

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

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Abstract : The paper analyses the neighbourhood effects on the economic mobility of the inhabitants of three segregated communities of Salvador (Brazil), in other words, the socio-economic advantages and disadvantages affecting the lives of poor people due to their embeddedness in specific socio-residential contexts. Recent studies performed 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 (delinquency, violence, access to the labour market and education) in spatial isolated and socially homogeneous slum areas (favelas). However, major disagreement remains whether the contiguity between residents of poor neighbourhoods and higher-class condominio-dwellers provides structures of opportunities or whether it fosters socio-spatial stigmatization. Based on a set of interviews, investigating the variability of interpersonal networks and their activation in the struggle for economic inclusion, the study confirms that the proximity of Nordeste de Amaralina to middle-/upper-class communities affects positively the access to labour opportunities. Nevertheless, residential stigmatization, as well as structures of social segmentation, annihilate these potentials. The lack of exposition to individuals and groups extrapolating from the favela's social, educational and cultural context restricts the structures of opportunities to local level. Therefore, residents' interpersonal networks reveal a high degree of redundancy and localism, based on bonding ties connecting family and neighbourhood members. The resilience of segregational structures in Plataforma contributes to the naturalization of social distance patterns. Its embeddedness in a socially homogeneous residential area (Subúrbio Ferroviário), growing informally and beyond official urban politics, encourages the construction of isotopic patterns of sociability, sharing the same values, social preferences, perspectives and behaviour models. Whereas its spatial isolation correlates with the scarcity of economic opportunities, the social heterogeneity of Fazenda Grande II interviewees and the socialising effects of public institutions mitigate the negative repercussions of segregation. The networks' composition admits a higher degree of heterophilia and a greater proportion of bridging ties accounting for the access to broader information actives and facilitating economic mobility. The variability observed within the three different scenarios urges to reflect about the responsibility of urban politics when it comes to the prevention or consolidation of the social segregation process in Salvador. Instead of promoting the local development of the favela Plataforma, public housing programs prioritize technocratic habitational 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. The example of Nordeste de Amaralina portrays the failing interest of urban politics to bridge the social distances structuring the Brazilian society's rigid stratification model, founded on mechanisms of segmentation (unequal access to labour market and education system, public transport, social security and law protection) and generating permanent conflicts between the two socioeconomically distant groups living in geographic contiguity. 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) contributes to the residents' socio-economic inclusion.

Keywords : economic mobility, neighborhood effects, Salvador, segregation

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