further dislocations resulted from the construction of new roads and viaducts. Finally, the floods of 1965-66 and even more so of 1975 as well as the interventions aimed at regulating the riverbed and the attempts to "upgrade" the shores, contributed to the dislocations (cf. FIDEM, 1982:120).

A look at the population distribution in the municipality of Recife can provide some insight in what was going on. The central areas of the city, the neighborhoods of Recife, Santo Amaro, Santo Antônio and São José, underwent a process of negative demographic growth as a result of the construction of new avenues and an all-round conversion into areas predominantly geared to commerce and services. In 1970, respectively 65% and 80% of the buildings in Recife and Santo Antônio were already being used for such purposes, notably banking and commercial enterprises. São José and Santo Amaro still had an important residential function, and included significant proportions of low-income dwellings: 41% and 35% respectively by the end of the 1970s. The population of Santo Amaro increased by 0.8% in the 1960s, but decreased by 0.5% in the 1970s. These neighborhoods were being incorporated into the economic-commercial core area of the city, and this was accompanied by a decrease in population.

In the course of the 1970s, the neighborhoods of Graças, Boa Vista and Madalena witnessed a slight population increase as a result of the construction of high-rise apartment buildings. Boa Vista serves as an extension of the commercial-economic core of the city and 16% of its buildings were used for economic purposes in 1970. In all three areas, housing for the high-income strata predominates, but Madalena also has an important proportion of middle-class housing.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, the population of Afogados, Beberibe, Boa Viagem, Casa Amarela, Encruzilhada, Tejipló and Várzea increased rapidly during the 1960s and somewhat less rapidly during the 1970s, indicating a process of saturation. Of these areas, Boa Viagem underwent the most rapid growth: 10,4% a year in the 1960s and 4.6% in

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<sup>17</sup> Boa Vista, Graças and Madalena not only score high on high income residences but also on "white residents": 57%, 78% and 55% against a citywide white person average of 27%. São José, Santo Amaro, Casa Amarela and Beberibe score high on "black" and "brown" persons as well as on low income housing (see: CONDEPE, 1984:57; Fontes, 1986: 148).

the 1970s. This was basically a result of the conversion of the area into one of upper and middle-class housing, particularly along the coastline where high-rise residential units, many of them veritable marble palaces, mushroomed. As noted, the urbanization and upgrading of this area was a continuous concern in the urban plans, and it received an important share of the investments. It is also an area of conflicts over the *favelados*, like those of Brasília Teimosa and the settlements on the west of the rapidly valorized coastline area. Afogados and Encruzilhada are predominantly inhabited by middle and higher-income strata, while in Várzea and Tejipló the middle and low-income groups predominate. Casa Amarela and Beberibe are neighborhoods where low-income housing accounted for 72% and 62% by the late 1970s. Ibura/Jordão, the southwestern cluster of low income settlements, was in the making at the time (cf. Fontes, 1986:148, 153, 226).

Some of the people dislocated by these developments were absorbed into COHAB housing projects on the periphery of Recife or in other municipalities of the metropolitan region. Between 1967 and 1980 the COHAB-PE constructed 32,137 housing units<sup>18</sup> in the metropolitan region of Recife; 6,832 in 1967-70, 5,246 in 1971-75 and 20,059 over the following five years, indicating the dip in activities in the popular housing sector in the early 1970s. Within the municipality of Recife 8,299 units were constructed, the majority in Ibura in the southwest of the municipality, which was populated during this period. The other units were mainly in the municipalities in the north of the metropolitan region.

The inconvenient location of the *conjuntos habitacionais* is due to the scarcity and the high cost of areas close to the urban center, thus explaining why they are so far from the infra-structure and basic services. As the FIDEM (1982:241)<sup>19</sup> observes:

The expansion of housing construction over the past two decades had serious consequences for the urbanization process, above all where spatial ordering and conservation of the environment are concerned, thus contributing to the reduction of the level of well-being of the population which is evident in the spatial distribution of the *conjuntos habitacionais*. An example is the overconcentration of the *conjuntos habitacionais* in the *Nucleação Norte*, totaling about 32 thousand units, which corresponds to about 40% of the residences in the RMR (....)

The distance of the *conjuntos habitacionais* from areas with an infra-structure leads to other socio-economic problems for the resident families if we take into account that they have to cope with

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<sup>18</sup> Figures have been taken from CONDEPE (1984:245). FIDEM (1982:118) indicates that the COHAB constructed 23,200 houses and apartments in the RMR over the 1970-1980 period.

<sup>19</sup> This diagnostic is rather critical. It reflects the professional frustrations of some of the technicians employed by the FIDEM and their sensitivity to the criticism of "civil society," which they themselves often helped to articulate by the early 1980s (see 6.4.3.).

higher expenses for transport, education, health, etc. To this we have to add, moreover, the inadequacy of the housing offer, particularly in view of the real purchasing power of its clientele who frequently do not succeed in paying their debts to the financing agencies, thus promoting the transfer of the residences to families with a higher income.

In fact the residences were basically built for people with an income between three and a half and five minimum wages, which was true of less than 15% of the working population in the RMR.<sup>20</sup>

For 1979 the total housing deficit in the RMR was estimated at 173,400 units and an increase to 190,400 units in 1982 was forecasted. For families earning less than two minimum wages, the deficit was estimated at 86,700 in 1979 and for those earning between two and seven minimum wages, it was estimated at 73,900 units (FIDEM, 1982:233). For these income groups, a "normal" residence was extremely difficult to acquire, if not virtually out of reach.

Therefore, it does not come as a surprise that over half the families in the RMR live in "subnormal settlements" occupying an area of about 3,300 ha with about 210.000 residences, most of them of the *mocambo*-type and located in areas with little or no social and physical infrastructure. The following data outline the situation around 1978 in the municipality of Recife and in the metropolitan region (RMR):

	Recife	RMR
<b>Population</b>		
total	1,174,000	2,246,000
mocambo	681,000	1,135,000
%	58%	53%
<b>Housing</b>		
total	235,000	413,000
mocambo	126,000	210,000
%	54%	47%
<b>Area</b>		
total	209 km <sup>2</sup>	2,201 km <sup>2</sup>
mocambo	19 km <sup>2</sup>	33 km <sup>2</sup>
%	9%	1.5%

(Falcão, 1985)

<sup>20</sup> Of the total employed population (*pessoas ocupadas*) in the RMR in 1978, which was 760,927 persons, 126,587 or 16.6% earned between two and five minimum wages and 72.2% earned less than two minimum wages (FIDEM, 1982:162).

These data indicate that about half the residences are of the *mocambo*-type. The surface occupied by this type of dwelling in the municipality of Recife amounted to 9% of the total. The corresponding percentage for the RMR was 1.5%. The data point to the concentration of the "sub-habitation"-problem in the core municipality. Other important concentrations were located in Olinda and Jaboatão. Furthermore, the data reveal the high population density of the *mocambo* areas, which strongly contributed to making Recife one of the most densely populated municipalities in Latin America (cf. Moura, 1987:153). By the end of the 1970s about 65% of the residences in the RMR had running water from the public system, and 20%, mostly in the core area of the RMR, were connected to the sewerage system. Only half the residences benefited from some form of regular garbage collection (FIDEM, 1982:232-241, 265; cf. Fontes, 1986:216-218).

The proportion of owner-occupied as against rented houses -the famous *casa própria*- in the RMR increased from 54.5% in 1970 to 57.9% in 1978. As the FIDEM observed with some irony, this growing number of *casas próprias* did not result from any positive impact of the governmental housing policies, but was strongly associated with the spreading phenomenon of "invasion" of areas situated nearby or in the central nucleus of the RMR, by low income families who construct their dwellings on terrains belonging to others, thus originating the wellknown sub-normal settlements (FIDEM, 1982:235)

This brings us to the issue of urban landownership. The data, which refer to owner-occupied residences, reveal that in 60% of the cases, the land the residence was located on was also owned by the owner-occupant of the residence; 21% of the residences were located on leased or rented land (*aforamento* and *arrendimento*) and 18% on "invaded" terrains.

There was a clear relationship between income level and landownership. Whereas 87% of the high-income owners of residences also owned the land, this was only the case for 44% of the low-income group. Conversely, 27% of the low-income residence-owners lived on "invaded" land, whereas this was only the case for 3% of the high-income group. The relationship between location on leased land and income strata was similar, the lower the income the more often the land was leased.

**Owner-occupied urban residences by legal condition of terrain, according to income classes in the RMR (1978)**

	<2sm *	2-7sm	7-15sm	>15sm	Non resp.	TOTAL	%
<b>Property of occupant</b>	34,300 (44%)	66,400 (61%)	25,400 (79%)	18,200 (87%)	2,800 (58%)	147,100	60%
<b>Aforamento (leased)</b>	16,500 (21%)	19,800 (18%)	4,200 (13%)	1,600 (8%)	1,000 (21%)	43,100	18%
<b>Arrendamento (rented)</b>	4,800 (6%)	2,700 (2%)	300 (1%)	100 (1%)	200 (4%)	8,100	3%
<b>Invasion</b>	20,800 (27%)	19,100 (17%)	2,200 (7%)	700 (3%)	800 (17%)	43,600	18%
private terr.	10,200	9,300	1,100	100	400	21,300	
public terr.	10,600	9,800	1,100	400	400	22,300	
<b>Non response</b>	1,700 (2%)	1,600 (1%)	100 (-)	400 (2%)	--- (-)	3,800	2%
<b>TOTAL</b>	78,100 (100%)	109,600 (100%)	32,200 (100%)	21,000 (100%)	4,800 (100%)	245,700	100%

\* sm = minimum wage

N.B.: Residences are classified according to the principal family (owner/occupant). Part of the residence may be rented out.

(Based on FIDEM, 1982:237)

I have outlined some of the urban contradictions and potential sources of conflict in Recife as they took shape during the 1964-1979 period. By way of the "spontaneous" land-rent mechanism, reinforced by the "planned" interventions of the bureaucratic-authoritarian state apparatuses, the urban poor tended to be relegated to the less valuable areas increasingly distant from the employment opportunities they depended for survival. The attempts at forceful eviction from the city center had their counterpart in the continuous efforts to remain or to return, resulting in a highly irregular occupation of urban land. A second contradiction revolved around the issue of collective consumption, i.e. the public services required for the reproduction of the urban population, including the urbanization of the areas occupied by the urban poor. In the remaining part of this chapter, I shall discuss some of the conflicts generated by these contradictions and the forms they took in the course of the 1964-1979 period. The last year of this period

marked the shift to the "politics of *abertura*," which will be discussed in the next chapter.

#### 5.4. The hills, the swamplands and the Church: urban associativism, 1964-1979

The urban associations that had come into existence in Recife in the 1950s were disbanded in 1964. People involved in neighborhood associations and similar organizations were persecuted and imprisoned, which often meant they were beaten or worse, and the population feared getting involved in anything that might even remotely resemble a "communist plot." The point is stressed again and again in interviews about the period, and without a doubt repression was particularly harsh in the "troubled land."

In the preceding sections, I outlined the contradictions that could become thematized in forms of neighborhood associativism. I now shall examine this process of "many mediations" (cf. Salman, 1990:129) as it took place in Recife between 1964 and 1979. The reemergence of neighborhood associativism, its forms and its pace, resulted from an interplay of factors. At a most general level, the political conjuncture should be taken into account, i.e. the tightening of the regime by the late 1960s and the subsequent *distensão*, which provided some more leeway for the stirrings of civil society from 1974 onward. The floods that hit Recife in 1965, 1966 and 1975 were a rather specific factor, as the rains of 1980 referred to in the next chapter. Such whims of nature affected the inhabitants of the city of "the hills, the swamplands and the in between" in very different ways and therefore can not simply be regarded as "natural calamities." They served as a catalyst in the efforts to promote neighborhood associativism.

A major factor in the reemergence of neighborhood associativism, however, was the changing role of the Church, which was to provide much of the organizational as well as the discursive matrix for the new associations. When the military took over, the *Conferência Nacional dos Bispos do Brasil* (CNBB) issued a "Statement on the National Situation" welcoming the new regime as the savior of the country from communism (cf. Lima, 1979:147). Although the text clearly supported the intervention, it was somewhat schizophrenic, being a concoction of two documents, one presented by the conservative wing and hailing the *coup*, the other presented by Dom Hélder Câmara, warning the new regime against excesses and reaffirming the commitment to the poor and the victims of persecution and injustice (Salem, 1981:27). Since the 1950s, when he was active in the articulation of the CNBB and played a role in the debates over the "plight of the Northeast" that eventually resulted in the creation of the SUDENE, Dom Hélder had become a prominent representative of the progressives within the Brazilian Church. Shortly after the *coup*, he was appointed Archbishop of Olinda and Recife and immediately

after his consecration, his residence in Recife was invaded by soldiers who pretended to be looking for a sister of deposed governor Arraes.

During the first years after the military intervention, the relatively progressive northeastern bishops were more or less marginalized. The CNBB became dominated by conservatives. This change in the CNBB contributed to the demobilization of the Brazilian lay movements, which had been radicalized in the early 1960s (Della Cava, 1988:233; Lima, 1979). Meanwhile, within the Latin American Church, the ideas of the Second Vatican Council (1963-65) were worked out at the Medellín Conference (1968). Inspired by Liberation Theology, the Conference sanctioned the "option for the poor" and recommended the creation of Ecclesial Base Communities (CEBs) (Lehmann, 1990:88-147). Thus, while the Catholic Church as a whole tended to adopt the positions represented earlier by the CNBB, the CNBB tended toward a more conservative position (Bruneau, 1982:53).

By the early 1970s, the Brazilian Church once again fell in line with this development towards more progressive positions. The assassination of one of Dom Hélder's assistants in 1969 by a *Comando de Caça aos Comunistas* (CCC) and other acts of repression made many bishops change their minds about the new regime. In 1970, a new less conservative directory of the CNBB was elected. The Church now closed its ranks in opposition to the increasingly repressive regime and became an institutional support for the CEBs and initiatives like the *Conselho Indigenista Missionário* (CIMI) and the *Comissão Pastoral da Terra* (CPT). With the appointment of Dom Paulo Evaristo Arns as archbishop of São Paulo, the southeastern Church joined the northeastern bishops in denouncing torture and criticizing the economic policies implemented by the regime (Della Cava, 1988). In the course of the 1970s, the southeastern Church gradually assumed the leading role in the radical Catholic movement. This shift was related to the different political dynamics of a city like São Paulo, which was to be the cradle of the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (PT). It was also related to the position taken by Dom Hélder who, while expressing political commitment in a broad sense, opted for a somewhat vague "third way," refractory to more concrete political involvement. Elsewhere the Church was somewhat less restrictive about this kind of involvement, though it posed dilemmas everywhere (Martins, 1990; Salem, 1981).

The reemergence of neighborhood associations in Recife after 1964 was strongly linked to activities deployed by the local Church. The first initiatives in this direction were related to the *Operação Esperança*, set up after the 1965 flood, which made the promotion of neighborhood associations one of its objectives. As a result of the increasingly repressive climate, however, these activities were scaled down by the late 1960s. The 1975 flood was a stimulus for a new flourishing of the *Operação*. In the aftermath of the emergency assistance measures, the lay social workers and clergy involved in the activities of the *Operação* discussed its contribution to "social transformation." This discussion was related to the initial influence

of the discursive matrix of urban social movement theory. Whereas *Operação Esperança* was inspired by a discourse of developmentalism through communitarian self-help, the "urban social movement" discourse provided a different signification for neighborhood associativism. Rather than aiming at a multifaceted and somewhat mystical "integral development" of the human being within the local community, it was proposed to turn the issue of urban land use into the main theme of activity. This shift away from the more cautious communitarian developmentalism generated a controversy that can be regarded as an initial example of the dilemmas the Church and the organizations related to it came to face when new political opportunities started to emerge, partly as a result of their own activities. The controversy contributed to the discontinuation of *Operação Esperança* in the urban areas in 1977. Meanwhile, a local variety of the Ecclesial Base Communities, the *Movimento de Evangelização Encontro dos Irmãos* had developed since 1969 and became the main support for the articulation of neighborhood associativism.

With regard to the role of the Church, 1979 can be pinpointed as a turning point in relation to the previous conjuncture. At a general level, the Puebla Conference heralded a retrenchment, which would become ever more obvious in the course of the 1980s. At the local level, where this institutional retrenchment did not immediately make itself felt, an administrative reorganization of the Archdiocese in 1977 may be said to mark the end of the period under discussion. It included the foundation of a *Comissão Justiça e Paz*, which in the first years of its existence was mainly concerned with the defense of political prisoners, but by 1979 made the defense of *favelados* one of its priorities. As I shall demonstrate in the next chapter, this contributed to the new dynamic of the conflicts over landownership and of the articulation of neighborhood organizations in Recife in the early 1980s.

#### 5.4.1. *Operação Esperança*

*Operação Esperança* was launched in the aftermath of the relatively small flood of 1965 to provide assistance to the afflicted. The flood of June 1966 further broadened its scope. This time 60% of the city was affected by the waters rising more than seven meters above their normal level. The city was declared a "disaster area." Through the SUDENE, a relief action for the victims was set up, and efforts were made to attend to the 15,000 requests for help. Because of its acknowledged capacity to work in poor areas, *Operação Esperança* was charged with the coordination of a *Campanha de Reconstrução*, where it collaborated with the state and municipal government, the armed forces, USAID and CARITAS. With material provided by the SUDENE and financial resources gathered through donations and a tombola organized by employers' associations, the Rotary and the Lions Club,

*Operação Esperança*, in cooperation with the still municipal COHAB (see 5.3.1.), coordinated the (re-)construction of 6,767 houses. The organization of mutual help reduced the costs of reconstruction by 30% (*Operação Esperança*, 1966).

Once the Reconstruction Campaign was concluded, *Operação Esperança* "turned from the emergency of the flood to the daily and anonymous emergency of life in the areas of challenge (*áreas desafio*) of Olinda and Recife." It was to be an "interdenominational movement embracing all religions and races, extra-partidarian, with the objective of preparing the people for the struggle for development (human solidarity, love)" (*Operação Esperança*, 1966).<sup>21</sup> The *Operação* had been active in 50 areas during the reconstruction campaign, but now the efforts were focused on fifteen neighborhoods.<sup>22</sup> They aimed at founding dwellers' councils (*conselhos de moradores*) and commissions or groups of neighbors. The *conselhos de moradores* were designed to be the deliberative body of "the community," whereas the commissions were to be involved with specific more localized issues. Each group would have a representative in the *conselho*.

In 1969 the activities of the *Operação* were reorganized. Four "sectors" were created to coordinate and structure activities in the areas of health care, education, infrastructure and "formation and orientation of groups". In the following year, the institutional structure was further elaborated. By that time the *Operação* had signed agreements with various agencies to carry out its projects. Thus, in cooperation with the SUDENE, USAID and the CNBB, programs were launched to improve sanitation in various areas; the FNBEM (*Fundação Nacional do Bem Estar do Menor*) contributed to the construction of community centers and the LBA (*Legião Brasileira de Assistência*) helped with the purchase of audio-visual equipment. Furthermore, the *Operação* involved students at the *Escola de Serviço Social de Pernambuco* in its activities.

Meanwhile the climate had become ever more repressive. On various occasions, Dom Hélder was accused of promoting subversion. In 1966 sociologist Gilberto Freyre described him as "The Brazilian Dr. Goebbels, pale, ascetic, intense, eloquent, gesticulating, dramatic and theatrical" and accused him of nurturing the ambition of becoming President of Brazil, and of being a "para-

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<sup>21</sup> On other occasions the aims were defined as "the transformation of the 'mass into people' (*massa em povo*)" (*Operação Esperança*, 1970) or as "human promotion of the marginalized masses of Recife, Great Recife and, eventually, of the Northeast" (*Operação Esperança*, 1973). These formulations indicate the continuity with the radical developmentalist discourse of the early 1960s. In 1973, after the climate had become increasingly repressive, it was specified that "human promotion" had nothing to do with "subversion and playing into the hands of Communism."

<sup>22</sup> Alto José Bonifácio, Brasília Teimosa, Beberibe, Campo da Vila, Ilha do Joaneiro, Sítio das Palmeiras, Sítio do Bevenuto, Nova Descoberta, Vasco da Gama, Alto do Mandu, Alto da Iracema, Coelhos, Ponte dos Carvalhos, Rio das Velhas and Vila São Bento. The latter three areas lie outside the municipality of Recife.

politician" rather than a priest. The harassment and confrontations did not end there. In 1968 two North American priests working in Recife were extradited and the campaign against the Belgian-born liberation theologian Joseph Comblin, who taught at the Regional Seminary in Olinda, eventually led to his extradition in 1972. In 1968, it was prohibited to broadcast or publish statements by Dom Hélder and even mention his name, a ban that was to last for several years. In 1969 Padre Henrique Pereira Neto was murdered. In 1971 and again in 1973, soon after the publication of the document *Eu Ouvi os Clamores do meu Povo*, offices of the archdiocese were invaded by the police. In 1973 eight of Dom Hélder's assistants, some of whom were active in *Operação Esperança*, were imprisoned and tortured. In 1975 participants in the local variety of Ecclesial Base Communities were the target of a similar action (cf. Castro, 1985; Prandini, Petrucci & Dale, 1986/1987).

Pressured by circumstances of this kind, the activities of *Operação Esperança* were scaled down after 1970. Collaboration with government agencies faltered and the *Operação* increasingly turned to funding and donations from foreign groups (e.g. MISERIOR, CARITAS). From 1971 onward, the activities were extended to rural areas. Three *engenhos* were bought, partly with the Nobel Peace Award money Dom Hélder received in 1974. Cooperative small-scale production was set up, involving some hundred families.

The flood of 1975 went a full meter higher than the 1966 flood, took over a 100 lives and left an estimated 60,000 people homeless (Freyre, 1975). It revived the initial concern of the *Operação*. This time, however, the *Operação* was not charged with coordinating government assistance, but coordinated various groups of volunteers. Assistance to victims of the flood was taken up again with the objective of leaving an "organizational saldo":

but you can see it before you. Imagine there are thousands of victims who have lost everything, fighting over wood, sand, cement, rafters, anything to reconstruct their house and you want to do educational work...(.....)So after nine months, when we came back from this experience we had a completely different conception of the realities of the people. The invasion of terrains, occupation and the problem of housing were issues identified as socially the major problems of this city. So we, that is to say some of the people who were working (for *Operação Esperança*), at the time thought a survey of the housing situation in Recife should be taken and on the basis of these data, the question of support to communitarian organizations should be rethought in their function as popular organization geared to the housing problem, and that the housing issue is not just a matter of infrastructure, but that it was the issue of land (*questão da terra*) which was at stake... (Interview Pantoja, November 25, 1988).

The debate about the orientation of the *Operação* reflected the changing political climate after the 1974 elections, and linked up with the disputes over

urban land that were *pipocando* (popping like popcorn) at the time, partly as a consequence of the dislocations caused by the flood. The proposal implied a politicization in relation to the earlier activities, i.e. a shift from communitarian self-help projects for human promotion to challenging "the social structure" (*Operação Esperança*, 1976a; 1976b).

Some opponents of the proposal argued that it was an attempt at "infiltration by left-wing party cadres." More likely, however, the discussion was initiated by some of the social workers and clergy active in *Operação Esperança*. They criticized the assistentialist features of the *Operação* from the perspective of a commitment to "the popular movement" and more specifically the urban social movement theories their professional training was starting to familiarize them with. These theories contributed to a specification of notions about emancipatory professional practice and provided a framework for deducing the strategic interests of their target groups and rethinking "the question of support for communitarian organizations." This support should be rethought in connection with what was regarded as the fundamental issue, namely the *questão da terra* and the disputes over urban land use, in contrast to communitarian self-help in creating infrastructure.

The discussion coincided with a similar debate involving the rural branch of *Operação Esperança*. There the relation between the rural cooperatives and the perspective of an agrarian reform was at stake. As an exemplary alternative of communitarian self-help, occasionally buying an *engenho* to set up a cooperative, did not present a real challenge to the agrarian structure, it was argued. The cooperatives should be more actively engaged in the struggle for agrarian reform.

The divergences resulted in the resignation of some of the *Operação* staff and the disactivation of the urban branch in 1977. A small team remained to manage the three *engenhos*. Some of the lay personnel in the urban team decided to work for FASE.<sup>23</sup> This is an early example of what Fernandes (1988:9) has described as a "typical trajectory." Confronted with the limitations of the organizational and discursive framework of the Church, people involved in Church-promoted social work tended to switch to, or even create, independent secular non-governmental organizations, while the assistentialist work of the early days evolved toward a more politically informed practice (see 6.8.).

It should be noted that though they continued to permeate discussions in Recife, the tensions described here never resulted in open conflict. Dom Hélder's charisma and his clear "option for the poor" gave no reason for such a confrontation and, as one of the people who left the *Operação Esperança*-team stressed, the

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<sup>23</sup> Federação de Orgãos para Assistência Social e Educacional, was founded in 1961 and was initially concerned with motorizing the clerus. FASE later turned to social work and by the mid-1970s, it had become active in projects of popular education. Nowadays it is one of the biggest NGOs in Brazil.

resignation had been voluntary.<sup>24</sup> They continued to cooperate closely with the increasingly intricate network of Church-related organizations. A local variety of the Ecclesial Base Communities, the *Movimento de Evangelização Encontro de Irmãos*, was part of this network and had started to become a major organizational framework for Church-related neighborhood associativism.

#### 5.4.2. Movimento de Evangelização Encontro dos Irmãos

The *Movimento de Evangelização Encontro de Irmãos* had been launched in 1969. The objective of the *Encontros de Irmãos* was "evangelization of the poor by the poor" following the method of "Seeing, Judging and Acting," i.e. to appraise life in the light of the Gospel and to act accordingly.<sup>25</sup> During the first five years of its existence, the *Encontros de Irmãos* remained rather "spiritual" or "inward oriented." It was the period of grupos de *reflexão* and the training of *animadores*, i.e. people animating the discussions.

One of the main instruments for articulating the evangelization movement was the program *Palavra da Bíblia* broadcasted by Radio Olinda. Initially it was broadcasted weekly. After 1972 there were daily broadcasts, but the program was suspended in 1976, to return on the air two years later after a series of protests and petitions. The program encouraged reflection on a passage from the Gospel, a word from Dom Hélder, an event or a song. Nelson Barbosa da Silva, the *Poeta dos Morros* who composed innumerable songs animating the struggles of the inhabitants of Casa Amarela, remembers his role as follows:

I sang for Radio Olinda. I remember that there was a program of mine on Radio Olinda and that it was censured, perhaps....I don't remember, perhaps by the censors, perhaps by the SNI or by the Federal Police. I'm not sure, but they said it was...(.....)....I sang a song of protest like "This shack, clinging to the hill / Is asking for assistance from the city at its feet / Oh shack, I'm listening to your voice / I don't forget you for a minute because I know who you are / Shack made of zinc, tradition of my country / Shack of zinc, poor

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<sup>24</sup> The rather cordial "parting of ways" is in sharp contrast to the situation under Dom Hélder's reactionary successor Dom José Cardoso Sobrinho, installed in 1985, who unleashed a veritable purge against the "Church of the Poor" (SEDIPO, 1988). In 1989 priests took to the street in protests against the new Archbishop.

<sup>25</sup> The "method" was developed in Belgium in the 1920s and was adopted by various Catholic lay movements. It was also a source of inspiration for the alphabetization method developed by Paulo Freire and the activities of the Movimento de Educação de Base (MEB) and other such movements in Brazil in the 1960s (de Kadt, 1970; Lehmann, 1990:88-104).

and unhappy..."<sup>26</sup> (...) (That one was) censured (Interview Nelson Barbosa da Silva, 09-28-1988).

Throughout the city, people came together in small groups to listen to these programs. People like *seu* Manoel and *dona* Eunice, who recalled decorating their *mocambo* for these occasions. Or *seu* Cipriano from the nearby Alto do Brasil, who recalls that

it was on Tuesdays. We used to go to a house. We would ask people if we could come together in their house to read the Gospel, you see. And to participate. We turned on the radio to pick up the program from the start and we began the meeting, reading a passage from the Gospel, you see? On the journey of the people (*a caminhada do povo*), how the people developed, the Old Testament etc. And then we commented a little, you see? The *caminhada* was linked to Radio Olinda, because Radio Olinda had a program about the *Encontro dos Irmãos* and we picked that up on the radio so that people could listen during the meeting...(.....)So it was like this: we listened to the radio and then there was always a link to the Gospel. We always established a link, interpreting what was being said on Radio Olinda, you see? At the meetings of the *Encontros de Irmãos* in the areas we always journeyed with the Gospel. That is, conscientizing the people about what to do. Because many people knew that they were suffering and thought that they were made for suffering, just because they were poor. And that God had made things like that....that they had to suffer with patience, just because they were poor....But they had not yet found out that there were people making this poverty. People that make others suffer. Because they always referred to God, saying "God has made things like this....," you see? We had been brought up like that: "If you suffer, it is because God wants things to be like that." But through the *Encontro dos Irmãos* we found out, through the work in the communities, that God is the father of everybody, you see? He is not stepfather to the one and father to the other. He is everybody's father. So if I am suffering, why? Because somebody makes me suffer. So we should find out who that is who makes us suffer. So, that was what the *Encontro dos Irmãos* was about (Interview, November 10, 1988).

By the end of the 1970s, there between 200 and 300 more or less active local groups, providing a framework for a new neighborhood associativism. The activities were coordinated by teams in each of the sectors -8 in 1977 and 12 in 1988- the Archbishopric was divided into. These sectoral teams, were represented in turn in higher level councils which were in charge of annual planning and the monitoring of its execution (Castro, 1987:95).

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<sup>26</sup> "Ei, barracão pendurado no morro / vem pedindo socorro a cidade a teus pés / ei, barracão tua voz eu escuto / não te esqueço um minuto pois eu sei quem tu és / barracão de zinco, tradição do meu país / barracão de zinco pobretão e infeliz..."

The *Movimento de Evangelização Encontro de Irmãos* was embedded in the overall organizational structure of the Archdiocese, which had been reorganized in the course of the 1960s and 1970s according to Dom Hélder's participative proposals for a *Governo Colegiado* of the Archdiocese. An administrative reform in 1977 abandoned the organization of pastoral work according to social strata in favour of an organization through Commissions by Priority: the poor, the "world of labor," the youth, and human rights. In fact the youth and the poor, including *Encontros de Irmãos*, were given priority in terms of practical pastoral work (Castro, 1987: 93, 120-124).

All these activities were part of what Salem (1981:177) called "a great structure" that rapidly grew in the late 1970s. The education and training of priests at the *Instituto de Teologia do Recife* (ITER) was one of the noteworthy features of the mode of Archdiocesan operation. Priests and novices were to share the life of the poor in their communities rather than be locked up in seminaries and cloisters. The ITER curriculum included courses in a broad range of subjects including Philosophy, Social Sciences and Theology, and was also made accessible to young men who had not completed secondary school and of whom only a minority eventually would be ordained. The Archdiocese premisses in the center of the city became a veritable beehive, harboring all sorts of commissions. Their activities were backed by the *Setor the Documentação e Informação Popular* (SEDIPO) which became a "factory" for the propagation of the northeastern Church among the masses. The *Comissão Justiça e Paz*, created in 1977, also operated in this context and was to play an important role in the promotion of neighborhood associativism from 1979 onward (see Chapter 6). This network of institutions and commissions was the breeding-grounds for a new generation of neighborhood leaders, who would later play an increasingly important role as spokespersons of the movement (cf. Lehmann, 1990:144, 173).

The reorganization of the Archdiocese in 1977 coincided with a shift in the orientation of the *Movimento de Evangelização Encontro de Irmãos*. During the first five years of its existence, the movement's meetings had mostly been devoted to parochial animation, liturgy and the formation of reflection groups. Campaigns were developed to install water filters and teach people how to use them, or to install garbage incinerators. Activities like these linked up with those of the *Operação Esperança*, which distributed the material. By the mid-1970s, the emphasis shifted toward outward-directed activity and a more clearly political orientation.

The shift was not simply a predetermined logical sequence of a "phase of preparation" and a "phase of doing things and solving problems," as Castro (1987:91) has suggested. It was related to the evolving debate over the role of the Church and its relationship to political issues and action in the context of the "awakening of civil society" (*o despertar da sociedade civil*) in the second half of

the 1970s. The conflict that arose in the *Operação Esperança* was part of this process, which involved working out of what Sader (1988:146-147) called "the discursive matrix of the christianism of the Ecclesial Base Communities." This specification of the meaning and content of the "option for the poor" was often inspired by the increasingly influential theorizations of "urban social movements." These theorizations provided a framework for deducing the "strategic interests" of "the poor," and thus for the formulation of an agenda for action. The Church in Recife, however, was reluctant to accept specifications of its commitment to the poor. Salem (1981:175), reviewing the role of the Church in different parts of Brazil at the end of the 1970s<sup>27</sup>, noted that although there was much talk in Recife about organizing and uniting the people, there was little specification of how to concretely go about this liberation: "No perspectives are opened for the people and neither is their engagement in the general political struggle stimulated." Such attitudes can not only be attributed to the extreme repression the Church of Recife suffered during the 1969-1974 period, but also to the influence of Dom Hélder's somewhat mystical "third way" of "communitarian developmentalism," which viewed "the community" as the locus of "liberation" but remained rather vague when it came to more concrete earthly politics. Moreover, the other discursive matrixes distinguished by Sader (1988), i.e. of the marxist Left and the new trade unionism, were much less influential in Recife than in São Paulo, where "pathways to encounter" (Kowarick, 1985) contributed to the founding of the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (PT) in 1980 (cf. Gadotti & Pereira, 1989). The situation in Recife amounted to a virtual ban on any discussion of more concrete politics at "the level of the masses." More than elsewhere, the discussion of political issues tended to be dismissed as a form of "corruption" and "infiltration." This delegitimation of political discussion became increasingly problematic as the opportunities for political engagement broadened.

While the development of more outward-oriented activity on the part of local CEBs and forms of neighborhood associativism promoted by the Church in Recife was accompanied by the discussions and frictions described above, conflicts over urban land rapidly proliferated in the city, as had already been observed by the *Operação Esperança* team in 1976. The perspective of the Church-promoted forms of organization continued to be a matter of debate, but there was no question as to which side to take in these conflicts. At the same time, the Church-promoted forms of organization provided the framework for organized demand making. In the following sections, I shall briefly review the proliferation of conflicts and then devote attention to two more organized movements.

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<sup>27</sup> At the time, with the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* in the making, the debate was raging over the degree of commitment to some form of socialism as a concretization of the "option for the poor" (cf. Salem, 1981).

### 5.5. Conflicts and movements in the 1970s

"Invasions" are a relatively recent feature in Recife's urban history (Fontes, 1986:269). Recent in the sense of being perceived as a problem as well as in the sense that the mode of urban land occupation by the lower income strata changed from piecemeal occupation to massive invasion. Although conflicts certainly existed before the 1970s, the occupation of urban land by the lower income groups was often legitimized by the payment of *foro* or remained altogether undisturbed for the time being. With the increasing density of the urban tissue and the consequent valorization of urban land, the situation became increasingly conflictive and the dislocations due to the 1975 flood further exacerbated the problems. In its Bulletin of November 1977, the Archdiocese of Olinda and Recife estimated that 58,000 families, totaling some 300,000 people, lived under the threat of eviction. Particularly in the central areas of the city, the opening of a new avenue, the construction of a viaduct, the regulation of the Capibaribe riverbed or even the creation of touristic areas were regarded as sufficient arguments for the demolition of some dozens of *mocambos* every day. Moreover, often by violent means, private owners, or people who claimed to be owners, started to recover terrains now being valorized. The people who were evicted would often occupy areas further from the center or less coveted, like the southwestern part of the municipality (Ibura). Public land became a more important target for increasingly organized invasions, since subsequent negotiations in this case were affected by the "political moment." At a time when electoral politics started to gain importance, violent repression became less feasible (Barros e Silva, 1985; Fagundes, Lacerda, Zancheti & Pontual, 1981; Falcão, Moura & Pereira, 1984; Falcão 1985; FIDEM/UFPE, 1986:9; Fontes, 1986:269, 278, 297; Moura, 1990:65-129; Pantoja, n.d.).

Based on a review of the local press, Fontes (1986:265-302) recorded over 180 invasions in the RMR between 1970 and 1980. In 146 cases, the location of the event could be verified, showing that 94 (64%) cases occurred in the municipality of Recife, whereas Olinda came second with 28 cases or 19%. He also noted an increase of conflicts from 1975 onward. Out of 94 cases between 1950 and the end of 1981, 55 occurred in the 1976-1980 period. Barros e Silva (1985) and Pantoja (n.d.), whose information was based on the work of the *Comissão Justiça e Paz*, mentioned 80 new invasions in the RMR between 1978 and 1981, involving some 250,000 persons. Falcão mentioned the same number of invasions, but estimated the number of persons involved at 150,000. Fagundes, Lacerda, Zancheti and Pontual

(1981:54) noted 60 invasions in RMR during 1978-81 period involving 150,000 persons.<sup>28</sup>

The characteristics of the invasions in the wake of the 1975 flood can be gauged from accounts from the Caxangá area. People stayed at schools and other public buildings for some time, and then started to construct new dwellings side by side with already existing *mocambos*, the inhabitants of which were paying *foro*. In some cases, newcomers were forced by police action to abandon the place, in other cases they remained undisturbed and sometimes received building material from the municipal assistance programs or from city councilors. Similar stories are told in many other parts of the city. A general feature of the process is that, in as far as it was organized, the organization was precarious and shortlived. In some cases, however, a more durable form of organization emerged as a result of Church support for the invaders. This was what happened in the case of the settlement called *Planeta dos Macacos* in Curado, inhabited by people dislocated by the flood. In September 1976, a large police contingent succeeded in destroying 200 dwellings, but about 90 remained and the settlement later expanded again. Before and after the police intervention, the "Planet of the Apes" was visited by Dom Hélder and the organization of the community was strongly stimulated by the Church, which promoted the installation of infrastructure through communitarian self-help. In the mid 1980s, the settlement counted about 750 dwellings and negotiations aimed at regularization were ongoing. This is an early example of a scenario that was to recur with increasing frequency by the turn of the decade, when the *Comissão Justiça e Paz* came to play a prominent role in the defense of "invaders" (see 6.5.3.).

In most of these cases, some extent of organization developed after an invasion and Church-promoted neighborhood associativism also provided an organizational framework for demand-making by older settlements. During the second half of the 1970s, two movements attracted attention, the *Movimento Terras de Ninguém* in Casa Amarela against the payment of *foro* and the resistance of Brasília Teimosa against the intentions of city planners. These two movements can be regarded as the culmination of the "formative period" of the new neighborhood associativism in Recife.

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<sup>28</sup> Although rough approximations have been made, principally by examining newspaper items, this hardly adds up to a reliable quantification of the occupation of urban land through "invasion", since press reports focus on conflicts, and not even all the conflicts are reported. Moreover, they usually fail to specify crucial information like the number of people involved. The problems of quantification can be gauged if we look at the different calculations of the number of "low income areas" or *favelas*, for which the irregularity of occupation is one criteria. By the early 1980s official sources acknowledged the existence of 72 *favelas* in the municipality of Recife. In 1985, 193 *favelas* were recorded and in 1988 the number was 484. The increase is not simply due to an increase in the number of invasions, but also results from an "individualization of communities previously included in one single area" (SEHAB/URB, 1988:12). Thus Casa Amarela, which had been considered a single "low income area," was split up into some 100 specific "areas," each with its distinctive features and history.

## HINO DE CASA AMARELA

Lá pras bandas da zona norte do Recife  
existe um bairro com grande população  
onde mora gente nobre, gente humilde.  
Ela é cortada por belos corregos e morros  
onde um dia edificaram-se palacetes e  
casas singelas, mocambo e barracão.

Hoje cantada es tú,  
Casa Amarela,  
bairro boémio, hospitaleiro torrão.

No cemitério de Casa Amarela  
lagrimas regam as flores.  
É Casa Amarela  
chorando saudades dos seus amores,  
na grande Casa Amarela  
tem risos, prantos e dores.

Quem deixou Casa Amarela  
e nas Cohabs foi morar  
tem saudades dos seus morros  
tem vontade de voltar.  
O país é Casa Amarela  
está a vos esperar.

Casa Amarela querida,  
Eu te amo de coração.  
Nos teus corregos e morros  
quando a vista eu levanto  
contemplo o azul do manto  
da Virgem da Conceição.

Nova Descoberta é linda,  
tem beleza, tem povão.  
Tem crianças pobres na rua  
tem pobre, triste, sem pão.  
Mas é um povo que luta  
para conquistar o chão.

Deus quando veio ao mundo  
papel de terra deu não.  
Apareçam donos de terra  
que enganam a população.  
Invade terra minha gente,  
que essa terra é do povão.

Nelson Barbosa da Silva, o Poeta dos Morros (1988)

### 5.5.1. The Earth trembles....

One of the most important movements in the latter half of the 1970s was undoubtedly the *Movimento Terras de Ninguém* in Casa Amarela, which was strongly related to the *Encontros de Irmãos* and was also supported by oppositional politicians of the various groups operating under the MDB umbrella. The movement's target was one of the "major urban latifúndios in the country," some 350 ha or 40% of the neighborhood of Casa Amarela.

There are various versions of the history of the area's ownership. According to the alleged legal owners, it goes back to the early years of Portuguese settlement when a sugar plantation, the Engenho São Pantaleão do Monteiro, was established in the area. The name derived from the founder of the enterprise, Pantaleão de Siqueira, and the owner at the time of the Dutch invasion, Francisco Monteiro Bezerra. Due to the decline of the sugar trade, the plantation was gradually abandoned from the mid 18th century onward. By the early 19th century, sugar was no longer harvested and the *engenho* was subdivided into *sítios*. Subsequently, some of these *sítios* were further subdivided and incorporated into the urban tissue, and a number of them were sold. By 1943 the remaining area, basically less accessible terrain due to its hilly character, was owned by 35 co-proprietors (*condomínio*), each of whom collected *foro* from the inhabitants of the part they claimed was theirs. To regulate this chaotic situation, an agreement was reached in 1952 dividing the area into three parts. One part went to the Othon Bezerra de Melo Group, owner of the *Fábrica da Macaxeira*, the textile factory that was the largest employer in Casa Amarela. A second part went to the heirs and successors of Manuel Alfredo Marinho do Passo and Primitiva Marinho. The remaining part was incorporated into an *Empresa Imobiliária de Pernambuco Ltda*, managed by Dr. Roberto Rosa Borges. The shareholders were the people who claimed to be the owners of parts of the area. This enterprise started to reorganize the collection of *foro* by employing *cobreadores*.

The popular version of the story is different: the land had belonged to an *Irmandade de Cosme e São Pantaleão*, and at a certain moment it abandoned the area. The Marinho family then took possession, collecting *foro* from the inhabitants. In 1946 a Rosa Borges married into the family and the *Empresa Imobiliária* was created (cf. Folha dos Bairros, 1988: no. 15). According to the testimony of Arnaldo Rodrigues da Cruz, one of the leaders of the *Movimento Terras de Ninguém*, "Rosa Borges was never the owner of anything." The terrain belonged to the *Santa Casa de Misericórdia*. They would send a *cobrador* to ask for money and if there was no money, he would take a chicken: "Saints do not eat chicken, do they? So the bloke (*cara*) would eat the chicken himself." Afterwards Santos Marinho took charge as *cobrador* and still later, when Marinho was already old,

Rosa Borges "infiltrated" the family and started to act as if he was the owner of the terrain:

So the Church lost. But the Church kept silent because the Church also thieves, you know? Forgive me the word, if you are Catholic. But the Church doesn't mind some theft, does it? So they kept silent. And Rosa Borges took charge. Nowadays nobody really can say he isn't the owner, because it was all done according to the law, he made it all lawful because he knows of those things. They have a Registry (*cartório*), the whole family studied, took degrees, they have judges in the family, lawyers, everything, so they arranged things all right. Like "you are my family and I do everything for you." So everybody agreed because they had their bread to eat. That was how Rosa Borges did it. And today Rosa Borges is here, rich, the owner of everything. You want a small plot? Not possible. But, if God would come here now to ask for a plot: how much would he make God pay? Because it is God who made the earth (FEACA, 1988:89-92).

The dispute in the area has antecedents going back at least to the 1950s, when the Empresa Imobiliária was created and *foro* collection was reorganized. These protests were linked to the activities of the Communist Party and the textile workers' union of the *Fábrica da Macaxeira*. In the early 1960s, a group of members of the *Sociedade de Amigos de Casa Amarela* protested the sale of parts of the terrain by the Marinho family, arguing that they did not possess any valid deed. They also protested the unwarranted increase of the *foro* (cf. SACA, 1961). Partly due to the repression after 1964, when people were not allowed to meet, "not even to preach the word of God" (cf. FEACA, 1988:87; *Folha dos Bairros*, 1988: no. 13 & 15) nothing came of these protests.

Sometime in the early 1970s, people started to discuss the problem again at prayer meetings (*reuniões do terço*), linked to the *Movimento de Evangelização Encontro dos Irmãos*. Active roles in these discussions were played by Arnaldo, nicknamed "the Prefect" since he did so much for the community, João do Cigarro and Zé de Aguiar, "the Prophet," "who preached of Christ and the struggles of the great men of the Bible, who gave their lives for him, because Christ was a revolutionary" (Interview Nelson Barbosa, September 28, 1988) and who would announce at meetings in the Church of the Morro da Conceição that "the earth is trembling. The earth trembles and the powerful do not want to understand....You cannot take what belongs to everybody." Nelson "the Poet" would underline the point with his songs, stressing that whatever the exploiters who pretend to have inherited the Engenho São Pantaleão may say, "Saints do not have heirs" and that "when God came to the world, he issued no deeds giving rights to the land. But then came the 'owners' to deceive the population. So invade these lands, people, because they

belong to the populace"<sup>29</sup> (cf. FEACA, 1988:105; Folha dos Bairros, 1988: no. 15; Nelson Barbosa da Silva -songs-, October 1, 1988).

In May 1974, oppositional city councillor Marcus Cunha (MDB) publicly denounced the exploitation by the bogus owners. In June 1975, the decision was made to organize weekly meetings instead of the initial prayer meetings. Gradually the movement started to assume a more definite shape and on Easter Sunday 1976 six parishes of the area participated in a collection to strengthen the movement. By that time, the press had been invited to investigate the documents proving the exploitation through the *foro*, as well as the documents proving that houses had been sold various times. MDB federal deputy Jarbas Vasconcelos now also publicly supported the movement. With the relaxation of censorship in the context of the *distensão*, publications followed in the nation-wide weekly *VEJA*, the *Diário de Pernambuco* and *O Globo*. It was from the article in *VEJA* (May 26, 1976) that the movement derived its name *Movimento Terras de Ninguém*. Rosa Borges responded by producing documents allegedly proving their rights. About the same time, the parishes in the Casa Amarela sector of the Archdiocese sent letters to the municipality and the state government to complain about the situation. In July 1976, the first official anniversary of the movement was celebrated with a Mass on the Morro da Conceição.<sup>30</sup>

On July 17th a year later, the movement gathered again<sup>31</sup> under the protective blue and white mantle of *Nossa Senhora da Conceição*, who also represents Iemanjá, the Queen of the Sea, mother of the *orixas* and Goddess of fertility.<sup>32</sup> By eight o'clock in the evening, the Church began to fill. While some

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<sup>29</sup> "Casa Amarela, Casa Amarela do meu coração / as tuas terras estão servindo de exploração / A história diz que suas terras / pertenceram ao engenho São Pantaleão / Os que a exploram dizem que são herdeiros / Santo não tem herdeiro não. // Deus quando veio ao mundo / papel de terra deu não / Aparecem donos de terra / que enganam a população / Invade terra minha gente / que a terra é do povão".

<sup>30</sup> The statue of *Nossa Senhora da Conceição* was commissioned in Paris in 1904 and placed on the hill named after it in the same year. The hill was gradually deforested to be covered with mocambos. It became a highly significant nucleus of the emerging neighborhood of Casa Amarela (Mendonça, 1986).

<sup>31</sup> The following account of the anniversary commemoration of the movement in 1977 is based on a detailed report by Alvaro Luiz Pantoja Leite (July 20, 1977) entitled Um Dia na Luta das "Terras de Ninguém", found in the FEACA Archives.

<sup>32</sup> Particularly in Casa Amarela, the Xangô pantheon is palpably present on many occasions, including gatherings of neighborhood movements, giving them their particular flavor. As a matter of course, people may switch from Hallelujahs to hymns in honor of the African deities. Nelson "the Poet" often serves as a lead singer in the procession of the statue of Santa Isabel whom the morro where he lives is named after. He also wears a small amulet "just bought from a street peddler, has something to do with spiritism." Asked what saint it was related to, he said it was "São Jorge, Ogum the warrior," but that he does not participate in spiritism: "we only admire, like we admire Che Guevara who to me is a saint, an idol, idealist, socialist, warrior. Pro-communist....I don't know, but a guerrillero he was. We are not communists, but neither do we belong to the Right" (Interview Nelson Barbosa da Silva, September

tried out the music and songs for the evening, Padre Romano, a member of the *Ação Católica Operária* (ACO) who was threatened with extradition, appeared and people clustered around to greet him (cf. Prandini, Petrucci & Dale, 1986/1987 (V):187-204). Nelson "the Poet" intoned the "Hymn of the Struggle" and gradually people joined in:

It is now two years ago that the struggle started / It is now two years ago that the people fraternized / And that Sector Casa Amarela united / hands joined in the struggle against the exploiter // Let's go ahead / It is the struggle of the people / The voice of the people is the voice of God / Let us have faith / God never abandons / His poor and humiliated children.<sup>33</sup>

Some 500 people were present. A young priest read articles 1, 2, 3 and 25 from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the *Poeta dos Morros* intoned yet another song about the people of the *Terras de Ninguém* and the injustices they suffered. One of the ten members of the Coordinating Committee, representing the parishes of the area, preached a "sermon" saying that "Jesus knows of our needs, we need a free plot of land to live and to work" and everyone present responded that "God gave the earth to the people."

For two years, the authorities had remained mute in the face of the protests of the movement, but the priest who took the floor doubted whether they were not listening and addressed them directly:

I have three messages....The first is for the authorities, who must have their informers (*portadores*) here tonight. They may carry the following message. Let them tell the authorities of this city, of this state and of this country, that the people who gather here tonight on the Morro da Conceição did not come together for agitation. It is a people that seeks a true order where, to begin with the humble (*os pequenos*), all have their opportunity (*vez*). Because the God in whom we believe wants the humble to be raised; those who have no land to construct their house....Let them say to these gentlemen, the authorities of this land, that all authority derives from the people, because the voice of the people is the voice of God (applause). Therefore, they only merit our obedience if they support the cause of the people, the rights of the humble and if they make participation in progress possible for all the people who construct it, the

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28, 1988). At an earlier moment, he had already included Jesus Christ -another warrior- in the list, pointing to the pictures of São Jorge/Ogum, Che Guevara and the crucifix which decorate the walls of his house.

Even communism and spiritism are not totally incompatible, as became clear from the words of José Sobreira da Franca, who was a founder of the Dwellers' Association of the adjacent Alto do Mandu in 1960s: "I'm a spiritist, that seems contradictory but I have been a communist for over 50 years and I am also a spiritist; I'm an atheist but not a materialist" (Interview, October 1, 1988).

<sup>33</sup> Faz 2 anos que a luta começou / Faz 2 anos que o povo se irmanou / E o Setor Casa Amarela se uniu / De mãos dadas contra o seu explorador // Vamos avante / Que a luta é do povo / A voz do povo é a voz de Deus / Tenhamos fé / Deus nunca abandona / Os pobres humilhados filhos seus.

arms of the workers present here at this moment (applause). The second message is for the people who want to be the owners of the world, the people who pretend to be the owners of this land. These lands belong to nobody, because they belong to all of us. They are surely listening to us at the moment and their agents (*fiscais*) probably received one of our invitations and are present here. So tell your lords that the people who are gathered here do not bear hatred in their hearts. We so badly want good for those who oppress us that we can not let them go on oppressing us. We want that at least, before dying, you do what Zacchaeus did. Divide what you think you possess with those who have nothing and give it back to those whom you have robbed fourfold, like Zacchaeus did (laughter). So we shall only end our struggle when you are equal and as humble as we are (applause). And finally, a last message to you, to us who are here together. We are here on the Morro da Conceição. This hill is to us what Mount Sinai was to Moses. Here we plant and here we will harvest liberation. That this land, which belongs to nobody, may really be ours, because God created it for us (applause).

After *Orações de Fiéis* for a hospitalized member of the Coordinating Committee and for Padre Romano, threatened with extradition, the gathering ended with the reading and distribution of a leaflet. It called for participation in the movement and listed "Ten Ways to Exploit and Cheat the People of the Terras de Ninguém," from collecting rent without being the legitimate owner of the land to forcing people to buy the land and cheating them on top of that.

The movement was gathering momentum and, at a time when opposition also began to stir in other parts of the country and, locally, the *Movimento the Evangelização Encontro dos Irmãos* became more outward oriented, the decision was made to gather signatures under a petition to the President of the Republic.

On April 13, 1978 Document 002447 was registered by the Documentation Service of the Presidency of the Republic.<sup>34</sup> It was read by Jarbas Vasconcelos in the Chamber of Deputies that same day. After denouncing the injustices perpetrated by the Rosa Borges family and their Empresa Imobiliária, the 2,650 signers of the petition wrote that they had

resolved to make an appeal to the authority of the President of the Republic in the hope that the Government would expropriate these lands to sell them at prices compatible with the inhabitants' means. Only in this way will our right to shelter (*direito de morar*) be officially guaranteed, avoiding exploitation by people who enrich themselves with what is not theirs, through the improvements the government makes in the area (light, water, paving, etc.), extorting the poor down to their last penny and subjecting them to the worst affronts. We are certain that we are on the side of Justice and Truth

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<sup>34</sup> For a translation of the full text, see appendix.

and that in this Country there are Laws to defend the humble. In the assurance that Your Excellency will take into consideration this plea for Justice we sign respectfully....

It was not until a year and a half later, after *distensão* had become *abertura* and the governmental attitude toward urban protests had undergone a substantial change, as will be described in the next chapter, that a reaction came to the plea of the inhabitants of the *Terras de Ninguém*.

### 5.5.2. Stubborn Brasília

A second mobilization that drew attention in these years was on the part of the inhabitants of Brasília Teimosa. This settlement is located to the south of Recife between Boa Viagem and the port area on a 50-hectare peninsula made up of successive landfills. The most important landfills were executed after 1934, when the state of Pernambuco bought parts of the area from the heirs of the Viscount of Livramento. The intention was to build oil tanks. They never materialized, however, and in spite of some attempts at repression, parts of the area were gradually occupied. The occupation peaked in 1957-58, when a draught struck the interior of Pernambuco. People also moved in from the nearby settlement around Pina Bridge, notably fishermen whose access to the sea through the Barra da Jangada -an opening in the reef- had been closed at the time of the landfills. In April 1958, a local newspaper reported the existence of 3,000 shacks in the area. The Port of Recife Administration and other interested parties began pressuring for intervention. Although police harassments increased and some houses were destroyed, the population resisted eviction, "rebuilding at night what had been destroyed in the daytime." Referring to the stubborn resistance of its inhabitants and the construction of the other new city -Brasília- in those years, the settlement became known as Brasília Teimosa: Stubborn Brasília. Neither the municipality nor the state government pushed the case. The consolidation of the settlement took place by way of contacts with local politicians from various parties. One of them was known around this part of town for selling or distributing water from a *carro pipa* (tank car). He also occasionally helped out by bringing in carloads of rubble to consolidate parts of the terrain. In some parts the installation of some extent of infrastructure and of electricity and running water was also with the help of politicians. By the early 1960s, more independent forms of organization emerged, manifesting themselves in street demonstrations and petitions for the improvement of the settlement (cf. Moura, 1987a:155-156; 1990:38; Silva, 1990). These forms of organization disappeared in 1964.

A *Conselho de Moradores* was created in 1966 in the context of the *Operação Esperança*. During the first ten years of its existence, the Council did not

exhibit much activity, however. This changed during the administration of Antônio Farias (1975-79) when rumors spread about the pending urbanization of the area. At the same time a youth group, backed by the local *padre*, brought more activity into the council and replaced the old directory through elections in 1977. In the press the inhabitants of the area -about 20,000 by that time- could see pictures of the projected transformation of their habitat and its integration into the skyline of Boa Viagem, where huge high-rise apartment buildings had mushroomed during the past decade. In collaboration with the FIDEM, the municipal urbanization company URB was drawing up the plans for transforming Brasília Teimosa into a tourism area (see 5.3.1.) As it became clear that the massive removal of the area's inhabitants would generate a huge conflict, URB started to elaborate a scenario aimed at the "humanization" of the *favela* and invited the *Conselho de Moradores* to cooperate. The elaboration of this plan and the invitation to cooperate reflected the change in urban policies on low-income settlements in the context of the redemocratization process.<sup>35</sup>

Rather than collaborate with the URB on the "humanization project," the Council devised a plan of its own. A Planning Commission was created to produce an alternative plan that would respond to the wishes of the inhabitants. It was supported and advised by a *Centro de Pesquisas e Ação Social*, a private enterprise whose members belonged to the opposition and dedicated part of their time to "support for popular projects." The general aim of the project was to prevent an *expulsão branca* -gradual removal of inhabitants as a result of the upgrading process and the consequent rise in the value- and to carry out a project for the settlement in a democratic participative manner. The activities started with the distribution of information concerning the area and possible solutions to its problems. Subsequently, in the course of 1979, 92 public meetings were held to discuss the proposals and to involve the population. Leaflets, featuring the story of Teimosinho -a fictive inhabitant of the settlement- and explaining aspects of the project, were distributed. Two plays, one relating the history of Brasília Teimosa and the other addressing the sanitation problems of the area, were staged with the same aims. A final draft of the project, as elaborated by the *Centro de Pesquisas e Ação Social* in close collaboration with the *Conselho de Moradores*, was submitted to a plebiscite in November 1979. It was estimated that over 50% of the population somehow participated in the mobilizations accompanying the elaboration of *Projeto Teimosinho* (FASE, 1980). The main feature of the project was that it simultaneously addressed three aspects of the problems of Brasília Teimosa. Legalization of the possession of land by its occupants was coupled with infrastructure im-

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<sup>35</sup> A mobilization to have a bus-line enter the settlement had taken place earlier. One reason for the success of this mobilization seems to have been that people would no longer have to walk through the zona on the southern fringe of the settlement.

provements and the creation of employment. Otherwise, it was argued, the process would only result in the *remoção branca* of the inhabitants.

While the *Projeto Teimosinho* was being drawn up, on the occasion of its 13th anniversary in August 1979, the Council also launched a *Manifesto* to influence public opinion. In the subsequent months, the Manifest was discussed in the neighborhood and signed by its inhabitants. When President Figueiredo visited Recife in October 1979, marking the shift to a new approach to the urban question<sup>36</sup>, the Council expected a visit to Brasília Teimosa and wanted to use the occasion to bring the Manifest to the attention of the President. Instead, a Council representative was only allowed to give a short speech, previously discussed with the people in charge of the protocol, during the President's visit to the *favela* of Coque. Nevertheless, the Manifesto<sup>37</sup> was launched from a platform erected in Brasília Teimosa. It stated that

Taking advantage of the political moment, we resolved to address the Government and public opinion to communicate the following decisions which have been approved at three general assemblies:

1. First and foremost, we demand the legalization of the land for us, the actual inhabitants, through *aforamento* (direct lease), to provide us definitive security.
2. We are elaborating our own urbanization project with the participation of the whole population, which we consider indispensable for any such project.
3. When the project is ready we shall present it to the Public Power, asking for approval and collaboration in its realization.
4. We do not accept the eviction of any inhabitant for whatever reason (*em hipótese alguma*). Eventual relocations will be permitted only if they take place within the neighborhood.
5. In our urbanization project, we give priority to the most needy part of the neighborhood, which is the seashore (*beira-mar*), or the area of *palafitas*.
6. We demand that, if necessary, special laws be adopted to effectuate the legalization and urbanization, as well as special measures so that, afterwards, everyone will be enabled to pay for the improvements.
7. Any collective matter shall be dealt with through the *Conselho de Moradores*.

Elucidating these points, it was observed that leasehold (*aforamento*) had to be understood as a way of recognizing the "right to land" for everyone: "For free. Without burden (*onus*), because God gave the land without asking a penny from

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<sup>36</sup> This change in urban politics will be further discussed in the next chapter. On the occasion of this visit, agreements were signed in which the Federal Government leased the area of Coque and Joana Bezerra to the municipality. In view of a regularization of the terrain, the area of Brasília Teimosa was transferred to the municipality.

<sup>37</sup> See Appendix.

anybody." Taking this as a starting point, the Council went on with a description of the type of urbanization it had in mind:

Most of us are poor people. Therefore, our urbanization must be for poor people. Without luxuries, without motorways (*autopistas*). But with the comfort we were denied during the long and hard years. The comfort of being able to walk a street without puddles, without mud and without the dust of the summer.

The comfort of having running water in our houses. The comfort of having more hygienic sanitation. The comfort of having a school, a health post, a maternity ward and a market nearby. And above all, the comfort of God's blessing, having the legal guarantee that we can not be sent away (*mandados embora*) due to egotistic and paltry interests.

An urbanization project, finally, that does not come down from the top, imposed without the participation of the population. An urbanization project for us, inhabitants, and made by us like we are doing now, because only through discussion and the unison of all will we win greater justice for the majority of the population.

Other significant features of the position taken by the *Conselho* are the attention for the most needy areas and for the people in rented dwellings -about a third of the families- and the emphasis on the demand to be recognized as the sole legitimate representative of the community, to which every measure has to be submitted before being implemented. With these demands the *Conselho* had formulated an alternative urban project that was to serve as an exemplary model for future initiatives on the part of the *Comissão Justiça e Paz* and "the popular movement" concerning the regularization of land use and urbanization of low-income settlements (see 7.7.). In the following chapters, I shall discuss the response to Brasília Teimosa's demands by the municipal administration in the context of the "politics of *abertura*."

### 5.5.3. A changing conjuncture

The two mobilizations described above were embedded in changing conjuncture of the late 1970s and illustrate it in exemplary ways. Just before the *distensão* became *abertura*, the *Movimento Terras de Ninguém* addressed a letter to the President of the Republic. A little over a year later, the Dwellers' Council of Brasília Teimosa directly addressed the new President on one of his goodwill trips to legitimate the *abertura* project.

The two movements addressed the presidents in different terms, indicative not only of the national political conjuncture but also of a shift in discourse and mode of organization. The *Movimento Terras de Ninguém* was strongly related to the local CEBs. Its imagery was predominantly religious and often represented an

appeal by the meek and humble to the President in the name of Justice and Truth. Imagery of this kind was much less prominent in the mobilization of Brasília Teimosa. Its Manifesto was an appeal of hard-working citizens to the public authorities in the name of people's rights. One of the processes underlying this difference in discourse between the two movements, was the emergence of new leadership groups, as was the case in Brasília Teimosa. The networks consisting of the Youth Pastoral, the *Instituto de Teologia do Recife* (ITER), *Ação Católica Operária* (ACO)<sup>38</sup> and other initiatives were producing a new group of younger leaders more apt to analyze society in socio-political terms. Networks of this kind were an important ingredient in the later efforts toward citywise articulation of a "neighborhood movement" and their dynamics (cf. Lehmann, 1990:173).

Another distinguishing feature was the different attitude to the relation between land rights and urbanization in the two documents. The *Movimento Terras de Ninguém* was against the payment of *foro* and proposed the legalization of the area by way of state-supervised sales and purchases at reasonable prices. Full ownership of their plot would protect the inhabitants from rent rises resulting from the gradual urbanization of the area. While the imagery of a society of equals informed the *Movimento*, the means of achieving this were worked out more concretely in the views on urbanization and land rights of the Dwellers' Council of Brasília Teimosa and its counsellors (*assessores*). For pragmatic as well as ideological reasons, it demanded legalization through perpetual leasehold (*aforamento*). This would be easier to attain than a donation of public land, and it would be less costly to the inhabitants. However, it was also a way to combat real estate speculation and eventual *expulsão branca*. Restrictions on ownership rights and the stipulation of a maximum plot size guaranteed that the urbanization process would benefit the low-income population. This procedure also provided one of the levers for control of the area by the inhabitants through their Dwellers' Council. The sale of a house and the consequent transfer of the plot would be subject to the approval of the Dwellers' Council, which would see to it that the future inhabitants would be of the same status as the present ones. Similarly the Council came up with a popular urbanization project, and demanded a full say in its future execution. As such, it set an example for initiatives elsewhere in the city and for subsequent proposals for legislation on land rights and urbanization as elaborated by the *Comissão Justiça e Paz* and the "popular movement" in 1985 (see 7.7.).

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<sup>38</sup> The ACO, created in the 1960s, reemerged in the 1970s as virtually the only oppositionist group concerned with trade unionism and the promotion of the Novo Sindicalismo in Recife (Soares, 1985).

## 5.6. Concluding remarks

In this chapter I discussed the installation of the bureaucratic-authoritarian planning machinery and the "formative" period of the new neighborhood associativism. This brought into view some of the actors and agencies that play a prominent role in the "politics of *abertura*" discussed in the following chapter.

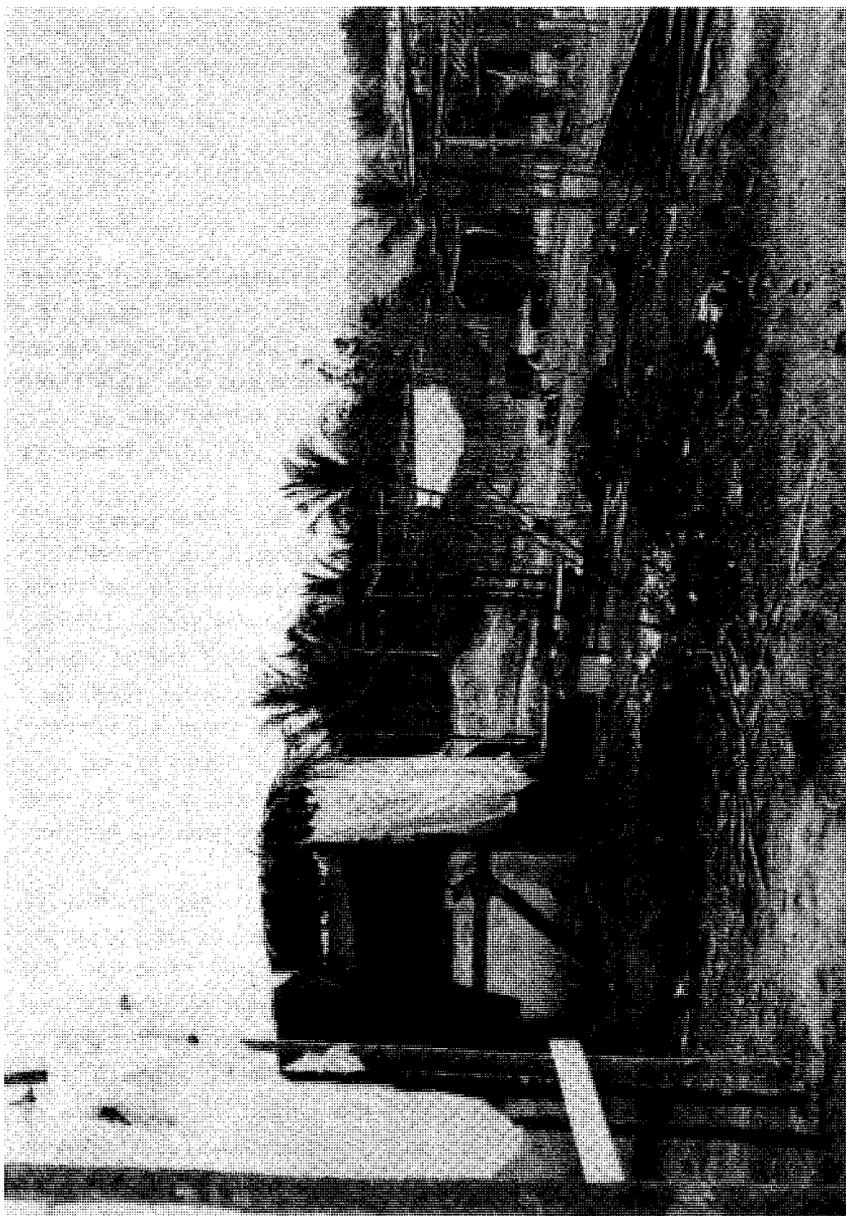
I started this chapter with the general features of bureaucratic-authoritarian urban policies in Brazil, the administrative and financial centralization, the role of the BNH and the institutional framework for the implementation of metropolitan and municipal policies. By the late 1970s, the high degree of centralization started to give rise to debate, eventually resulting in the decentralizing aspects of the 1988 Constitution. The period under discussion in this study thus continued to be marked by the centralized framework installed in the 1960s and 1970s. Where the BNH is concerned we noted how its policies increasingly diverged from its stated aim of providing housing for the low-income strata. Investment in large-scale urban infrastructure became one of its main activities, furthering the interests of large construction companies and contributing to the "miracle"-economy. The housing policies of the BNH became geared to providing housing for the better-off. With the advent of the *abertura*, social concerns once again occupied a prominent place in the BNH policies, as illustrated by the launching of the PROMORAR housing program in 1979. The new turn in urban policies reflected the efforts to boost the legitimacy of the regime in managing the transition to a civilian government. The actual effects were, however, restricted by the economic downturn. The changing political conjuncture also was to affect the planning bureaucracies that came to play a new role in the context of the "politics of *abertura*." In the following chapter, I shall discuss how this politicization resulted in an "identity crisis" of the planning agencies.

The discussion of the urban policies implemented in Recife has demonstrated how little consideration there was for the majority of the population. Investment was concentrated in large-scale infrastructure, the road system and the upgrading of the city center. As far as the low-income population was concerned, the "logic of the system" and the interventions of planning agencies contributed to the relocation of low-income settlements in peripheral areas and actually promoted the growth of *favelas*, since BNH housing was beyond the purchasing power of most of the population. The tensions generated by this logic and accentuated by natural disasters came into the open during the latter half of the 1970s, when the indiscriminate repression of earlier years slackened and Church-related organizations could expand the boundaries of their activities, providing an infrastructure for a new neighborhood associativism as well as much of the discursive matrix for articulating such activities.

The role of the Church in the emergence of the new neighborhood associations can hardly be overestimated. It helped overcome the fear of joining associations or, as *seu* Manoel put it, quoting Dom Hélder: "Communists do not exist in Brazil, what exists is hunger." We have seen how in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the *Operação Esperança* was the main vehicle for promoting neighborhood associativism through the efforts to achieve an "organizational advantage" from the assistance to victims of the floods that hit the city in 1965/66 and again in 1975. By then, *Operação* social work had become largely independent of state agencies as a consequence of the tensions between Church and regime. Foreign funding had become its main resource, and it had started linking up with the emerging Ecclesial Base Communities, the *Movimento de Evangelização Encontro de Irmãos*, to carry out local projects as the distribution of water filters.

If the emergence of the Base Communities was one of the reasons for the eclipse of *Operação Esperança*, the dispute over its political orientation was another. The conflict had its parallel in the working out of the discursive matrix of base community christianism which resulted in the transition from a "phase of preparation" to a "phase of doing things and solving problems." In its broadest sense, it revealed the tension between a religiously inspired approach and a more socio-political one. More concretely, it involved the perspective of social work practice and the relationship between the Church and political activities. What did it mean to do things and solve problems? One orientation tended toward human promotion through communitarian self-help. Its politics were those of denunciation and an appeal to the authorities to right wrongs, while secular politics were often regarded as corrupt as well as corrupting. The other orientation was partly inspired by the urban social movement theorizations, starting to exert influence at the time. This orientation tended more toward confrontation with the authorities and commitment to the newly emerging "popular movement," including its uncorrupted political expressions, a commitment beyond the boundaries of the institutional Church. The two orientations coexisted uneasily rather than in overt conflict and it should be noted that the people who resigned from *Operação Esperança* did so voluntarily, in stark contrast to the purge under Dom Hélder's successor after 1985.

I analyzed the emergence of two movements that can be regarded as outcomes of the formative period of the new neighborhood associativism, and commented on the shifts in discourse and mode of operation taking place in the context of the changing political situation. Both movements were successful in eliciting a response from the authorities. The essentially repressive attitude of the bureaucratic-authoritarian regime made way for the "politics of *abertura*."



Invasión Guabiraba (1988)