

# The Impact of Neighborhood Effects on the Economic Mobility of the Inhabitants of Three Segregated Communities in Salvador (Brazil)

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This paper examines the neighbourhood effects on the economic mobility of the inhabitants of three segregated communities of Salvador, in other words the socio-economic advantages and disadvantages affecting the lives of poor people due to their embeddedness in specific socio-residential contexts. Wilson (1987) drew a direct causal relation between a socially homogeneous composition of the neighborhood, committed to high rates of poverty and unemployment, and its inhabitants' compromised capacity to operationalize social capital in processes of labour market integration. According to his hypothesis of *social isolation*, the absence of sustained interaction to middle-class peer groups and role models transmitting conventional attitudes towards education, steady employment and family stability fosters the reproduction of urban poverty and deviant behavior patterns. Studies carried out in Brazilian metropolis have concentrated on the structural dimensions of negative externalities in order to explain neighbourhood-level variations in a field of different phenomena in spatially isolated and socially homogeneous peripheral neighborhoods. However, major disagreement remains whether the geographical contiguity between poor neighbourhoods and affluent condominium-dwellers provides structures of opportunities and mitigates situations of poverty or whether it reinforces socio-spatial stigmatization. Based on a set of interviews, investigating the variability of personal networks and their activation in the struggle for economic inclusion, the study confirms that the proximity of Nordeste de Amaralina to affluent communities affects positively the access to labour opportunities. Nevertheless, residential stigmatization as well as structures of social segmentation annihilate these potentials. The inhabitants' social networks reveal a high degree of homophily and localism, primary ties being paramount for the obtention of (im)material goods and of information about job opportunities. The structural constraints affecting Plataforma interviewees' socioeconomic achievements interfere negatively in the extension and diversity of their social networks. The correlation between the low degree of exposition to socioeconomically dissimilar individuals and the high degree of localism and homophily characterizing their social relations concurs with Wilson's (1987) hypothesis of social isolation. The clusterization of family members around highly fragmented networks, with sparse inter-groupal connections, create obstacles to their economic mobility due to the redundancy of the information transmitted. In the same token, the promotion of short-term survival structures based on a defensively designed family safety net compensates neither the occupational instability inherent to the informal market nor the individual's permanent exclusion from the formal labour market. Desinstitutionalization tendencies and the absence of public investments significantly reduce the opportunities of social interaction and exert detrimental effects on the community's social cohesion. Finally, in Fazenda Grande II, a major degree of heterophily and diversity can be registered within the composition of the inhabitants personal networks. These networks do not rely predominantly on primary social instances and therefore entail a higher degree of territorial dispersion. The vitality of institutional structures (schools, child-care centers, churches,

communitary and cultural associations) depends essentially on the dwellers' integration in the formal labour market and on the economic support provided by the lower middle-class segment. The social interactions occurring in the realm of the spheres of sociability (religious) "associative life" and "leisure" can be considered as cross-class relations which promote the access to (in)tangible goods and services in the neighborhood. In this comparative research, the patterns of sociability of individuals embedded into different contexts of residential segregation showed a major congruence between the geographical neighborhood boundaries and the space of social interaction and network constitution. While the local context remains paramount for social interaction and the mobilization of social capital, it is particularly the local school context that exerts a significant influence in the process of childrens' and adolescents' socialization and contributes to the internalization and reproduction of social references, values and behaviour patterns detrimental to future socio-economic mobility. The embeddedness into a physically dilapidated and socioeconomically deprived neighborhood context may thus reinforce existing disadvantages arising at individual or household level. The study urges to reflect about the responsibility of urban policies when it comes to the prevention or consolidation of residential segregation processes in Salvador. The assumption of an opportunity-enriching environment, where socioeconomically distant populations live in geographical proximity, doesn't comply with the class-hierarchized socio-spatial organization of Salvador. Shiftings within residential segregation patterns have occurred in scale but not in function, social distance markers being translated to spatial dimensions by the means of security devices, as observed in Nordeste de Amaralina. Instead of promoting the local development of the favela Plataforma, public housing programs prioritized technocratic solutions without providing the residents' socio-economic integration. The impact of negative externalities related to the homogeneously poor neighbourhood is potencialized in peripheral areas, turning its' inhabitants socially invisible, thus being isolated from other social groups. Finally, in the case of Fazenda Grande II, the public investments in both housing projects and complementary infrastructure (e.g. schools, hospitals, community center, police stations, recreation areas) generate positive spill over effects for the residents' economic mobility and promote cross-class interactions.

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