

# Bioethics and housing: an ethical perspective on the squats at the center of Rio de Janeiro

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## Abstract

The act of entrance in an abandoned realty/property and changing it into housing characterizes the squats at the center of Rio de Janeiro. These informal housing are settled on a conflict territory since they stand in opposition to the principle of property and the current political and urban transformations on the city, illustrated for example by the urban operation *Porto Maravilha*. This work aims to answer whereas squatting is legitimated. Furthermore it aims to identify the principles of squatting which are opposite to the principle of property. We conclude that these principles could represent a substantive contribution to the focus of reflection in bioethics, as well as a contribution to its way of analysis and action.

**Key words:** Housing. Bioethics. Politics.

## Resumo

### Bioética e habitação: leitura ética sobre as ocupações urbanas no centro do Rio de Janeiro

As ocupações urbanas no centro da cidade do Rio de Janeiro caracterizam-se pelo ato de adentrar em imóveis/propriedades abandonados e transformá-los em moradia. Encontram-se em território conflituoso, haja vista que atuam em oposição ao princípio de propriedade e às atuais transformações urbanas no centro da cidade, ilustradas, por exemplo, pela Operação Urbana Porto Maravilha. Tendo em vista a transformação de tal território, este trabalho tem como objetivo geral responder se a ação empreendida para a consolidação dessas ocupações é moralmente legítima ou não. Para tanto, busca-se ainda identificar os princípios que sustentam a ação de ocupar e que estão em oposição àquele da propriedade. Conclui-se que tais princípios podem representar uma substantiva contribuição ao foco da reflexão, análise e atuação bioética.

**Palavras-chave:** Habitação. Bioética. Política.

## Resumen

### Bioética y vivienda: lectura ética acerca de las ocupaciones urbanas en el centro de Rio de Janeiro

Las ocupaciones urbanas en el centro de la ciudad de Rio de Janeiro se caracterizan por el acto de entrar en inmuebles/propiedades abandonados y transformarlos en viviendas. Se encuentran en un territorio conflictivo, puesto que actúan en contraste con el principio de la propiedad y con las transformaciones urbanas actuales en el centro de la ciudad, ilustradas, por ejemplo, por la "Operación Urbana Porto Maravilha". Teniendo en cuenta esta transformación territorial, este trabajo tiene como objetivo general contestar si la acción adoptada para consolidar estas ocupaciones es moralmente legítima o no. Para eso, se busca aún identificar los principios que sustentan la acción de ocupar y que se oponen al principio de propiedad. Se concluye que dichos principios pueden representar un aporte sustantivo al enfoque de la reflexión, del análisis y de la actuación de la bioética.

**Palabras-clave:** Vivienda. Bioética. Política.

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The objects of analysis of this study are the squats at the center of Rio de Janeiro. The purpose is to answer, as a general intent, whether the act of entering into abandoned realties/properties and turning them into housing, under the management of a collective constituted by the occupants, is ethical or not. The specific purpose is the analysis of property in the context of squats. Property is understood to be a power device. Imposed on specific power relations it can mold, transform, control and even train the individuals involved in these relationships<sup>1</sup>. This power device has the ability to infer the interests of the owner as superior to the interests of the group of squatters, even considering these interests as paramount to life with quality, as is the case of the housing interest.

From the relations in which the property device is imposed, it is necessary to stress an analytical question that is associated to those involved in these relations: *who exactly is being protected?*<sup>2</sup> When trying to answer this question, the relation between society and the value it gives life forms is shown. Accordingly, the intention of this study is to elucidate the urban and, specifically, the housing issue, focused after this question. In other words, one can understand the morality – group of reasons, principles and justifications – that guides the urban actions existing through this interrogation.

Another specific goal of this article is to emphasize principles related to squatting. Principles that can provide a change of perspective in the field of bioethics, in order to point out possibilities for protective actions and interventions that do not come from the hegemonic, state or private powers.

The acting of bioethics is understood as legitimate and justified due to the fact that the aspects related to housing permeate and/or affect the lives of the city inhabitants and, in particular, of the inhabitants of the areas considered materially and immaterially poor. Housing is therefore understood as a place for shelter/protection; a relations network: creation of a community, a circle of friends, a network of mutual support; capacity development opportunities: proximity to labor supply and education, areas of cultural production and placement, variety of entertainment and leisure; and maintenance and promotion of health and quality of life. Under this perspective, the housing area and, more broadly, the city engender forms of relationship not only with the physical urban space, but with other individuals, communities and their concerns about what they understand for good or correct.

## Squats

In general, social movements *arise against a particular life situation and, based on its organization, it tries to change the state of thing (status quo)*<sup>3</sup>. Particularly, the movement of urban occupations *raises questions about aspects related to forms of appropriation of the city*<sup>4</sup>. It is established by the entry into abandoned urban property or land and its transformation into housing through the decisions and actions of a collective constituted of its occupants.

The squats at the city center of Rio de Janeiro arise from actions taken by the very people affected by urban reality, i.e., people living in the streets, workers of the city center with no condition of paying the transport from their residences to the workplace, people who have no condition to sustain the increase in rents and that, instead of waiting for the State to offer a solution for these conditions, take direct action to accomplish their goals. Political actions of autonomous individuals or groups of individuals, in the sense of being free of representation or institutionalization.

These squats have an organizational form that might be highlighted when compared to different urban social movements due to its horizontality: absence of hierarchical relationships. Decisions are made in assemblies, in which the present residents act by vote or consensus. Structure, maintenance and security are under responsibility of committees formed by the residents themselves. The community kitchen is a reality in the early occupation projects, as in the case of the *Machado de Assis* squat, and may become a permanent space, as in the *Flor do Asfalto* squat. The latter maintained a library with a collection of over 500 books, besides a vegetable garden and capoeira classes.

The squats *Quilombo das Guerreiras* and *Chiquinha Gonzaga* still exist at the center of Rio de Janeiro. The squats *Zumbi dos Palmares*, *Flor do Asfalto* and *Machado de Assis* were displaced due to the Urban Project *Porto Maravilha*, a "revitalization" project of the port area of Rio de Janeiro, whose realization requires the replacement of the poor residing group by groups that are more appropriate to the economic and urban hegemonic goals<sup>5</sup>. The *Guerreiros Urbanos* group, who shares the characteristics of horizontal policy, was violently<sup>6</sup>evicted in its three occupation attempts in the city center of Rio de Janeiro.

## Bioethics, housing deficit and urban conflicts

*The human condition is defined by the finitude and the element represented by the limited resourc-*

es available to satisfy the human desire of postponing death and alleviating suffering<sup>7</sup> is a component of this condition. In public health, the finitude of resources is part of a concrete reality marked by multiple conflicts.

When applied to the case of housing, the statement regarding the finitude of resources intrinsic to reality is questionable. According to recent data presented by the Ministry of Cities<sup>8</sup>, the Brazilian housing deficit is estimated at 5,546,000 households and includes people in precarious housing situations, family cohabitation, excessive rent burdens and increased resident density of households in rented houses. It is estimated that there are 7,542,000 vacant realties in Brazil. Excluding the buildings under construction or renovation, 6,307,000 would be able to be occupied. Therefore, the amount of vacant realties outweighs the housing deficit.

The data suggest that before finitude of resources, there is, within a bioethical conflict, the choice of respecting the principle of property. This can be understood through the statement: *to act against the incorporation of a person is acting against that person*<sup>9</sup>. The choice is made, among others, due to the principle of beneficence. In other words, there arises a conflict between *giving individuals their own property and give others what is necessary for life*<sup>10</sup>, in which ownership claims over beneficence.

In the here discussed case there is a favoring of interests of keeping empty realties intended for real estate speculation or acquisition by majority groups, those suitable to the prevailing standard of urban life - as professionals and managers – instead of redirecting these properties to groups in vulnerable situations derived from the housing deficit. To illustrate the preponderance of the destiny of properties available for purchase by majority groups, one can compare the data deficit in the metropolitan region of the State of Rio de Janeiro to the data of the *Minha Casa, Minha Vida II* program in the city of Rio de Janeiro, made available by the Municipal Department of Housing<sup>11</sup>. When analyzing the distribution of the housing deficit by ranges of monthly household average income in the metropolitan region of the State of Rio de Janeiro, it is possible to notice that 87.8% is concentrated in the range of up to 3 minimum wages, 7.5% in the range of 3-5 minimum wages and 4.7% above 5 minimum wages. The program *Minha Casa, Minha Vida II* in the city of Rio de Janeiro has 43,000 housing units, 23,000 of these (53%) are designated to the range of up to 3 minimum wages, 9.000 (21%) to the range of between

3 and 6 minimum wages and 11.000 (26%) to the range of above 6 minimum wages.

Initially, it is important to be aware of the here taken data approach of the metropolitan region of the State of Rio de Janeiro in relation to the city of Rio de Janeiro, as well as to highlight the difference between the separation of income ranges presented by the document of the Ministry of Cities. Made the reservations, it is possible to observe that even a housing program shows no proportional activity to the housing deficit, once 26% of housing units are intended to a group of 4.7% families affected by the housing deficit.

It is worth remembering, though, the existence of the Program *Novas Alternativas*, which aims to convert ruined and abandoned houses throughout the downtown area into housing and/or commercial units<sup>12</sup>, considering that, at the public hearing in which this program is mentioned, the same reference index of 500 abandoned or dilapidated buildings of 2010 is presented – there is no reduction of the previous index. In contrast, there is an almost total removal of communities like *Vila Harmonia*, *Restinga* and *Vila Recreio II*, and the eviction of squats as *Zumbi dos Palmares*, *Flor do Asfalto* and *Machado de Assis*.

In this conflicting context of broad housing deficit, it is possible to highlight the ineffectiveness of housing programs provided by the government and the preponderance of the principle of property in hegemonic social morality, which contextualize the movement of urban occupations at the center of Rio de Janeiro.

### Principle of property and its implications

The principle of property positions the State or private institutions as legitimate owners of the informally occupied and built land, in the case of slums or realties physically and tributary abandoned for decades, targets for squats. The principle of property is founded upon the understanding that "something own" is an extension of the owner himself. This property can be a machine, a large piece of land or an abandoned realty. Besides being an owner, the State acts as an advocate for owners and their properties.

The principle of property focuses on the fact that people are not only in their body, but also in things they produce<sup>13</sup>, i.e., on what they apply their body strength through their work. Therefore, this principle is established as a protection to the body

of the individual, because it extends to objects that they possess<sup>14</sup>. Thus, as it is considered illegitimate to interfere on an individual without their consent, it is also illegitimate to interfere on their property.

However, property is a power device, able to mold, transform, control and even train the individuals involved in these relationships. In general, the introduction of devices *always involves a subjective process, which means they must produce their subjects*<sup>15</sup>. In the case of property, *the privacy of the possessed is one and the same thing as the deprivation that determines who does not agree something with the rightful owner - i.e., the entire community of squatters*<sup>16</sup>. The performance of the ownership device separates the owners, the squatters and the properties into distinct groups.

The members of the first group are protected from the action of the squatters on their property by the institution of the principle of property and the defense through the power of the State. The third group is composed by objects like cars, books and - with the advent of domestication and, consequently, of speciesism - the nonhuman animals. The interests of the owner are superior to the interests of the group of squatters, even the most important interests, such as shelter. In this study it is understood that this inference derives from the assumption on the property as *the original law of nature, which allows the goods to be belonged to those who devoted their own work on it, although they previously were a common right to all*<sup>17</sup>. Through the work the individual becomes the owner, the property becomes part of them<sup>18</sup>.

Locke says that the act of the owner that excludes something of the *common right of other individuals*<sup>18</sup> is legitimate, in both moral and legal sense, *at least when there is enough and in also good quality for others*<sup>17</sup>. These statements imply that the chances of becoming owner through work are equal. However, situations discordant to that statement occur. The first example is the appropriation through the work of servants: *the peat that the servant cut becomes my property*<sup>17</sup>. The second is the statement of the right of inheritance, which is born with the person: *the right, before anyone else, to inherit, in conjunction with siblings, the property of the parent*<sup>19</sup>. If there are equal opportunities for all through work, there is no basis for the existence of a group of people that needs to available their work to others; the guarantee of inheritance as an essential right provides better opportunities for some, if they are "lucky" to belong to a wealthy family.

It is difficult to ethically justify the assertion that *property rights on the services of others are based directly on the permission, the morality of mutual respect*<sup>20</sup>, considering that the character of nonproprietary relegates some individuals to sell its workforce restricted to subordinate jobs. As a result, it mischaracterizes a form of consensual relationship in which a person is able to *agree to perform certain services and to enter into special relationships of obedience*<sup>20</sup>.

It becomes clear, therefore, that equality of opportunities is practically unrealizable<sup>21</sup> due to differences in capabilities, contexts and collective and personal histories. Slavery, mark of the Brazilian history, is an example of a fact that structures the broad inequality of opportunities, since it historically constitutes both the material destitution of the African descent population - represented by the continued exploration and, among others, the inability to access land - and the immaterial destitution, represented by arbitrary discrimination based on skin color, which is cause for situations of inferiority, exclusion and diverse vulnerabilities.

The existence of historical events such as slavery, which are characterized by not being limited to the past and to certain spaces, and by causing negative conditions, verified currently in multiple spaces, on specific groups, constitutes the need for *preferential treatment to members of disadvantaged groups*<sup>21</sup>. A treatment that would be applicable to the Brazilian housing situation, however, is not socially realized due to the action of the device of property and its defense through the derived principle. In this sense, from the relations in which such a device is imposed, a relevant issue to the field of bioethics is highlighted: *who exactly is being protected?*<sup>22</sup>

## Genealogy of squats at the center of Rio de Janeiro

The movement of squats at the center of Rio de Janeiro is analyzed through direct observation, as well as through the document named Commitment Letter of the Machado de Assis Squat, written in 2008 by the Collective of the Machado de Assis Squat, in which the initial organization and management rules of the squat are presented. Speeches of squats residents, from the two editions of the public event called "Margins of the City: from slums to urban occupations" - May 27, 2011 at the Institute of Philosophy and Social Sciences and August 11, 2011 at the Institute of Social Medicine, both in the city of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, are also used in the analysis.

These are arguments of the residents of the Quilombo das Guerreiras and Chiquinha Gonzaga squats.

Here it is necessary to make an observation. Deleuze, in dialogue with Foucault, referring to the practice of the author of *Discipline and Punish* (about his work with Defert in prisons, directed to the creation of the Prison Information Group / PIG), indicates the goal of *creating conditions for prisoners to speak for themselves*<sup>22</sup>. This objective, which also permeates the theoretical construction of the PIG, turns explicit the fundamental teaching of Foucault: *the indignity of speaking for others*<sup>23</sup>. The event "*Margens da cidade*" is structured in this sense, providing the opportunity to speak with and listen to others.

Deleuze emphasizes that the theories, in particular the political and philosophical, are like tool boxes and if there are no people to use them, i.e., understand and confront the reality through them, theories are worthless. Therefore, theories require a bond with the practice and the practice with the theory, once *the practice is a group of relays from one theory to another, and theory a relay from one practice to another*<sup>22</sup>. One can also understand that the event "*Margens da cidade*" was characterized by the assumption of the discourse and theory by people who actually are in urban struggles, in short, using theories and creating practices of resistance and creating possibilities for life in the city.

Thus, the event presents itself as an element among others in the strategic search to *unlink the power of truth from the forms of hegemony (social, economic, cultural) within which the truth works at the moment*<sup>24</sup>. The truth is produced and conveyed by speeches from socially recognized as moral and legally reliable institutions. But it is worth remembering that when there are forms of power, there are also forms of resistance that can fetch the speech as a strategic way to undermine the power.

Internal to this realization there are two editions of the event. The first has the presence of a resident of the *Quilombo das Guerreiras* squat; the second has the presence of a resident of the *Chiquinha Gonzaga* squat. Their speeches picture the history and dynamics of urban occupation movement of the city center of Rio de Janeiro.

The union between the Popular Struggle Front, the Center of Popular Movements and people living in the streets generates, on July 23, 2004, the Chiquinha Gonzaga squat, located in a building of the Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA). The beginning of the dialogue between

these three main agents of the occupation takes place in a public demonstration, materialized in an encampment in front of the embassy of the United States of America, against the invasion of Iraq. The character of the demonstration allowed the proximity of people living in the streets and these popular movements, initiating a dialogue between theory, practice and need. A process of meetings between these three agents and registration of persons as future residents begins, which culminates on the day of entry into the building in proven abandonment situation in the center of Rio de Janeiro.

The political horizontality and self-management of the squat are consolidated by a collective, represented by general assemblies, whose decision-making is shared between all persons participating, as well as by the various responsible committees, for example, for negotiating with the owner, for organization, collective kitchen and infrastructure. The peculiarity of the horizontal organization is exemplified in the police approach which demands the presence of the "leader" on the door and has as response the constitution of a committee responsible for this dialogue. Through the decisions reached at the 14 weekly meetings and through the committees "the collective put the building to work" turning it into housing, as reported by the resident of the Chiquinha Gonzaga squat.

Squatting happens through the entry into an abandoned building aiming a given social order - in this case, housing. Thus, it is a direct action, i.e., individual or collective action free of institutionalization or representation. This is exemplified when the collective explained the squatting to be an extend to the report in which then President Lula declared that they would use inactive public properties for housing, presenting it to the police and informing them that the occupation was an action that was "ahead of what the federal government said it would do", as evidenced by the same squat resident in the event "*Margens da Cidade*". Therefore, squatting is presented as an action that aims to end the situation of susceptibility and/or vulnerability. This goal was not achieved by the government, as says the resident of the *Quilombo das Guerreiras* squat, "that should do it, but does not; so if they do not do it, we have to do." The large demand of people with housing deficit interested in joining the *Chiquinha Gonzaga* squat, led to the creation of the *Zumbi dos Palmares* squat in 2005 and later to the *Quilombo da Guerreiras*, in 2006.

The same horizontal character is present in the *Quilombo da Guerreiras* squat. It is derived from the

occupation process of the *Chiquinha Gonzaga* squat and is created on October 8, 2006 in an abandoned building of the Docas Company. The search for materialization of the occupation processes in the city center has as one of its justifications the presence of work opportunities and maintenance. The existence of the *Quilombo das Guerreiras* squat made it possible for a resident that participated of the event to get out of a susceptibility situation in which she could not go back to her home in Belford Roxo after a day of work with street trading, since according to her speech, "I could pay the ticket or take something home."

Squatting, as a solution for a susceptibility and/or vulnerability situation, results in the displacement of the principle of property of the privilege position. Squatting questions the motivation of the individual to be taken *to respect the principle of property while interested in the possibility of a peaceful community*<sup>25</sup>, once peace is structured in maintaining the existence of subordinate, excluded and violated individuals. The objective is the end of this existence through the breaking of a property understood as illegitimate - a property that does not fulfill its intended purpose and also without compensating the limitation of the possibility of incorporation by others by paying taxes for collective funds redistribution - and the establishment of a collective property. The commitment letter of the *Machado de Assis* squat exemplifies this fact.

With the same character of the squattings mentioned above arises, on November 21, 2008, the Machado de Assis squat. The commitment letter of this squat starts with the determination of the general assembly as the only deliberative body. So the assembly has the ability to modify the rules existing in the letter, even those on the property. About this last point it is possible to highlight topics regarding: the available space for each individual or family, which is decided by the collective agreement according to the available physical space, personal needs and characteristics of occupants; the prohibition of sale or rental of housing spaces; and the establishment of the realty or land as a collective property, preventing private use.

The principle of property is, in this way, displaced, positioning it as subordinate to the established and derivative principles, specifically, of the action of occupation: the principle of direct community action; principle of sabotage; principle of collective protection.

## Principles applied in urban resistance

The principle of direct community action is applied in cases of proven existence of subordinate, excluded and/or violated groups. It is constituted through the dialogue of similarities between the situations of subordination, exclusion and vulnerability, of contextualization in the social environment and of research and analysis of possibilities to overcome these situations. This integrated and horizontal process, in which the similarities, context and possible solutions are understood, establishes the communal character of the intervening action, implemented in accordance with the resources available to the group to solve the common problem. In this analyzed case the transverse consequences of the housing deficit have as solution the direct action to occupy abandoned realties or lands in the central area of the city of Rio de Janeiro.

The direct action is embodied in squatting. It not only presents itself as a solution to a specific problem, but also as a direct combat against the causes of the institution of situations with negative consequences to the group. The concept of direct action brings us to the international labor movement in the nineteenth century, which, as Bakunin wrote, sought *emancipation by practicing*<sup>26</sup>. Thus, the sabotage principle is composed.

The origin of the word sabotage is the French word *sabot*: wooden shoe. These were used by industrial workers who threw them into factory machines to damage them. Such action was configured as a combat against the workers exploitation forms and the prevailing labor mechanization of their areas. This configures a direct combat action - in which there is no outsourcing of damage to groups that are not involved in the conflict - against the agents of exploitation. It is necessary to know that damaging the machines does not mean damaging the body extent of the owner of the means of production, but rather an implication of economic damage strategy as a defense action of a group in a negative situation and as a fight against an agent, in this case, the exploitation - transformation of beings into mere means for specific individual or empowered group benefit.

The sabotage principle has a dual purpose: to overcome certain negative situations and fight

against their agents. In urban occupations it is applied on negative situations generated by the housing deficit, as the fighting against one of the agent groups involved in this situation, represented by the owners of the abandoned realties.

The transformation and maintenance of an abandoned property into housing by the collective management are instituted by the collective protection principle, in the sense of the formation of an *ethos*, a word that in its origin means "shelter" or "abode". The protection principle is highlighted by the existence of groups in situations of susceptibility and/or vulnerability whose capabilities are not sufficient to overcome such existence conditions. Because of this, these groups need protection on the grievance, which should entail the conditions of empowerment to protect themselves with autonomy.

The collective protection principle is structured differently from the ethics of protection - which has as one of its pillars the assertion that the *only political establishment capable of assuming roles of collective protection is the State*<sup>27</sup>. While, on the one hand, the protection ethics present points of flexibility in order to distance themselves from the State, affirming that the State is not imperatively assuming its realization, by the other hand, it features the State as the inexorable presence by stating that *it is not conceivable that there is not at least one effective inspection by a central government*<sup>28</sup>.

The collective protection principle can be viewed differently, i.e., as a horizontal protection structure in which susceptible/vulnerable individuals empower themselves by constituting themselves as members of the collective. In short, they overcome negative situations in the individual dimension through mutual protective and empowering actions. This can be exemplified by squats, collective protection enterprises, resistance and intervention against characterized vulnerability situations, for example, the street housing, and constituted by difficulties related to food, to obtaining and maintaining a source of income, to conflicts with other city inhabitants and the vulnerability implied by agents of the State, through the seizure and destruction of belongings, *personal documents, telephone contacts, photos, food, clothes and school uniforms*<sup>29</sup>, inclusively working tools, such as carts to collect recyclable materials.

## State as an agent of vulnerability and principles of resistance

In Rio de Janeiro it is possible to highlight the operation *Choque de Ordem*, which has as one of its urban planning goals the "host" of people living in the street. Agents of the Special Secretariat of Public Order, the Municipal Social Welfare Department and municipal guards participate in this hosting actions- participation that gives the homeless population a criminalization character. The hosted adults are forwarded to the shelters of *Paciência* or *Ilha do Governador*, as reported on the news of the city hall website<sup>30-38</sup>. Between April, May and June of 2010, 154 people were forwarded to the shelter of *Ilha do Governador* and 170 to the shelter of *Paciência*, besides 147 people with no specification about the division between minors and adults, as well as about the forwarding destination. The action takes place in the areas of Tijuca, Center and Southern Zone.

At the moment the host of people living in the streets occurs, through actions of the urban planning operation, there arises a conflict characterized, by the articulating of the National Movement of Street Population<sup>39</sup>, as kidnapping. The withdrawal of people of the street is made without their consent, *"agents take people out of the streets by force"*<sup>39</sup>, and their fate is inappropriate, once these people are forwarded to *Ilha do Governador*, which has no more vacancies in the shelter, or to the *Paciência* shelter, which has more than 300 people that are not street residents<sup>39</sup>, with all kinds of problems, including mental.

By understanding the street housing as a negative situation and by wishing to exit this condition, people have in the squats, through the collective protection principle, the possibility of accessing a property to live. The physical integrity of individuals, as well as what they understand as dignity, is protected; they distance themselves from situations in which they are treated as *human trash*<sup>39</sup> or as mere objects to be seized: *Choque de Ordem (...) seized a large amount of merchandise with unauthorized street traders, besides 42 street residents*<sup>40</sup>.

Also as a part of collective protection there are specific rules as those that ensure the impossibility of rental or sale of housing spaces, a fact that protects the social character of housing. The centrality of the occupations results in job opportunities,

access to urban facilities and areas for culture and leisure, which enables the development of various capacities. The assemblies are affirmed as empowerment processes, because they allow direct political participation through discussion, consensus, dissents and votes. The participation in collective decision-making processes, in which risks, benefits, strategies and theories are weighed, is presented as a pedagogical tool for building practical autonomy - to be the engine of their own actions through the ability of reflective decision-making and, ideally, free of coercion.

From these principles, moral patients affected specifically in their quality of life become agents of resistance. These principles, that guide the actions of squatting, contextualize themselves in a conflict in which they are opposed to removals and eviction, as well as to the preponderance of the principle of property.

### Final Considerations

The understanding of the city out of the squats brings out considerations that are not limited to demographic analysis and related to change in the physical urban space, restricted to the technical field. The issues traditionally raised by this technicist approach do not take into consideration the ethical and political aspects related to this form of association which is the city. So, being an association of persons, the city is an object of analysis of bioethics, once it is characterized, beside its I-you and self-other structure, as a tool applied to human actions that lead to significant changes in the world recognized as vital. The application of bioethics, therefore, demonstrates itself relevant, because it is possible to check for individuals adversely affected by the urban development and maintenance.

The conservation of susceptibility situations, i.e., of greater propensity to damage, and vulnerability situations, in which the damage is already installed and maintained, is due to the predominance of the principle of property which can be

checked through the high number of vague properties in relation to the details of the housing deficit in Brazil. In this sense, squatting is presented as an ethical response to represented negative conditions, for example, the housing deficit. It is a legitimate act undertaken by autonomous groups who observe that the State, unlike agents that protect more susceptible or vulnerable groups, is a vulnerability agent, as exemplified by the consequences of recent urban transformations in Rio de Janeiro, whose official end is the adequacy of the city to big events - the World Cup and Olympics - and whose means are the removals and evictions of slums and squats.

In this sense, the principle of property becomes visible from the analysis of the inaction and actions taken by the State, which lead to the conservation of the abandoned status of properties. The property, as a power device, constitutes subjects as owners and non-owners, breaking and hierarchizing human groups. The privilege of the principle of property in decision-making sets up as a defense of a particular way of life, the one of the owners, to the detriment of the life of the non-owners. Thus, more susceptible or vulnerable groups have their conditions maintained or even expanded by means of these actions, in which the principle of property underlies.

On the other hand, the principles of direct community action, sabotage and collective protection rise up from the analysis of squatting. They appear as different possibilities to those that rely on actions of the State or market, underlying political actions of groups of individuals free of corporate or political representation, in search of getting out of and extinguishing specific vulnerability situations - such as the conditions involved in the housing deficit or in living on the streets.

The presented principles can be understood as a substantive contribution to the focus of bioethics reflection, analysis and action. Therefore, from the urban resistance processes, such as squatting, critical and complementary principles are inferred against the ones traditionally presented in the field of bioethics.

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**Authors' participation**

Study resulting from the dissertation of Erick Araujo of Assumpção oriented by Fermin Roland Schramm.

