

**FREEDOM! FREEDOM? CHILDREN'S DREAMS AND  
THE RIGHT TO HOUSING AND LIFE**

**LIBERDADE! LIBERDADE? SONHOS DE CRIANÇAS E O  
DIREITO A HABITAR E À VIDA**

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**Abstract**

This paper was prepared in connection with the celebrations of the April 25th Carnation Revolution and the Seminar held at UMinho aimed at reflecting on democracy in relation to childhood. Written from São Paulo, Brazil, it intends to present reflections that address the weaknesses of democracy and the need for discussion in order to maintain and deepen democratic principles. Based on research carried out by the author with children in the Metropolis squatters' commune in Rome from 2022 to 2023, the dreams of a boy living there stand out as emblematic of the need to discuss children's needs and their dreams when both asleep and awake. The aim is to reflect on fear as an affection, and on how children's lives and rights are vilified daily, depending on social class, creed, race and gender.

**Keywords:** Childhoods, Squatters' communes, Children's dreams, Democracy and the Carnation Revolution

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**Resumo**

Este artigo foi elaborado a propósito das comemorações do 25 de Abril e da Revolução dos Cravos e do Seminário realizado na UMinho, destinado a refletir sobre a democracia em relação à infância. Escrito a partir de São Paulo, Brasil, tem como objetivo apresentar reflexões que abordem as fragilidades da democracia e a urgência de a discutir para a manter e aprofundar. A partir de pesquisa realizada pela autora com crianças da Ocupação Metropolis, em Roma, entre os anos de 2022 e 2023, destacam-se os sonhos de um menino, morador, como mote para discutir as urgências para a infância e seus sonhos quando as crianças estão dormindo e quando estão acordadas. O objetivo é refletir sobre o medo como afeto, sobre o

quotidiano vilipendiado das vidas e dos direitos das crianças, consoante a classe social, o credo, a raça e o género.

**Palavras-chave:** Infâncias, Ocupações Habitacionais, Sonhos de Crianças, Democracia e Revolução dos Cravos

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This chapter stems from a speech I gave at an event at the University of Minho commemorating the 25th April and the Portuguese resistance for democracy and freedom. At this event, we revisited the memory and practices of the 25th of April or Carnation Revolution, a moment in Portuguese history marked by an eruption of discontent with the Salazar dictatorship that had been in force from 1933 to 1974. I ventured to take on this challenge as a Brazilian defender of democracy, not forgetting that ours is still very fragile. The proposal for this event included a thought-provoking exercise, which was to articulate the key aims of the 25th of April revolution with respect to children. The role of freedom, social justice and democracy in the construction of children's lives. I am honoured to have been invited to give a lecture and to write this paper for the book that now transposes that event into the written word.

We are constantly urged to conceive of children as an authentic expression of freedom. We naturalise ways of seeing children and their practices, often making them idyllic. However, if we look more closely and consider children in all their various different forms, we encounter many situations requiring problematisation and estrangement. Therefore, taking the seminar's central question - the struggles for freedom and democracy - and seeking to look at them more closely, I ask: how can we discuss freedom and democratic processes with children as a reference? What kind of freedom do children around the world live under? What kinds of freedom and democracy are constructed with them? What does freedom mean for girls, boys and young women around the world, in their many ways of producing and reproducing life?

Freedom and democracy are intricate concepts, with a vast bibliography of references. Broadly speaking, we can see them as relating to the guarantee of the right to express different opinions, ideologies and beliefs, whereby disagreements and criticisms are viewed positively and not as affronts to power, and differences are treated not as inequalities but as rights. Being in a permanent process of construction, democracy requires constant dialogue to define what paths should be taken, considering their limits and potentially negotiable openings. In this respect, it is not a form of government, but a political system whose practices are decided by the various components that make up society. It is closely linked to freedom as a manifestation of human independence and self-determination, and can be understood in the plural as freedoms, as variously defined throughout history

according to the contexts and conditions affecting their creation and practice. Because of its dynamic nature, democracy is in a permanent state of construction, not having reached an endpoint in which democracy is ready, but being emmeshed in processes that can consolidate or weaken it.

There is a constant and urgent need to describe and produce social ideas and practices in which freedom and the construction of democracy are combined with childhood, bearing in mind the huge number around the world whose lives are deprived of these basic rights. As mentioned above, writing about this topic is not simply a matter of a few pages. It is an endeavour with the aim - perhaps ambitiously - to help prevent erasure of the memory of dictatorships, such as that of Salazar in Portugal, but also looking further afield in the world and considering situations such as what is currently happening in Israel and Palestine, where there are around 17,000 children without families or guardians to look after them, raise them or encourage them in the face of tragedy and ensure they have full lives ahead of them. The streets, once a place for organised political struggles, where life could go on at its own pace, are abandoned and neglected, where life now pulses only on the margin of the margins. I am referring here to Gaza, the war that has been reaching our television screens, but also to the city of São Paulo and so many others which, to satisfy the exorbitance of capitalism, have become urban monsters for the people who live in them. Not so far away geographically, we find similarities when we look at the places occupied by children, living in and out of tents, in large urban centres where the streets and squares have become part of their homes. Yes, homes. We have to remember in order not to forget and remember not to forget, since our memory is getting dimmer, especially when it comes to those political events which bring us closer to the actions of dictators, depriving us of the freedom to think and what follows from that.

Taking the aforementioned speech as a starting point, I intend to maintain its essayistic and introductory tone and write in the first-person singular. This chapter is divided into three points that are sometimes closely linked, sometimes less so: Point 1: Dictatorships, fear as a central political affection, and the search for freedom; Point 2: In the dreams of a boy: times in ruin and the fragility of rights and democracy; Point 3: A framework for further reflection and the production of lives in the struggle for freedom. Thus we proceed, with carnations in hand, in support of the many daily struggles and insurgencies.

## **1. DICTATORSHIPS, fear as a central political affect, AND THE SEARCH FOR FREEDOM**

We come with the weight of the past and the seed  
Waiting so many years makes everything more urgent  
and the thirst of waiting is only quenched by the torrent  
and the thirst of waiting is only quenched by the torrent  
We've lived so many years talking quietly

You can only want everything when you've had nothing  
You only want a full life if you've had your life at a standstill  
You only want a full life if you've had a full life  
There's only real freedom when there's  
Peace, bread  
housing  
health, education  
Sérgio Godinho

In the above song, the Portuguese singer and songwriter Sérgio Godinho evokes the ideas of freedom and social justice which, as we know, were pursued and won in Portugal 50 years ago, and have since also been achieved at different times around the world. These lyrics represent what is as essential to us as the bread we eat every day. We have a duty to uphold freedom and equality, to remember so as not to forget and thereby to endeavour to go on producing, in our everyday actions, different ways of structurally altering the current state of affairs. When we look around the world, it is clear to see that there are vast disparities, which essentially mean that there is not enough bread for all the people, bread not only as food, but also when thought of symbolically, as in this song, as it unfolds into so many other demands of ordinary life: education, health, culture, quality food and a dignified way of life. As Godinho sang, fear bears a fruit as, indeed, it does in many different parts of the world - as a result of the long-imposed gag which silences freedom of speech. It is important to emphasise that thinking about democracy means that we cannot be quiet until we have conquered the right to “bread” in all its forms, not just that which feeds our hungry physical bodies.

I should emphasise that I am talking about Brazil, specifically from the vast and complex city of São Paulo. These facts of misery and absence are very close to the bone and touch us very deeply, day after day. In agreement with the statements made by Edson Teles and Vladimir Safatle (2010), we can say that in Brazil we live in an imperfect democracy, fragile and in need of our continuous participation. This imperfect democracy is characterised by the absence of a policy of reparation, investigation and punishment for torturers, for those who founded the dictatorship and for those who continued it over time and, especially, over the last five years. We need to debate the ideas reproduced during these periods. We have lived through a very unhappy time in Brazil in which the process of discussing this experience, reflecting on it and critically remembering it have seemed to give rise to manifestations of hatred, reflecting not so much discontent with the past, but rather with the very discussions that return to it.

The silence that was initially imposed reverberated in other silences that we imposed on ourselves and on people, both near and far. There has been a management of silence leading to a seemingly programmed agreement to forget. Perhaps the writing of texts and the Seminar mentioned above are an exercise in listening. It is still an impression that needs to be unravelled, but we can affirm that,

sadly and slowly, we are increasingly being repressed from daily debating, agreeing and disagreeing on events and are thus collectively unable to concretely project other possible and fair societies for all people. Perhaps we lack the narrator, as defined by Benjamin, who brought back and, to a certain extent, maintained and modified the stories of a certain period or journey made by certain people. The importance of telling, discussing and exchanging experiences of shared times is absolutely key.

It is necessary to emphasise that what this produces in terms of individual sufferings then become the collective phenomena of countless ways to mask the practice of the myriad forms of torture that are still present in our country and the innumerable instances of violence and abuse, from working in conditions analogous to slavery, and children in precarious living conditions, to domestic violence and violence against children. There is so much violence and so many deaths that people are unfortunately becoming naturalized and immune to it – “people-nature-people-nature-people”. Writing now, I recall what Professor Léa Tiriba said at the aforementioned seminar and, I hereby reaffirm her sentiment that people and nature have amalgamated into a single people-nature because we are the same; that is, people and nature in terms of extinction. Life and death. Death as a project to maintain other lives. Some others, that is. By understanding this as a project, we understand the necessary erasure of wreckage and ruins. We know, however, that scars remain, despite the attempt to erase them, and so we write about them. If we do not question and seek answers to the ruins that perpetuate themselves in social practices both large and small, we are corresponding to or acquiescing in a project that is far from contributing to the construction of democracy.

Taking up the idea of oblivion and silence and bringing it closer to our everyday practices, we can liken this to the creation of the effect of vision under fog, as if a curtain has prevented us from finding the very object to be contested, discussed and fought against. We have constructed and produced views under fog, or in the clouds, that monitor us on a daily basis, and which so often prevent us from seeing by leaving us immersed in a perpetual mist.

In addition to the fog that clouds our vision, we can also detect asphyxiation building up daily, expressed in certain relationships that we make amid a world where those coordinating and consolidating power and leadership are becoming distinctly authoritarian, sometimes even fascist. We are told not to underestimate the strength of the far right, which is the unacceptable face of politics, and I would again highlight the important initiative of these events in memory of the 25th of April. However, I wonder whether we have already accepted it. Faced with this question, we often hear the response of, “We follow”. It is such a common phrase, at least in Brazil, and I wonder what is embedded in that answer. After all, what or whom do we follow? I understand that it is about moving forward without looking back, without trying to understand where we are and what is being done to our lives, in a world where relations of exploitation and segregation are reproduced

indiscriminately in the name of capitalism. I return to Walter Benjamin's famous text in which he introduces us to the "angel of history". According to Benjamin, he wants to gather up the fragments, bury the dead and look back, who knows, but, pushed by progress, he is forced to move on. Even today, being pushed to go on can lead to the construction of a mentality of "Let's keep going" based on a future that comes to us, embraces us, envelops us and engulfs us. It is at this point that Guilherme Wisnik (2018) introduces us to another important element to consider, which surrounds us and takes us over: the fog. For Wisnik, we are blind from seeing so much. We live with little clarity, in a foggy confusion. And yet, we still keep going on. That is important, because fundamental facts that could affect us much more materially seem obscured, not understood with the lucidity necessary even to question them, to stop them from continuing. The curious thing is that we have a generation growing up in this fog – our children, for whom, just like for us, there is no foreseeable direction. Hence the importance of commemorating, remembering, thinking and trying to plan. Children, although shrouded in this fog, are fundamental to this process. Not because they hold the future, but because the present is nothing without them and their questions. They have to keep asking us questions, piercing the mists that appear so dense and immovable. Children are understood here as the fireflies described by Didi-Huberman (2011), inspired by Pasolini, when he says that fireflies are those little lights of resistance, of art and beauty, of moments full of humanity, fragile and authentic. Children are thus, in their own way, the urgent firefly resistance of this age.

### **1.1. With children "from below"**

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2018) draw attention to the existence of insurgent social movements that have risen up against injustice, but which soon fade from view, their failure creating a vacuum that leaves us with an uneasy sense that we are somehow being made to drive blindly into the future with no brakes. While highlighting the positives of such movements, the authors also provoke us, questioning what kind of power we want as the world moves on. They pose the fundamental question: what do we want to become if we gain power? We are subjects who must assert ourselves as such, they tell us, and the production of democratic decision-making processes is central to reflecting on the object being sought, the absent justices, the right-wing political forces and the lives that are continually being worn down and overly impacted by the tide of capitalism. We can join in the chorus of complaint with those "from below", which means:

Firstly, to define power from the point of view of the subordinate, whose knowledge is transformed through resistance and struggles to free themselves from the domination of those "above". Those "from below" have a more comprehensive knowledge of the social whole, a gift that can serve as the basis for a multitudinous endeavour to build the common. From below also designates a political trajectory: an

institutional project that not only has the strength to subvert command, but also the capacity to politically build an alternative society (Hardt; Negri, 2018, p. 114).

When thinking about those who speak and fight "from below", I cannot exclude children, since they too are marked by differences of social class, gender, sex, race and creed. Although discussing children's participation and presence in social movements requires us to consider certain aspects beyond those pertaining to the adult universe, the origins and practices of these movements, with respect not only to adults, have repercussions on the way they organise themselves "from below" or from above and how these movements and manifestations affect children. In view of the above, I ask: to what extent does the absence of democratic practices have an impact on children's lives? In what ways do the ultra-right and its policies relating to education, housing and health have an impact on the construction of childhoods and their rights? And what is the impact on their relationships with other children, with the places where they live and with their dreams? Aware of the complexity of these issues, I will seek here only to approach this discussion from the perspective of an interview I conducted in the city of Rome, in a squatters' commune called Metropoliz. There is so much that can be said about it. I would like to point out that this is just an excerpt from a research project that has led me to think increasingly about childhoods, children's dreams and their memories, as well as the urgent need to listen to them and change so much of what is out there. I present two significant excerpts from a recorded conversation that lasted 1.5 hours. This choice stems from the expression of two dreams that complement each other – one awake and one asleep – and from my understanding of the child as the flash of a firefly that does not rise up but points to other ways of producing the world in the face of the many people surrounding the child and the worldviews which effectively exclude it.

## **2. In the boy's dreams: times ruins and the fragility of rights and democracy**

Bruno: I dream of having a (squat) commune so big that all the children can fit in it.

Marcia: What about mums, dads, families?

Bruno: Ahh, I'll make another one for them.

These are the words of Bruno, a boy living in Metropoliz, a mixed-race squatters' commune in Rome, who was under threat of eviction at the time. They correspond to some of the findings and constructs of research, currently being analysed and written up in greater depth. These are data produced since November 2022. This study initially focused only on the displacement of children and women in a particular squat on the outskirts of Rome, but it made me want to understand more about common good practices, above all because of what I saw, read and heard being said by people living in and using squats in some regions of Italy. This

did not come out of my waistcoat pocket, as José de Souza Martins (1997) would say, referring to the research themes and certain deviations that are imposed as we make our way through the field. Moreover, it is a social issue that points to how we can inhabit the planet in a different way. I want to make it clear that this comes from research that I have carried out and guided, and which has been taken up in Brazil, specifically in the city of São Paulo.

What exactly do I mean by that? Community living, with children, producing relationships and, as a result, childhoods to be known and learnt from. To what extent do we have groups that help each other and their surroundings to understand community relationships that serve populations, especially migrants and others in more precarious living conditions? How are these relationships being built and what ties are being forged? Finally, where are the children in all this, and where does the school come in? Is the school, from nursery school onwards, when provided by the state as a public service, a space that can be thought of as a common good? Based on practical life experiences, we can say that it is, though this is not exactly new and, but I think it is important for us to reflect on this notion, which, like everything else, is under permanent construction, acquiring and expressing different forms in each group researched, with very similar strands. These questions will not all be answered here, but I believe it is important to raise them for those future studies and approaches that are underway and which, to some extent, are already providing the questions and reflections on children's dreams "from below".

In this research, dreams were one of the non-objectified objects I sought out - turning myself into a dream collector for a while - in order to understand previous and subsequent expectations about the processes of displacement undergone by children and women, especially family members. A second focus I pursued was the relationship between these dreams and the production of ways of living and, in turn, of childhoods. The dreams told to me were, and still are, important elements for descending into life in a squatters' commune, for understanding the impact on children of the struggle for housing and life in such a community with so many other people of different ages, languages and cultures. How has all this been incorporated into their lives? What do the children feel and how do they project those feelings from what they experience on a daily basis? Some answers were found from the descriptions of their dreams.

As Bernard Lahire (2018) said, dreams, taken as individual and intimate phenomena, are also social, and can thus be considered sociological objects. As well as looking into the views and feelings of those who live in squatters' communes today, including children and women (their mothers), I also sought to get to know their dreams, whether sleeping or waking. When it comes to dreams, there are those we have in our oneiric universe and those that we project when we are awake, which may or may not be realised, but which can certainly drive our lives or, as a social phenomenon, reveal some of our motivations. The commitment was and still is to understand these processes as told by those who participate in them, from the



bottom up, as it were, which is necessarily a huge challenge. To this end, as well as spending time in the field, interviews were conducted with both groups, especially in the squatters' commune.

From a methodological point of view, I made many visits to the squat in order to get to know the people living there, what the relationships were between its residents, and to understand how the commune was organised. I was also interested in experiencing the neighbourhood through the senses, its customary smells and sounds. Besides the cars, buses, footsteps and babies crying, there were also the more exotic sounds of its various accents and unfamiliar languages such as Romanian and Arabic, alongside the better-known ones like French, Spanish, English and Portuguese. I was always mistaken for a Spanish speaker, revealing ignorance of the language spoken in Brazil.

There is no space to write here at length (though further texts and new reflections will be presented soon), but it should be stated that this practice of "collecting" dreams and analysing them from a sociological perspective so as to understand how they relate to the social environment, the world of work and the wider culture, follows the lead of a number of previous studies: Roger Bastide's initial reflections in 1960 pointed to the construction of a sociology of dreams, followed in Brazil by José de Souza Martins. These studies found resonance in the research of Jean Duvignaud, Françoise Duvignaud and Jean Pierre Corbeau (1996), whose dream bank aimed to discover society through the dreams of contemporary people with their hardships and adventures, looking especially at the working classes. More recently, Bernard Lahire (2018) has sought to understand dreams as a social phenomenon, compiling two large volumes in which he explores theories and exposes dreamed dreams as a point for his reflections. In addition, Hanna Limulja (2022) has carried out an ethnography of Yanomami dreams, which provokes us to listen to dreams and think about this process methodologically, as well as the function of dreams for certain societies. It is briefly worth saying that when I listened to children, their mothers and other women telling their dreams, one of the things I learnt was to appreciate the value of time, which is so important for listening and for the stories that we dream, whether awake or asleep.

I used Bruno's dream as a starting point. He told me about it in conversation, inside his home, which at the time was the setting for a major art exhibition. Presenting a small section of the research and a single case is not through the desire to create something to be referenced or modelled. It merely serves to motivate further reflections, a thread to be pulled in order to think about inhabiting the space of childhood, about children's dreams and the relationship with freedom and democracy and the anti-democratic policies that have undermined our lives and those of children since they were babies.

The dream shown at the beginning is in a waking state. It takes us back to an imagined squatters' commune, a large plot of land, which seems similar to the one where Bruno lives, created by children and for them, almost "all the children in the

world", as he adds at the end, and without any family members. In *When the house burns down*, Giorgio Agamben (2023) states that there is salvation because there are others. This large commune of children is manifested in the existence of other people who bring salvation, who point to other possible relationships and who, in this case, are mostly made up of children. He is one among many, another among others, and are all together. For Bruno this plurality gives him a way out from his life as resident of a squatters' community, living along with so many others in an abandoned factory site that has been occupied for over a decade by squatters who, at the time of the research, were under a strong threat of eviction. This waking dream, we could say, is a reflection of the daily nightmare that has been imposed on all the residents. Bruno points out that there are no lifeguards for everyone. Inspired by his proposal to create a place that welcomes all people, I think he, in his own way, invites us to look at the effects of capitalism in the way he confronts it in this dream of creating other possibilities for living together by reconstituting the humanity in each human being, or provoking us to at least think about it.

It was a waking dream, told to me by a boy, the expression of a desire that involved everyone. Could this be the flashing light of the firefly that Pasolini and Didi-Huberman reflected on? Bruno was born in Metropolit, a squat on the outskirts of Rome, where families from many countries live. They are migrants from Africa and South America as well as from the "Roma" community. Bruno is part of the only Italian family in the commune. On a daily basis he has learnt to deal with the many other children living there, He defines himself as a resident of what he claims to be the largest squat in the world, and which he rightly asserts is in fact home to a completely unique art museum within the squat itself, the Museo Dell'altro e dell'altrove (MAAM),. The boy's dream is surprising in its act of welcoming which reveals living to be more than simply having a roof over one's head, but to be a dynamic practice involving relationships between all the children. With his happy dream of a city made by and for its child occupants, Bruno allows us to look at the city from the point of view of everyday life, or rather, another everyday life that is structurally different from the one we know, live and produce. It shows us how the city transforms itself, or rather, could transform itself with those who inhabit it, based on the material and immaterial relationships produced by children. I believe that in his waking dream he tells us about the possibility of the existence of another city in accordance with his proposals. MAAM would exist in his waking dream because, for him, it is marvellous to live in the midst of so many works of art, but it would be experienced fully by everyone, while at the same time the children would leave their marks, their voices, perhaps more deeply marked. In this waking dream, the boy makes poetry while "the house burns" (Agamben, 2023).

But his own waking dream, as I have called it here, coexists with another dream, the one while he is asleep. Reproduced here is an excerpt from the dialogue:

Bruno: I dream every night that I'm on the street. That people come in, take people out of their houses and we're walking down the street, in the street.

Let's together take a moment to think about this boy who dreams, about what has been collected here and how it relates to the social phenomenon of homelessness, the struggle for a roof over one's head, neglect and feeling neglected, which occurs in opposition to the space he has created, which he himself would create materially, namely a commune for all the children.

Which house is burning? Perhaps the houses and cities have already been burnt down, we don't know since when, in a single immense fire that we pretend not to see. Of some, only pieces of wall remain, a painted wall, part of the ceiling, names, many names already devoured by the fire. And yet we cover them so zealously with white plaster and lying words that they seem intact. We live in houses, in cities burnt from top to bottom as if they were still standing, people pretend to live and go out into the streets masked among the ruins, as if they were still the familiar neighbourhoods of yesteryear (Agamben, 2023, p. 12).

Future papers will seek to reflect further on this experience but confronting the findings from both of Bruno's dreams makes us think about the relationships between various aspects of the city. For a start, these dreams raise questions about how the lived city, made of people, relates to the built city, made of stone. In addition, they also get us to question the relationship between the planned city and the city that is produced; the former being responsible for eviction actions involving people, their stories, their dreams, the reasons that led them to occupy and inhabit certain spaces, to build their lives and to love, while the latter refers to the city which, in this case, is produced by children both in dreams and also in reality. Thus, Bruno's dreams provoke us to think about how the city is lived and produced. Moreover, Bruno places the street in opposition to the house where he lives, the squatters' commune where he was born, whose space has, ever since he was baby, also been the work of his production, in his own way. The street of the sleeping dream is the place that reminds us of the fear of wandering aimlessly around, not out of choice, but due to the lack of it. It presents us with elements that challenge our everyday life, such as evictions which, like a sudden fire erupting, result in the removal of everything we own, but which we pretend not to see, putting on the make-up that covers up what burns underneath.

However, when we consider Bruno's dream while he is asleep, we can present him as a witness, testifying to the reality of his life, the words in his dream no longer muted but speaking directly to me and touching a nerve. It was through the dream that the boy bore witness to something that is threatening to happen. His dream was about eviction and everything that it carries away: friendships, the roof that has already been built, relationships and the production of a space by the people who inhabit it, in short, life in all its fullness. In this respect, the sleeping dream is a

document about the state of social relations between us and ourselves, between us and the difference, the otherness that mediates our transformation into a social being (Martins, 1996). In telling me his dream, Bruno revealed the state in which the threats of eviction had left him emotionally and his concerns. When asked what he thought of his own dream (a methodology inspired by an exploratory study carried out by Martins), he replied by saying that he felt that everyone would be walking the streets. When I think about the resources that gave him such an understanding, I would say that they are those constructed by ordinary life, to which we have to descend in order to understand his daily life, which is that of one of the many children living in the squat community.

Ordinary life does not stop in the face of these seemingly extraordinary events (Das, 2011) but goes on, revealing some of its aspects to me when I had the privilege to carry out this research, which was a very moving experience. Bruno's dream is fundamental to understanding his daily life and the impact of anti-democratic policies on children's lives. These are practices that invade his dreams when he is asleep and reveal themselves as desires common to everyone, children in particular, to attain a place to live. He is seized by the violence of the threat of eviction. I ask myself, also prompted by conversations with others like Bruno: what have these political practices done to these children? What is inscribed in their bodies, in the production of their imagination, their lives and their desire to stay alive? So much has been said about hope, which has recently become a verb conjugated in such a way that it sounds empty. What hopes lie in this boy's dreams, which reflect those of countless children in different countries around the world? He anchors his story - or is it a testimony? - in two different visions. In the waking dream, there is the production of something new, a place for many people his age. In the sleeping dream, there is the fear that affects him and, at times, silences him. Silence, which behaves like the commas that dissect our speech, is important for us to breathe and at the same time get closer to the unspoken. Taken as a testimony of a present reality that demands answers and change, it was essential for me to realise the depth of feeling and emotions in children like Bruno and to fully appreciate what the demeaning practices of the long-established far-right are capable of producing in children, and how much this kind of politics and its representatives, elected or not, invade children's lives, materially and beyond.

Bruno's dreams challenge us and demand that we take a stand.

### 3. A framework for further reflection and the production of lives in the liberatory struggle



**Photo 1.** Floor of the Metropoliz occupation. Source: Author's collection (2023).

There are many studies and stories told about the social movements fighting for housing. However, much less is known about who takes part in these struggles, who inhabits the places they have acquired, who loses them when they are evicted, who is forced to move on in search of other destinations, since research in this area has not been so explicitly mapped out. Particularly when it comes to children, there are gaps in our understanding of who narrates and produces these stories on a daily basis. We can look at the numbers of people who leave their countries or cities of origin and travel the world in search of better days ahead. A future that ensures stable conditions beyond the current reality of bitterness and insecurity. Leaving their hometowns sounds like a glimmer of possibility for change. In this very short chapter, I have chosen to present another side; that is, the impact of eviction practices and daily inequalities on the life of Bruno, a nine-year-old boy, and more specifically, on his dreams, "from below". It was not possible to explore exactly how the imminent eviction was incorporated into everyday life and the repercussions that this may have provoked. However, from the research findings presented here, we can infer how childhoods, such as Bruno's, are produced in processes of struggle for the right to housing and what follows from this. At the same time, we can consider ways out of these dilemmas. Dreams present projections of other ways of relating and exposing what is seen and experienced. They are mechanisms for reinventing oneself. It can be said that waking dreams are almost the expression of a transgression.

I began this chapter by trying to get closer to the theme of freedom and democracy. I end with the dreams of a boy living in a squatters' commune in the city of Rome, Italy, where few know that such a vital struggle for housing is happening. Today, it is under the aegis of the current government that the boy dreams and exposes his dreams.

Therefore, I will conclude this summary of points made from research by adding to the wishes expressed every April, which arrives with carnations blooming in the scent of spring and bears the longing for freedom, which must not be allowed to grow cold.

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Received: August 2024

Published: December 2024