



**Social Movements in fight for Housing at Encosta Norte Complex, East  
Zone of São Paulo city**

**Maria Isabel Imbronito**

Professora Doutora, USJT, UPM, Brasil  
imbronito@gmail.com

**Rita de Cássia Nogueira Pinheiro**

Mestre, USJT, Brasil  
rita.pinheiro@uol.com.br

#### **ABSTRACT**

The Encosta Norte Housing Complex (São Miguel Paulista E), located in the extreme East Zone of São Paulo, will be investigated as a result of the performance of micropolitics and macropolitics, through the actions of Social Movements and the performance of Urban and Housing Development Company (CDHU). The methodological approach foresees information search about social movements' organization and the establishment of the set, between the decades of 1980 and 2000. The approach also focuses on the current time, through the tracking of leaderships and local associations that promote actions in order to improve life quality in this community. The research aims to understand how the dynamics that are established in this territory can both reinforce the status quo, represented by a rigid system of space production relations and a modern paradigm of urban design, as well as build alternative paths, adapting and transforming spaces, designing housing policies and social relations according to the needs and desires of the community, creating better living conditions for the locals. The discussion achieved by relating the past of this region, with its history of fight for housing programs, to present actions articulated in order to achieve a fairer and more inclusive city, reaffirms the continuous work of articulation and transformation of this territory in line with SDG-11: Sustainable cities and communities.

**KEYWORDS:** Social Housing. Participation in Building Process. Urban Social Movements.

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

The Encosta Norte Housing Complex (São Miguel Paulista E), located in the extreme East Zone of São Paulo, will be investigated as a space resulting from the performance of micropolitics and macro-politics. The complex was urbanized as a result of state housing programs through the Housing and Urban Development Company (CDHU), which emerged in response to urban social movements fighting for housing which were very active in the region from the mid-1980s. The approaches to the analyzed agents will take place at two different times: in the formation of the set, recovering testimonies, historical data and consolidated bibliographic references, and in the current period, through the monitoring of local leaders and associations that develop actions to support and improve the quality of life of the community. These actions are in line with SDG-11, which focuses on sustainable cities and communities.

The complex under study [Figure 1] has an area of 53 hectares and consists of blocks with single-family houses and collective housing buildings, as well as buildings for institutional use and green areas, which are located next to three springs that occur in the gleba. The areas intended for complementary uses to the housing program currently house 11 schools, a CIC (Center for Integration and Citizenship), a UBS (Basic Health Unit), a CAE (Special Reception Center) and a Culture Factory. In addition to these uses, there are two buildings inside the complex in precarious conditions of use: the old Community Center in ruins, very active in the past, and an abandoned school building. Currently, these buildings are partially ceded to civil society organizations. Regarding the green areas, besides the small squares foreseen in the CDHU urbanization project, the three spring areas are currently in the following conditions: the first one is occupied by the Jagatá Favela, and two others are unoccupied, but with no landscape project implemented. In one of these areas, there is a soccer field known as Arena Pirelli, a powerful space implemented and used by the community.

Figure 1. Encosta Norte set, in red, inserted in the Subprefecture of Itaim Paulista, São Paulo.



Source: Own elaboration from GeoSampa.

## 2 OBJECTIVES

The research dialogues with the objectives of SDG 10 - Reduction of Inequalities, by focusing on the urbanization process of a peripheral area of the city of São Paulo and recognizing both the transformative intentions of popular movements and the public policies that dialogued with the movements, reporting the experience of a territory in a recent and intense process of urbanization. In this path, we seek to recognize historical and current agents, mapping especially the action of social movements in the 1980-2000s and local associations at the present time.

The research aims to investigate and understand how the dynamics that are established between the agents found and the territory can both reaffirm the status quo and the model of a modern urban project and build alternative paths, adapting and transforming the space according to the needs and desires of the community to create better living conditions for the local population.

It should be noted that this urbanization process was the result of complex dynamics that include the presence of other actors, which, although eventually mentioned in the text, will not be further explored in this article.

## 3 METHODOLOGY

Through a review of the literature of the narrative type, we sought to base, based on the field of post-structuralist philosophy, the understanding of the game of social and political forces that was at the origin of the process of urbanization of the place, as well as the recognition of the current disputes present in that territory. In this sense, the understanding of the concepts of macropolitics and micropolitics, axioms and rhizomes, molar and molecular, molar social machines and molecular desiring machines, subjectivity and territory, among others, constitutes

the fundamental bias of mediation of the researchers' contact with the territory, since the agents, evidenced during the research process, come to exist from the relationship with the others through the established game of forces, considering their role in the conformation of the territory itself (GUATARRI, ROLNIK, 1996). The narrative literature review also had a stage focused on the collection of historical information (through books, theses, periodicals and testimonies) and current information (collected on social networks), as well as on the involvement with events that occurred in the study site during the research. Data collection aimed to cover two time periods: the moment of action of social movements and the urbanization process, by CDHU, from the late 1980s, and the present moment in which the research was carried out, between 2020 and 2022.

Even though the research has revealed a multiplicity of agents acting simultaneously for the constitution of that territory, it was decided to present it, in this work now reported, by the cut of the social movements organized around the housing issue, which will be detailed below.

#### **4 SOCIAL MOVEMENTS**

From the 1980s, the East Zone of São Paulo, formed predominantly by the popular classes, became an important stage for the emergence of urban social movements that fought for the right to land, housing and infrastructure. In 1983, supported by the Catholic Church, the Movimento Sem Terra emerged in the State of São Paulo, with its largest support base in the East Zone of São Paulo (GOHN, 1991). On May 5, 1984, the Movement for Housing East II was founded, bringing together a group from the diocese of the Catholic Church led by Dom Angélico Sândalo Bernardino, bishop of the episcopal region of São Miguel Paulista between 1976 and 1989, with the participation of party leaders, especially from the Workers' Party. In 1987, the trajectory of the Union of Housing Movements (UMM) began, when the East 2 Housing Movement met with several movements in the region to discuss a form of unification. This was also the year of the formation of the Landless Association East 1.

In the articulation of these movements, it is important to mention the work of the Catholic Church, through the work of Pastoral and Basic Ecclesial Communities (CEBs). These emerged in the late 1960s in Latin America and Brazil as a new form of pastoral organization. The neighborhood of São Miguel Paulista became the center of social, political and cultural movement in the region, with Dom Angélico as an active figure in the formation and performance of movements for rights and housing (GOHN, 1991, p.77). Dom Angélico also created, in 1983, the CEMI (Centro de Comunicação e Educação de São Miguel Paulista), developing popular communication projects, such as the Grito do Povo newspaper and Rádio Corneta, placed in the favelas and occupations to organize popular movements. Another important figure was Father Ticão (1952-2021), who worked with the Pastoral, CEBs and Dom Angélico in the struggle for land and housing and in the organization of land occupations in the region of São Miguel and Itaim Paulista.

Between 1983 and 1987, several occupations in public and private areas were carried out by these movements in the East Zone of São Paulo. As Gohn (1993, p.49) points out, they were collective and organized occupations of urban space appropriation, resulting in conflicts

that found several political mechanisms to expel the occupants. In that context, the year 1987 was marked by important events. In addition to the formation of the UMM and the Landless Association East 1, the movements occupied 238 areas in the East Zone of São Paulo, involving 32,000 families and about 100,000 people (GOHN, 1991, p.84). The invasions and conflicts intensified and made the headlines of the newspapers of the time, which reported the actions of the movements supported by the Church and the violence of the conflicts through the action of police and state control, but which also positioned themselves accusing the social movements and positioning themselves in defense of conservative forces.

On March 31, 1987, there was a serious conflict in the neighborhood of Itaim Paulista that led to the death of the 29-year-old bricklayer Adão Manoel, a participant in an occupation, after being hit by shots fired by the Metropolitan Guard. This time, the case had enormous repercussions in the media, causing the revolt of the movements, and the State had to mobilize to promote rapid responses (GOHN, p.86). This event marked the movement and served to redouble its strength. A week later, a large meeting of the movements was held in Praça Padre Aleixo Mafra (Praça do Forró) in front of the Church of São Miguel Paulista, which was a turning point in the history of these movements (Figure 2).

Figure 2 - Assembly of the Pastoral of Land and Housing held in 1987 in front of the Matriz de São Miguel with more than 20,000 people gathered.

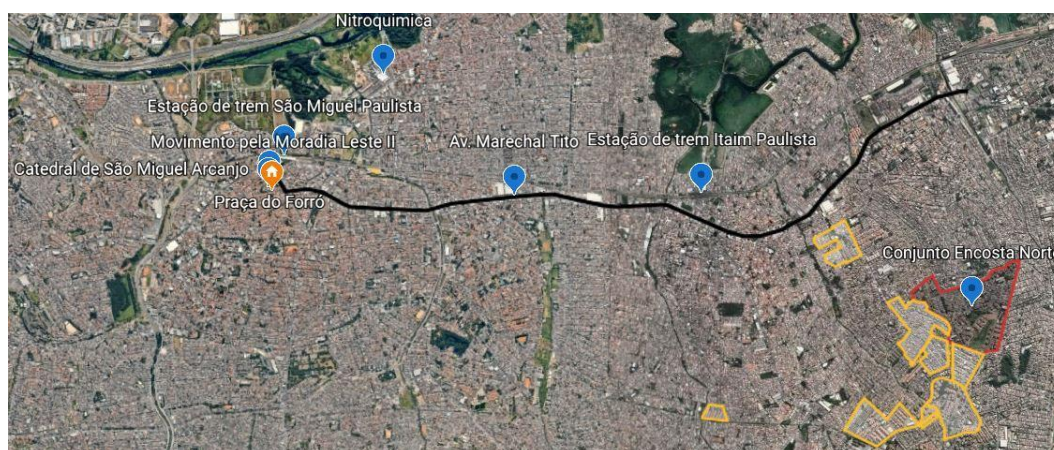


Source: MARCHIONI, 2012.

At that time, the Pastoral da Moradia already listed a demand for housing of more than 32 thousand families registered in the neighborhoods of São Miguel Paulista, Itaim Paulista, Guaianazes, Ermelino Matarazzo, Itaquera, among others. The Itaim Paulista neighborhood was the second largest neighborhood with occupations, totaling 41, according to a survey by the Pastoral da Moradia.

In response to these movements, the State Government initiated a process of expropriation and purchase of large tracts of land in the East Zone of São Paulo (CDHU, 2016). CDHU acquired large areas in the region to implement social housing projects. Among these areas is Conjunto São Miguel Paulista E (Encosta Norte), as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3 - Location of the CDHU complexes (Encosta Norte in red) in Itaim Paulista in relation to: Marechal Tito Avenue, CPTM stations, headquarters of the Movement for Housing East II and St. Michael the Archangel Church.



Source: Own elaboration using Google Earth from documents provided by CDHU's technical area.

The Encosta Norte Complex was built between 1989 and 2009, divided into 14 phases of work undertaken separately, either through global contracting programs, contracted directly by CDHU, or through the various mutirão programs carried out by the company in partnership with associations.<sup>1</sup> The following text seeks to identify the participation of residents' associations in the construction of these phases, and to report on their dynamics of action, with a special comparison between phases E1 and E2 and phases E7, E8 and E9.

The first phases of Encosta Norte (Phases E1 and E2) were built by global contract. In this modality, a construction company is contracted directly by CDHU to deliver the finished work, dispensing with the participation of the associations that formalize the popular movements. In 1989, 1071 housing units (UHs) in the 011/87 typology, a single-family embryo house with 35m<sup>2</sup> of built area, were delivered in these two stages. At that time, the state government was in a transition phase, from Franco Montoro to Orestes Quéricia. This transition prevented the realization of phases E1 and E2 through the mutirão process, as was programmed in the previous administration, since Governor Quéricia favored the hiring of construction companies, restricting housing to minimum facilities. The construction of housing by joint effort, which occurred in some pioneering cases during the Montoro government, only took place in Encosta Norte from 1996 onwards, during the administration of Mario Covas, with the implementation of stages E5 and E7, and subsequently continued to occur in the other stages.

Residents of Conjunto Encosta Norte who were part of the housing movement at that time, and who received the first houses of phases E1 and E2, reported, during the research, the way the work was delivered: without a slab and without internal and external finishing, and without walls or lot boundaries (side, front and back). The local infrastructure was precarious, the surrounding streets were not yet paved, public transportation was scarce and water was constantly lacking. Due to the circumstances, the residents reported that the population's struggles did not cease after the houses were delivered. The residents formed an organization,

<sup>1</sup> Data referring to the phases of Conjunto São Miguel Paulista E were extracted from CDHU's website, available at: <<http://www.cdhu.sp.gov.br/web/guest/producao-habitacional/consultar-producao-habitacional>>.

which had a coordinator from each street to attend meetings scheduled at the Community Centre, taking the demands and organizing communications. The demands were sent directly to the Municipal Secretariats, through letters prepared by the residents. According to information collected in testimonies during this research, residents demanded asphalt, transportation, water and street lighting. Schools and health services were also requested. Health was also one of the long-standing action fronts of social movements and, even after the installation of the UBS in Encosta Norte, the population continued to participate in health actions and movements. The lack of schools led to the construction of schools and daycare centers in Encosta Norte and its surroundings, through joint efforts by parents.

Also the first sets of buildings built in Encosta Norte (E3 and E6) were executed through the global contracting modality, in which the construction company was contracted directly by CDHU, excluding the participation of residents' associations. The first sets of buildings built through the joint effort system were in phases E7 (delivered in 1996) and E5 (delivered in 1998). With the improvement of participation policies, housing began to be built through the Self-Management Mutirão Program, implemented by CDHU. In this program, CDHU signed a contract with a residents' association, which was responsible for managing the resources and for managing the work until the end of construction. In order to sign the contract with CDHU, the association had to submit the registration of the demand with a closed list of families participating in the project, and any change in this demand during the process had to be approved in an assembly with the participation of the technical and social advisors and the mutirantes. In order to formalize the contract, the association had to present the prior hiring of a technical advisory, composed of an engineering or architecture office. To intermediate these technical advisory services with the company, CDHU directly hired the services of an outsourced manager.

Phases E7, E8, E9 in Encosta Norte took place under this joint effort system. The report obtained in this research came from CEP Assessoria, the technical consultancy involved in these phases and still active in the region today. It was confirmed that, in addition to the residents' association and the technical advisory hired by the association, there was a manager, hired by CDHU to make the technical intermediation between the technical advisory and CDHU. CDHU transferred the funds and provided the project to be executed, which had a standardized typology. The technical advisory services carried out the work according to the project provided by CDHU, planning the work together with the residents' association and its mutirantes, and measuring the services performed. The consultancy also hired specialized labor when necessary, since the mutirantes alone did not have the professional preparation and time dedication necessary for the proper progress of the work. The technical advisory also hired a social advisory, since the presence of a social technician was a CDHU requirement for the projects executed by mutirão. The social advisory services monitored the families, checking their suitability, registration, participation, contracts, etc.

In this construction modality, the participation of different agents is noted. In the self-management mutirão program, all decisions were made by the residents' association and its members, who, at the construction site, were the very people who participated in the project. According to CEP Assessoria, the residents' associations performed several tasks: they were responsible for registering the families, generating the demand with the list of families

participating in each project; they managed the resources together with the technical advisory; they organized the mutirantes and elaborated the work rules, under the verification and monitoring of the social advisory. The association could decide, at its discretion, on the hiring of external companies to perform construction services. However, as the funds came from CDHU with a 40% reduction, a discount determined by the rules of the mutirão program, the only way to make the work feasible was to rely on the participation of the families. In the case of hired labor, the mutirantes worked in a complementary way as helpers (during excavations, to transport blocks forming a women's corridor, in the distribution of material and transportation of mortar, among others). Among the mutirantes, a minority who had some professional activity in the civil construction area and had some previous experience could be hired by the association, increasing their dedication to the work by receiving a salary.

In the field research, reports of the joint effort were found as a positive experience, both on the part of the residents interviewed and on the part of the technical assistance. It is pointed out that the resident values his housing unit, either because he participated in social movements or because he worked on the site. On the other hand, a negative point was the work overload, as the works took a few years and the families' free time was committed to construction. Images of the inauguration of phase E8 show the presence of residents, workers, press and official representatives (Figure 4).

Figure 4 - Inauguration of phase E8 of Conjunto Encosta Norte in a self-management joint effort: CEP, Movimento Sem Terra and Pastoral da Moradia.



Source: Photos provided by CEP and Movimento pela Moradia Zona Leste 2.

## 5 ASSOCIATIONS AND LEADERS WORKING TODAY IN ITAIM PAULISTA AND REGION

It was found through research and site visits that many social leaders and associations are currently developing various actions in Encosta Norte and the region. Some of these associations are indicated on the map below (Figure 5). These researched movements, associations and communities have been active during the Covid-19 pandemic. Even though they restricted activities such as meetings, soccer and samba, they were responsible for collecting and distributing food during the most critical period of pandemic isolation. Many are involved with housing and environmental programs, as is the case of the Nélia Mabel Association, which has dialogue with the Itaim Paulista Subprefecture and the Climate Secretariat.



Figure 5 - Location of associations and occupations: 1) Old community center; 2) Encosta Samba and Solidary Football Community; 3) Pirelli Arena; 4) Nélia Mabel Association; 5) GRRC Bloco do Encosta and Team Bloco do Encosta; 6). Voluntary Women Community; 9) Jagatá Community; 10) Tijuco Preto Community.



Source: Own elaboration from Google Earth and site visits.

Some associations that are currently active, identified in the research, were:

- Movimento pela Moradia Leste II (Movement for Housing East II), constituted on 05/05/1984, which acts until today registering families and building housing through the available public programs, being active also in social networks (Figure 6);
- Associação Nélia Mabel Esporte e Lazer and Associação Nélia Mabel Social (Association Nélia Mabel Sport and Leisure and Association Nélia Mabel Social), a voluntary non-profit group. Based near the study area, it collects and distributes food for the vulnerable population, promotes activities and actively participates in public policy discussions such as security and housing (Figure 7);
  - G.R.R.C. Bloco do Encosta and Time Bloco do Encosta. Founded in 2019, it promotes cultural and leisure actions, mainly related to carnival and samba. It has the motto "do good without looking at whom" and "together we are stronger" (Figure 8);
  - Encosta Samba and Solidary Football Community: Solidarity Itaim Paulista. Founded in 2018, it promotes food collections in activities related to soccer and samba. Activities are concentrated in a local bar (Figure 9);
  - Jagatá Community Leaders, who work internally in the Jagatá favela, fighting for specific improvements and organizing events, on commemorative dates, to distribute goods and food. The leaders also participate in actions promoted by other institutions and organizations, expanding the visibility of the favela to the surroundings, with emphasis on the activities carried out at the state school located in front of the favela, P.M. Soldado Eder Bernardes dos Santos.

Figure 6 - Website of the Movement for Housing East II.



Source: Facebook page of the Movement for Housing East II. Available at:  
<<https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=movimento%20pela%20moradia%20leste%20ii>>

Figure 7 - Headquarters of the Nélia Mabel Association, 2021.



Source: Authors' photos.

Figure 8 - Headquarters of Bloco do Encosta and Time Bloco do Encosta, with event poster.



Source: Extracted from Facebook and Instagram of Bloco do Encosta

Figure 9 - Actions of Futebol Solidário and Encosta Samba Community.



Source: Extracted from the associations' Facebook and Instagram.

## 6 DISCUSSING THE NORTH SLOPE BASED ON THE THEORETICAL FOUNDATION OF THE RESEARCH: SUBJECTIVITY AND TERRITORY

From the material presented above, we seek to discuss and analyze what types of subjectivities are produced from social and political relations and how they construct, maintain or alter the design of the Encosta Norte Set.

According to the theoretical conceptualization used, subjectivity is understood as modes of existence produced by collective actions that take place within the political and social field. political and social field. However, not only the agency, but also the territory, understood as the territory, understood as the spatial framework added to the actions and movements of the people who inhabit that place, produces subjectivity. The research showed that different modes of existence are produced and perceived in the dynamics between macro and micro policies and the Encosta Norte itself.

In the production of territories (physical and/or social), sometimes "striated", rigid or stable spaces are generated, characterizing territorialization and reterritorialization; sometimes "smooth" spaces are produced, characterizing deterritorialization. The deterritorialization is understood as a potential field to produce new possibilities of worlds or, depending on how the

micro-politics act, will serve to reinforce the physical environment and existing power relations (GUATARRI, ROLNIK, 1996).

It is important to consider the interplay of forces and the intertwining of housing policies and social movements: while public policies adapted to the social movement's struggle for housing, social movements organized themselves into associations to meet the requirements of public policies. The Encosta Norte ensemble is the result of this encounter, and this process assimilated the dedication of technicians, the popular will and the sense of opportunity of politicians, transforming agents according to these clashes and collaborations.

The first subjectivity recognized in Encosta Norte is the dominant subjectivity of the state's macro-politics. It can be seen that the Encosta Norte complex has changed little structurally over the years. One of the reasons for the strong presence of state subjectivity in the CDHU representation is the persistence of the initial Encosta Norte plan, which determined a striated space with a technical contribution present in the urbanization process, by establishing road layouts, infrastructure networks and implementing some inflexible typologies, such as collective housing buildings (Figure 10). The individual dwellings underwent extensions, but these were, in a way, considered in the embryo house project, in which the expansion of the housing unit was envisioned (Figure 11). Institutional uses were also implemented in the institutional areas foreseen in the project, following the plan initially drawn up. It is important to note that the urbanization process differs the area from its surroundings, as it is noted that the set contains consolidated streets, public facilities in abundance and is served by infrastructure networks.

Another important aspect that determines state control is the lack of regularization, registration of the area and definitive deed of the housing units. In a way, this situation causes the private areas to be associated with CDHU not only because of the origin of the complex, but because these properties constitute a liability of the Company, which holds responsibilities from which it has not been able to disengage. With the entire area in the name of CDHU and lack of dismemberment of properties, irregularities such as drawer sales contracts and lack of stability regarding the ownership of units increase, which imply the need for legal proceedings, regularization and ownership, condominium problems and problems with utilities that fall on the Company, etc. impacting and restricting the lives of residents and CDHU itself. These characteristics affirm the constitution of ways of life that reflect and reinforce the dominant normative logic, affecting the autonomy of residents.

Macropolitical actions tend to direct the desires for reintegrations, orienting the desires and needs of a micropolitical action towards the composition and reinforcement of the current social machine. Thus, the result of these reintegrating actions is perceived spatially in the rigidity of the complex, in the streets without movement, in the standardized constructions, or even in the presence of institutional uses that symbolize the State (Figure 10).

Figure 10 - Typology PI22-F implanted in phase E8 of the Encosta Norte complex.



Source: Authors, 20/02/2021.

Figure 11 - Typology 011/87 in the original conformation, implanted in phase E1 of the Encosta Norte Set, and extensions of the neighboring houses, originally in the same typology.



Source: Authors, 2020.

Spontaneous transformations occurred in the context of the use of spaces, such as the introduction of shops in free areas and residential areas, the presence of locally based residents' organizations, and the occupation of empty areas for collective purposes. In opposition to the dominant normative logic present in the territory, in these spontaneous actions it is possible to identify some examples in the field of micropolitics, which will destabilize spaces and experiences, opening the way for the construction of new relationships. Among them, we can mention:

- the formation of local associations and neighborhood community movements that have been and still are active in Encosta Norte and the region to demand improvements in infrastructure and local quality of life, as well as to provide support to families most in need of resources;

- the ongoing struggle of social movements for housing construction in the East Zone of São Paulo (Figure 12);
- the implementation of the Pirelli Arena (soccer field) by the community itself, with the intention of scoring a space for meetings between people;
- the coexistence in the local streets of single-family houses, which provide actions of integration between children and neighbors, different from what happens in the streets of building condominiums, deserted, with their extensive fronts of walled lots. This configuration of the single-family house brings the house closer to the street and places the street as a space for socialization;
- the search for recognition of identities, belongings and diversities, identified in the narratives of local leaders;
- the occupation of the Favela do Jagatá in the area of the complex, which shows that the housing program implemented was insufficient and left populations unattended.

Figure 12 - Meeting at Associação Nélia Mabel to inform about the housing program "Pode Entrar", 2021.



Source: Photo by the authors, logo extracted from PMSP official website.

In all these actions, we can see movements that try to break, with their attitudes, with the existing fixed conditions, typical of macro-political representations that work to maintain a system and a dominant subjectivity. All these actions, in the field of micro-politics and deeply linked to the territory, suggest escapes that point to paths for deterritorializations, making the space smooth for the production of new potential agency.

Among the actions and transformations identified above, the Pirelli Arena stands out, either because of its strategic location, occupying a highly visible area in the center of the complex, or because it provides collective uses of great popularity, such as soccer and leisure. The field (Figure 13) serves as a reference point for the local community, being used by multiple agents, and concentrates social actions, such as food distribution and collection. It is an available space with a striking image and recognition, which is characterized by being unspecialized, but whose lack of support spaces, lighting, paving and shade do not prevent the occurrence of community events and actions. The existence of a space like the Pirelli Arena shows that the life of this population goes beyond the predictions of the official housing program and that the residual areas of the urbanization process are powerful places where the lines of escape that

may exist, superimposed on this programmed space of the Encosta Norte complex, are manifested.

Figure 13 - Pirelli Arena, meeting space, sport, food collection and distribution.



Source: Photo by the authors, 2020, photo before the Covid-19 pandemic.

Thus, depending on how the actions, desires and needs of these people will be acted in the social and political field, reterritorialization may occur, with the capture of these actions for reintegration into a system of maintenance of the same social and spatial logic, or it may arise, from the interstices of the set and daily practice, the production of spaces with more quality of life, more open to popular manifestation and more democratic, and both spaces can coexist and overlap in the same territory.

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