

*The role of residential context and public policies in the production of urban inequalities*

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## Introduction

The aim of this paper is analyze the interface among spatial concentration of disadvantage in residential contexts and public policies in the production of urban inequality, taking into account research findings that, in different latitudes, have addressed the issue. To this end, we have dived into the debates around the role of urban space and public policies in the production of inequalities. In particular, we focus on two central discussions: on the one hand, those that occur around the geographies of opportunities and, on the other, those that have to do with the neighborhood effects. Also, we focus on the mechanisms through which they operate (Katzman, 2001, Blanco and Subirats, 2008, Najman, 2017) and on the role of residential context have in the definition of public policies.

The systematic exploration of the effects of the spatial concentration of disadvantages associated with urban poverty begins at the Chicago School.<sup>1&2</sup> Its representatives focused on the analysis of "the structural consequences of urbanization for the differential social organization of the city, especially its neighborhoods. Prominent questions included how the culture and structure of a community—for instance, its capacity for social control or the age-graded transmission of social norms—were influenced by economic segregation and ethnic heterogeneity, and how this process shaped delinquency rates (Park and Burgess 1925; Shaw and McKay 1942). The unit of analysis [...] [was] rates of social behavior that varied by neighborhood-level cultural and social structure. The theoretically implied unit of intervention was the community itself" (Sampson, 2008:190). However, the changes occurred in the intensity and characteristics of urban poverty between the 1970s and 1980s -and that in some latitudes deepened during the 1990s- prompted a new wave of research on the subject.

One of the works that has marked a turning point along this line was WJ Wilson's *The Truly Disadvantaged* (1987; Henceforth, TTD) (Small and Newman, 2001; Sampson, 2008). Wilson argues that, since 1970, the structural changes in the economy - the de-industrialization processes, the shift from a manufacturing to a service-based economy, the loss of low-skilled jobs and, concomitantly, the increase in unemployment among the most disadvantaged groups of the urban ghettos in American cities- have plunged inner-city neighborhoods into concentrated poverty (Wilson, 1996). Likewise, poverty concentration was fueled by suburbanization processes carried out by middle-class and working class African-American families that, taking advantage of fair housing laws, managed to move to more affluent neighborhoods (Quillan, 1999). As the families that managed to maintain their insertions in the labor market left the central areas of North American cities, the most disadvantaged remained. Therefore, neighborhoods progressively turned into areas of concentrated poverty, generating and accumulating disadvantages in the daily lives of their inhabitants (economic dependence, violence, drug consumption, among others) (Wilson, 1987, Small and Newman, 2001). Wilson's work has facilitated two lines of inquiry: those

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<sup>1</sup>The pioneering article by Park (1926) shows how interested this group of intellectuals was on the issue.

<sup>2</sup>A systematic review of the different perspectives from which this relationship was traditionally addressed in urban studies can be read in Ruiz-Tagle (2013)

linked to geographies of opportunities and those that related with the neighborhood effects.

1. Urban geography as a driver of opportunities and inequalities

As Wilson's poses, the spatial concentration of poverty restricts the possibilities of *access to opportunities*. However, how does neighborhood geography affect opportunity structures and the neighbors perceptions build around them? Structures are associated to city life – mainly, in terms of social and economic activities. *Opportunity structures* are defined here as "the probabilities of access to goods, services or the performance of activities. These opportunities have an impact on household well-being, either because they allow or facilitate the use of their own resources by household members, or because they provide them with resources. The term structure refers to the fact that welfare paths are closely linked, so that access to certain goods, services or activities provides resources that, in turn, allow access to other opportunities "(Katzman, 1999b: 9).<sup>3</sup> Additionally, access (or not) to certain *opportunity structures* is affected by what Galster and Killen (1995) call *perceived opportunities*, that is, the possible socioeconomic outcomes (such as future income, consumption, profits, etc.) that families and their members believe they will have if they make certain decisions related to education, work, etc. These results, on the one hand, provide information on the characteristics of households and their members;<sup>4</sup> and on the other hand, on the subjective perceptions that household members have on how *opportunity structures* can intervene in the transformation (or not) of said characteristics. In this way, the *opportunity structure* and perceived opportunities are articulated in the effective decisions that families and their members make to access and use goods and services.

Reviewing the literature some people suggest the role of geography is key factor to understand intra-urban inequalities (Woo & Kim, 2016; Li, 2011, Muhammad, de Jong & Ottens, 2008; Flores 2008 y 2006). How does neighborhood geography affect *opportunity structures* and the perceptions villagers build around them?<sup>5</sup> On the one hand, it affects access to goods and services insofar as the dynamics of the markets and the provision of resources available to the institutions providing goods and services, - either public or private -; in the city are not necessarily equivalent. On the other hand, the families residing in the city do not have the same possibilities of locating themselves in the areas or neighborhoods they consider most desirable (Galster and Killen, 1995). With these disparities as a backdrop, research has attempted to identify the specific effects of neighborhood geography on the distribution and use of opportunities to access to goods and services. "According to this approach, the neighborhood configures an *opportunity structure* determined by the space where a market sphere (economic-productive), a social- communitarian sphere (reciprocity) and a public authority sphere (redistribution) acquire

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<sup>3</sup>Within this framework, local welfare institutions are a very important component in the definition of opportunity structures insofar as they shape the normative and informational context of decisions about the use of resources and / or channels of access to them (Blanco and Subirats, 2008).

<sup>4</sup> Those characteristics have been either structural (such as size, moment of life cycle or type, in the case of households or, age and gender in the case of its members) or acquired.

<sup>5</sup> The study of the neighborhood effects on effective possibilities of access to goods and services (opportunities) has a long history in international urban sociology (Sampson, 2008 and 2019, Briggs 2005 and 1997, Ellen and Turner 2003, Massey and Denton, 1993; Tienda, 1991; Jencks and Mayer, 1990,

among others). The works by Katzman (2001, 2007 and 2013) and Katzman and Retamoso (2005), in Montevideo, constitute a compulsory reference in Latin America. In Argentina, among local researches on this issue, Merklen (1999), Soldano (2005), Di Virgilio (2011), Najman (2017) are identified.

specific characteristics. From this point of view, the impact of area effects upon individuals' life courses could be explained, for example, by the quality of the infrastructure and the public transport system connecting the neighborhood to the metropolitan central areas; the adequacy and quality of health, social, cultural and educational services in the neighborhood or its surroundings; the existence of employment opportunities in the territory, or at least the absence of labor market marginalizing behavior because of the area of residence (address effects); the density and energy level of mutual cooperation and supporting networks between people, and so on. Of course, all of these factors, operate concurrently" (Blanco y Subirats, 2008:133).

Based on the work by Wilson (1987, 1996), Jencks and Mayer (1990b) and Massey and Denton (1993), Small and Newman (2001) have identified two explanatory models to account for the mechanisms through which neighborhood geography affects access to opportunities: *instrumental mechanisms*, which describe how the agency capacity of residents is limited by neighborhood conditions; and *socialization mechanisms*, which describe how neighborhoods socialize those who grow in them. Instrumental mechanisms are ancillary to neighborhood location in a metropolitan area and to context characteristics that, directly and indirectly, may affect the possibilities of access, for example, to employment and /or educational opportunities through spatial mismatch between the places where the offer is located and the places where those increasing the demand live. They also refer to the organizational form of activities in the city and service distribution (transport, commercial, health, etc.) that differentially affect population's daily and residential mobility. Socialization mechanisms refer to the fact that neighborhood geography also has an impact, due to group characteristics and the socio-territorial networks that are developed there. The use (or not) of opportunity structures seems to be mediated by the integration (or not) of families in social networks, their ability to move social capital and the agency capacity that these groups and their members have.<sup>6</sup> Thus, context seems to affect inhabitants in such context of *socialization* (Rosenbaum, 1991 and 1995).

The two dimensions recognized by literature review in the analysis of the distribution and the access to goods and services provide information on the success and failure in the struggles for the appropriation of the urban space and on the social background of households and their members (Bourdieu, 2000). That is to say, the schemes of perception, of appreciation and of internalized action, the system of willingness to act, to think, to perceive (*habitus*) that operate as a principle of structuring practices<sup>7</sup> are closely linked to the characteristics of the urban geography where said willingness and perceptual schemes are developed (Gutiérrez, 1999).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>The capacity to dominate space, taking over scarce goods that are distributed in it, depends on the owned capital (Bourdieu, 2000). Now, among the different types of capital, economic and cultural capitals are the fundamental principles to structure urban space, while social and symbolic capitals are rather principles of additional profitability of the other two (Gutiérrez, 1999) . Therefore, location in the city and, therefore, proximity to physical space, allows proximity to the social space to produce all its effects - negative or positive - facilitating or hindering the accumulation of different forms of capital. The facilitating or inhibiting effects of social and spatial proximity depend on the characteristics of the environment and the economic and social characteristics of its inhabitants.

<sup>7</sup>They allow us to perceive the options, to think about them or not to think about them and act accordingly.

<sup>8</sup>The concept of *habitus* is key to understand mobility decisions as practices guided by "rationality

based on a practical sense, in the sense of the game that has been incorporated by the social agent throughout its history. The meaning of game is what allows living – the experienced sense- as something "evident" the sense objectified in institutions, that is, perceptions and representations as a result of the incorporation of objective conditions "(Gutiérrez, 1999).

It seems important to note that access to *opportunity structures* is linked, on the one hand, to the characteristics of the housing market segment that is accessed and, on the other hand, to the relative location of households in the city.<sup>9</sup> Location conditions "are not only segregative by social groups (insofar as they access land, services, urban facilities and workplaces in differential conditions), but it also affect [s] other aspects. It is not just a matter of social differentiation of places of residence; the organizational form of activities in the city differentially affects residential mobility and accessibility to workplaces as they are in the urban space "(Salazar Cruz, 1999: 44. Also see Pinkster, 2007).

Leading researches in the field of urban studies -especially those linked to the ecological perspective- indicated that agglomerations have defined *distance gradients* of neighborhoods or city areas in relation to the center.<sup>10</sup> According to this scheme, centrally located sites derived their profits from their proximity to production factors and clients (demand). With the growth of cities, accessibility -and with it, *location*- became a key factor in the access to the value of complex use of the city. Thus, land uses were seen as economically determined according to the principle of best *location*. Even though these pioneering models –that have attempted to understand the urban space division and the existence of zones or areas destined to different land uses-, nowadays cannot account for the transformations and complexities of post-Fordist<sup>11</sup> urbanization, they continue to call the attention on central aspects to be taken into account in the analysis of urbanization and the production of urban inequalities.<sup>12</sup>

The locational approach has been widely developed by neoclassical school's representatives. In spite of this, some recent research has tried to (re) define it in terms of geographic constructivism. Based on the notion of the *residential market of intra-urban locations*, del Río (2010) identifies that "the housing position [...] in the socio-spatial

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<sup>9</sup>In the case of Latin American cities, this aspect is particularly evident, for example, in the case of settlements of informal origin located on the margins of metropolitan areas, where processes of residential (in) mobility or incidents of minor intensity associated with situations of informal and precarious insertion in the labor market are reported (Di Virgilio, 2007, Dureau et al, 2015, Camargo, 2017).

<sup>10</sup>These gradients are reflected, partly, in the income produced by the different sites according to their location and in the price of said sites and of households built there.

<sup>11</sup> The notion of *post-fordist urbanization* attempts to account for the differences between contemporary urban regions and those that were consolidated in the mid-twentieth century. The *post* prefix indicates the transition between what has been called the modern metropolis and the current metropolis composed by new spatial and social forms and processes (Soja, 2008).

<sup>12</sup> The ideas of specialization of different areas for specific sector activities (productive, commercial, residential, etc.) and multiple development centers took place in the years 1930 and 1940 (Hoyt, 1939, Harris and Ullman, 1945). The Bid Rent theory - which emerged in the 1960s and was based on the characteristics of the physical structure of many cities -helped to explain why the price of rent and real estate varied according to distance from the central district (Alonso, 1964). The main factors in the explanation were transport costs and the interaction between construction costs and the price of land. When transport costs increase, distance decreases the price of land and marginally construction costs (or they remain unchanged). The higher price of land and buildings in central areas is what drives developers to substitute capital for land (Söderberg and Janssen, 2001: 62). Likewise, higher-income households are willing to pay higher transportation costs in exchange for more space at lower cost in the suburbs: when income increases, the desire for more space available for residential use also

increases, even under conditions when it is impossible to reduce transportation costs (Flores, 2008).

structure is not neutral, instead it is produced by a commercial and institutional relationship based on which the urban complex use value referred to by Topalov is distributed asymmetrically "(del Río, 2010: 14).<sup>13</sup> Localization is defined as a relational position that becomes relevant when analyzing the urban structure as a social product. Thus, focusing the analysis on aspects related to location conditions implies considering geomorphological and built-up features that affect intra-urban inequalities -land availability, physical infrastructure related to housing and transportation, the existence of old and historic popular urban sectors and vacant land, etc. <sup>14</sup>Such characteristics seem to be especially relevant when taking into account that urban inequalities are fed by the unequal distribution of equipment and infrastructure, which tends to reinforce city differentiation into better equipped areas, concentrating population with greatest resources opposite to poor areas with a fragile base of equipment and collective spaces and their relative location in the metropolitan environment (Arraigada Luco and Rodríguez Vignoli, 2003). In a context in which, since the 1970s, employment creation conditions, insertion in the labor market and the social care structure linked to universal social policies -education and health- have been progressively degraded, the effects of neighborhood geography and its location have intensified (Smets and Salman, 2006). Therefore, the analysis of neighborhood geography of opportunities is especially critical when attempting to account for inequality processes at the metropolitan scale.

## 2. The perspective of neighborhood effects and its critics

The ethnographic work of Wilson (1987) based in the Projects of Chicago, open the line of studies of neighborhood effects.<sup>15</sup> The idea of neighborhood effects implies that the demographic context of deprived poor neighborhoods has a negative effect on residents' life chances and their individual characteristics (van Ham and Manley, 2010) and instills dysfunctional norms, values and behaviors into population, triggering a cycle of disadvantages (Bauder, 2000). Some authors pose neighborhood effects are part of a wider tradition of studies linked with inner-city marginality and the concept of territorial stigmatization (Wacquant, 2007; Baurder, 2000; Wacquant, Slater & Pereira, 2014; Freidin, Wilner, Ballesteros et al; 2018).

Galster (2010) identifies 15 potential causal pathways linked to neighborhood effects, grouped into four categories: social-interactive mechanisms, environmental mechanisms, geographical mechanisms, and institutional mechanisms. "Social-interactive mechanisms refer to social processes endogenous to neighborhoods, which are generally seen as the core of the neighborhood effects argument (social contagion, collective socialisation, social networks, social cohesion and control, competition, relative deprivation, and parental mediation). Environmental mechanisms operate through natural and human-made attributes of neighborhood that may affect directly the mental and/or physical health of residents without affecting their behaviors (exposure to violence; physical surroundings;

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<sup>13</sup> Thus defined, the concept is inscribed in the line of thought of the social division of residential space and socio-spatial structure of Duhau and Giglia (2009).

<sup>14</sup> These characteristics are related to those specific to segregated spaces and those of the sites in which they are located (Machado Barbosa, 2001).

<sup>15</sup> "However, the origin of area-based studies can be found at the turn of the twentieth century with the work of Booth (1889) and Rowntree (1901). Their ecological mapping, based in the streets of London and York respectively, demonstrated the potential for the forthcoming neighborhood effects literature and, although the notion of the neighborhood as an analytical device was still some 25 years away (Park, Burgess, and McKenzie 1925), they provided an early expression of the scope for

understanding the linkages between places and people” (Manley, 2019:1332).

and toxic exposure). Geographical mechanisms refer to effects of the relative location of neighborhoods (spatial mismatch of jobs and workers and a lack of quality public services). And finally institutional mechanisms which are related to the behavior of actors external to neighborhoods, who control the resources available and access to housing, services and markets for neighborhood residents (stigmatization, local institutional resources, and local market actors)” (van Ham, Manley, Bailey et al, 2012:9).

Although there is a long history of studies posing problems on relationships between urban geography and the production of inequalities, it is not possible to ignore that empirical results have not been unique (Jargousky, 1997, Lupton, 2003, Darcy, 2010; Quillian, 2012; ) van Ham, Manley, Bailey et al, 2012; Arbaci and Rae, 2014). The bibliographic review allows us identifying some critical aspects in researching on neighborhoods effects in the production of inequalities. On the one hand, the question of scaling appears. What is the most appropriate scale to account for territory effects on the production of urban inequalities? Kearns and Parkinson (2001) suggest that multiple scales are articulated into the neighborhood effect: *home area, locality and urban district or region*.

**Table 1.** Scales of neighbourhood

Scale	Predominant function	Mechanism(s)
Home area	Psycho-social benefits (for example, identity; belonging)	Familiarity Community
Locality	Residential activities Social status and position	Planning Service provision Housing market
Urban district or region	Landscape of social and economic opportunities	Employment connections Leisure interests Social networks

Source: Kearns and Parkinson (2001:2104)

Meanwhile, Lukas (2019) poses that “urban scale is the product of the centralization of capital and labor and its boundaries are mainly established through the commuting zone”. In last decades, globalization has involved a very important rescaling (Marti, McCann & Purcel, 2003; Lukas, 2019). Supra-national scales and sub-national scales -such as the urban one- assume a greater role. In this context, national scale transfer authority and responsibility to supranational governance forms and to sub-national ones. Due this rescaling, the sub-national levels become most relevant to urban politics and policy.<sup>16</sup> They have become more responsible for ensuring local area effectively competitiveness in the wider global economy. Thus, urban policy orientation has become much more neoliberal (Brenner & Theodore, 2002a, Marti, McCann & Purcel, 2003).

Therefore, the definition of the scale does not seem to be a minor issue. Even though, in the field of urban studies, there seems to be theoretical consensus on the importance of place and space in the production of inequalities. At an empirical level, apparently there is no agreement on which the most suitable scale to account for them is (see Ruiz Tagle,

<sup>16</sup> “It involves local states and governance institutions accepting more responsibility and authority as nation-states devolve control from the national scale to the local and regional scales. National states are increasingly transferring responsibility to urban governments for tasks such as economic development, social services, and the provision of infrastructure. [...] The augmented responsibilities of local governing institutions have been accompanied by a shift in their policy orientation” (Marti,

2013).<sup>17</sup> Nor has there been any clear progress on research development that brings into play multiple scalability. In this sense, a group of colleagues from the French academy (Imbert, Dubucs, Dureau and Giroud, 2014, Dureau, Lulle, Souchaud and Contreras, 2014), taking advantage of the longitudinal approach<sup>18</sup>, have made important contributions to the investigation, in multiple scales, regarding the effects of socio-spatial reconfiguration processes in the daily life of inhabitants of Latin American cities. This research focuses on settlement evolution and new forms of social differentiation in urban space, combining data and records about inhabitants' behavior, characteristics of the urban structure, and about sectorial public policies.

Likewise, scale definition and ways of approaching multi-scalability are associated to the conceptualization of what we understand by urban scale or, more specifically, by neighborhood. What is a neighborhood? "Neighborhoods [have] 'intrinsic' characteristics that are well established and hard to change, such as their housing stock and economic base. The nature of these characteristics, in relation to those of other neighborhoods, determines who comes to live there [...] [Thereby] neighborhoods are simultaneously physical and social. Physical characteristics, through their impact on population mix, lead neighborhoods to 'acquire' certain other characteristics, such as services and facilities, reputation, social order and patterns of social interaction, as people and place interact. For example, disadvantaged individuals in an isolated area will form one set of social relations, while disadvantaged individuals in a well-connected area may form another. The nature of social relations may itself impact on individual decisions to stay or move, and on individual outcomes, such as employment or health (i.e. they are not exogenous). Thus, neighborhoods are not fixed entities, independent of the people who live in them. They are being constantly re-created as the people who live in them simultaneously consume and produce them" (Lupton, 2003:5). Then, investigating the effect of urban environment on the production of inequalities involves concomitantly investigating, at least, three aspects suggested in the definition by Lupton (2003): demography (population composition according to age, sex, ethnicity, social class, etc.) , neighborhood geography and local welfare architecture (characteristics of housing stock and forms of producing it, economic activities therein located, provision of urban services, transportation networks, provision of education and health care services, social and cultural equipment, etc.) and the dynamics and / or relationships among those who live there, and those who circulate there.

Finally, the play of scales in the approach of neighborhood effects on the production of inequalities also shows that the territories are not fixed or isolated entities. Furthermore, they are neither temporal nor spatially fixed entities (Manley, 2019). "They are neither bounded entities nor do they have objective characteristics that are experienced in the same way by all their inhabitants [...] Their characteristics are shaped by their relationship to other places as well as by their internal features" (Lupton, 2003:4). The work by Giroud (2018) - ancillary to the French tradition to which we made reference earlier- allows us to appreciate the dynamic and complex nature of territories. According to the author, residential presence (which includes both settlement in the neighborhood and the decision to remain in it) are the product of inhabitants' biographical history and of permanent

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<sup>17</sup> The lack of agreements on the investigation scale is related to the debates about the scale of intervention. In the reduction of inequalities and in the provision of more equal opportunities, are neighborhood policies more effective than comprehensive redistribution policies? (Van Gent et al., 2009).

<sup>18</sup> The longitudinal approach emerges in the field of biographical research in the late 1950s. It focuses on the events that occur throughout people's lives, evolving from individualist perspectives to contextual and multilevel models that make aggregate characteristics interact at different levels to

explain individual behaviors (Dureau and Imbert, 2018).

contextual changes, which are in movement. Consequently, the residential presence of the inhabitants depends on a socio-residential position that, at a given moment, concomitantly expresses contextual conditions. Therefore, any residential presence is explained by a dynamic relationship among society evolution, change of a neighborhood and personal history. In turn, residential presence plays a role in the creation of urban and social change: some presences speed up the transformation of the social composition of old working-class neighborhoods, while others contribute to attenuating it or even slowing it down.

By way of a synthesis, based on the contributions made by Dubet (2011), it is possible to think that residential context has an impact on the dual dimension of inequalities: *position and opportunities*. The first one focuses on the positions that individuals and their households occupy in the socio-urban structure. According to this perspective, inequalities are associated to the position they occupy in the city, taking into account -as above mentioned- the characteristics of the environment and its relative location. The second perspective seeks to offer all individuals opportunities to allow them to occupy the best positions according to a "meritocratic" principle. That is, spatial justice would mean giving equal opportunities to all individuals for them to occupy more advantageous positions in the socio-urban structure, in general, and in local and real estate markets. The play of scales, the dynamic and relational character of places and spaces, as well as the multiple transient natures that are put into play in their production, provide complexity to the analysis of both dimensions. Thus, the approach of neighborhood effects on the production of inequalities "requires to move forward of the one dimensional theories [...] to develop multidimensional and multi temporal arguments and explanations. This raises the empirical problem of which dimensions, indicators and units of analysis the researcher must address (Perelman, 2019).

### 3. The importance of neighborhood in public policies against inequalities

Although debates on the importance of urban geography in the creation of inequalities are still open, never before residential context has had such a relevance in the definition of public policy as it does today (Lupton, 2003; Virgilio and Rodríguez, 2011; Arbaci and Rae, 2014). Indeed "developments in social policy [...] have again highlighted the role of spatial policy, and a related perception that space may be a significant dimension in structuring social and economic inequality" (Buck, 2001:2251). It is possible to ask, however, why have public policies once again highlighted space as a significant dimension in the structuring of inequalities?

On the one hand, it is impossible to ignore that, the role to access to equipment and infrastructure role in the creation of urban inequalities puts the state at the heart of the debate. The state is responsible for ensuring levels of provision of more or less homogeneous (and equitable) equipment, infrastructure and urban services in the metropolitan territory (Nelson et al, 2004). It also defines and manages the regulations and rules governing the access to housing and location conditions insofar as, in some contexts, it is this regulatory framework the one that limits the possibilities of integration of poor neighborhoods into the city<sup>19</sup> and, therefore, the reduction of residential segregation (Canestraro, 2008, Clingermayer, 2004, Feiock, 2004, Fischel, 2004, Ihlantfeldt, 2004, Lungo and Baires, 2001, Iracheta Cenecorta and Smolka, 2000). Finally, it constitutes a key player in the definition of welfare architecture characteristics -particularly, at the local level. As

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<sup>19</sup> In the case of Latin American cities, this issue is especially relevant when it comes to informal urbanizations, which need the intervention of the state to achieve their regularization in both urban and ownership terms (see Ward, Jiménez Huerta and Di Virgilio, 2014).



pointed out by Blanco and Subirats (2008), the relative weight and type of articulations carried out in each territory among the market, public authorities, social and community organizations and social, family and kinship networks affect the level of social inequality and its spatial expression in the city. Thus, although in contemporary societies, welfare depends on multiple instances; undoubtedly, the state is a key stakeholder.

Nevertheless, it is possible to think that the role played by residential context does not only and exclusively respond to the privileged position that the state occupies in the definition of local welfare architecture. Other concomitant processes have contributed to neighborhood centrality in the definition of public policy (Camou and Di Virgilio, 2009). On the one hand, since more than three decades ago, in capitalist countries, beyond diversity, local level has been turned -for many reasons- into a privileged space for public policy management, in general, and for welfare policies, in particular (Varela, 2015).<sup>20</sup> Initially, this local level hierarchy was associated, towards the end of the 1980s and during the 1990s, with the implementation of decentralization initiatives through which numerous social and urban services were left in the hands of local governments<sup>21</sup> and/or were implemented through effectors with a strong territorial anchorage (Fernández Gatica and Serrano, 2005, Wilson, Ward, Spink and Rodríguez, 2008, Zicardi, 2008, Ward, Wilson and Spink, 2010). Within this framework, the management model accompanying poverty alleviation and employment assistance programs in different countries also placed the local level in a privileged position. More recently, globalization and market liberalization at a global scale have deepened the reemergence of the political power of local governments and subnational territorial authorities (Varela, 2015).

On the other hand, it must be considered that, additionally since the end of 1980s, particularly in the context of structural adjustment processes and changes in *welfare regimes*,<sup>22</sup> in cities of different latitudes, social conflict in suburban neighborhoods has broken out (Donzelot, 2006). The social explosion, which has a strong territorial imprint, challenges the political, institutional and administrative skills of local governments to respond to the convulsed environment.<sup>23</sup> The territorialized social conflict radically

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<sup>20</sup> "With local *management spaces*, we mean complex processes by which -through different strategies- actors' skills are increased and developed to reorient resources (including those of policies and social programs) articulating them in a local policy in which policy logics, understood as the deepening of the autonomous capacity of the actors over that of the market, prevails" (Chiara and Di Virgilio, 2006).

<sup>21</sup> "In different degrees, from a minimum of autonomy in centralist models to a more open scheme in federalism, local governments are ontologically defined by a baseline that justifies their sovereignty in the exercise of their powers and in the political relationships with citizenship [...] The local government is, by nature, the closest to citizens: it assumes daily -life challenges; the specific demands of citizens in relation to habitat, housing, quality, coverage and spatiality of public services; the very offer of education and, of course, also the topics that, under the generic heading of "quality of life", incorporate the dimensions of cultural industries, entertainment, leisure, nightlife. Even the space for the configuration of urban crime itself has been articulated by virtue of the supply of this type of goods and the flows of social interactions" (Varela, 2015: 217 ff.).

<sup>22</sup> This change of regime mainly consisted in the redefinition of the *welfare architecture*; that is, in the redefinition of "redistributive objectives, the role of public policies in aspects such as the amount of resources and their allocation, the criteria to access public services, the range and duration of benefits and the notion of citizenship that gives them meaning" (Martinez Franzoni, 2008: 9).

<sup>23</sup> In Europe, in cities such as Lyon, rioting was reported in the early 1980s. *These riots intensified more than twenty years later in the neighborhoods of the Parisian banlieus*. In Argentina, in the context of hyperinflation in 1989, social conflict breaks out in suburban neighborhoods, both in the Province of Buenos Aires and in large urban centers of the interior of the country. Arias and Rodríguez (1999) report similar episodes since 1983 in the cities of San Pablo and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and in the same

modified the conditions of the context and the functions that local governments effectively performed in welfare architecture. This resulted in a change in relationships with local players as new intermediaries (non-governmental organizations, grassroots groups, trade union organizations), and / or new forms of relationships with old stakeholders -based on the role attributed to them in program design and implementation -emerged.

Although as Lupton points out (2003: 3), "area-based policies are not dependent on the existence of neighborhood effects and that would most likely be implemented anyway even if no neighborhood effects were found." It is possible to think that, territorialized social conflict, ancillary to the accumulation of disadvantages, which are also territorialized, is what allows understanding the lost link between policy priorities and the effect of urban environment in lower income neighborhoods. Local welfare policies contribute to the governance of territory. As well, local governments have an outstanding role in the coordination of public policies with *governance* dynamics (Varela, 2015), regardless of whether neighborhood effect is (or not) explicitly recognized or whether a fundamentally instrumental perspective oriented by the need for governance is predominant.

Within this framework, finally, it is worth asking: does the fact that urban scale and neighborhood have become a key part of public welfare policies effectively contribute (or not) to rethinking its links with the production of inequalities?

The answer, at this point, seems to be little encouraging. On the one hand, the fact that space and local governments have become central components in the welfare architecture does not ignore the fact that, in a context of neoliberal globalism, their main concern is to turn into competitive territories, articulated with central flows of the capitalism-world (Brenner & Theodore, 2002b; Varela, 2007a). In this scenario, on many occasions, public interventions promote pro-market logics and institutions which, far from alleviating, feed the network of disadvantages (Reygadas, 2010). In this way, in contexts where articulation and coordination skills of public players and local governments fail, welfare continues to depend mainly on the domestic sphere and on the deployment of household members' work.

Thus, when urban collective consumption management narrows its links with the global market, a greater fragmentation at a territorial level arises (Sassen, 2018). The most vibrant expression of this phenomenon is the privatization of services and housing with its differentiating potential regarding the composition of urban environment. This privatization process is not simply a change in the ownership regime, but a transfer of functions to the market, in general, and to families, in particular.<sup>24</sup> The increase in prices and fees associated with the privatization of basic urban services also transfers the cost of living in the city to the wages of workers and modifies the forms of demand management.

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year 1989, months before, the *caracazo* had claimed 500 deaths in Venezuela. Since then, their presence has been sustained with different intensities, but they have not disappeared. In Argentina, the *piquetero* movement took over the streets during the 2001/2002 crisis and, since then, picketing has become the traditional form of demonstration. Perhaps the most contemporary expression is that of the yellow jackets (*gilets jaunes*) in French cities.

<sup>24</sup> In Latin American cities, the most relevant transformations impacting on the intensity and persistence of socio-territorial inequalities are: (i) privatization of basic urban services. (2) Development of isolation processes for lowest-income sectors that faced with the commercialization of the city cannot be built in an attractive demand for capital. (3) Suburbanization of high-income sectors -configured by low density enclaves- that gives rise to a dispute over interstitial territories in the periphery, traditionally urbanized by low-income sectors; and (IV) a process of deterioration of the existing housing stock that stresses the formal city landscape allowing the slow alteration of use and the status of material structures.

Likewise, in the context of a sharp decline in employment opportunities, urban inequalities are exacerbated. On several occasions -especially in Latin American cities and in the North American black ghetto<sup>25</sup>, these conditions converge into a process of isolation in which integration possibilities are undermined by the perverse combination of two phenomena: while, the axis of identity creation moves from the world of employment to the world of consumption (Katzman, 2000), the income inequality gap and the gap in mercantile access to worthy housing conditions deepen.

As pointed out by Ruiz-Tagle (2014); the neoliberal policies of municipalization, segmented services and targeted resources are the factors that make the quality of resources and local opportunities dependent on the socioeconomic level of the population. From this point of view, the neighborhood effects are mediated by the *neoliberal spatial equivalence* between poor inhabitants, on the one hand, and poor services, opportunities and resources, on the other. "The main evidence for this is that in the European welfare states, due to the greater territorial redistribution of resources, neighborhood effects are not as severe as in the United States and in [Global South] (Musterd, 2005) [...] The neighborhood effects come from powerful institutions (Gans, 2008), and they are 'effects of the state inscribed in the space' (Wacquant, 2009:109)" (Ruiz-Tagle, 2014:40).

As proposed by Torres et al (1996), the spreading of new patterns of territorial organization produces, on the one hand, a strong concentration of investments in precise areas considered as strategic spaces at the urban level. On the other, a relative abandonment of large areas that are beginning to be considered as residual and that are not of interest for capital. This is due to the particular residential segmentation presented by the real estate market, the labor market, the intervention capacity of state agencies and social networks (Salvia and Grande, 2007).

As Ruiz-Tagle (2014) poses, these processes take different characteristics at different latitudes. In European cities, differentiation mechanisms are seemed to be more sophisticated and / or less evident. The works by Arbaci (2008) and Arbaci and Malheiros (2010), on spatial distribution of non-western foreigners in different cities of Southern Europe, show that their insertion in the city is featured by deficient residential conditions, high levels of informality in the access to the real estate market, high suburbanization and spatial dispersion. Consequently, the authors argue that even when these groups are not necessarily concentrated in the territory -which results in socially and ethnically mixed neighborhoods- their disadvantages are expressed as high differentiation in the forms of tenure and access to housing. Therefore, despite the existence of moderate spatial segregation, there is considerable social marginalization. "These forms of dispersed settlement are not the result of concrete conjunctures, but of structural mechanisms and a broader process of socio-residential differentiation, which are anchored in: the macro functioning of the welfare system, the host society ideology, the segmentation of the labor market and, above all, in the dual housing regime associated with processes of social division of space "(Arbaci, 2008: 33).

In this way, even though - on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean - social policies and the mixture of tenancy types are recurrently developed -as mechanisms to confront deprivation and reduce social inequalities-, Arbaci and Rae (2014), based on a large selection of study

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<sup>25</sup> Among other works, Bayón (2012 and 2015) and Bayón and Saravi (2017) can be analyzed in the case of Mexico City; Soldano (2008) and Najman (2017), for the case of the Metropolitan Area of Buenos Aires, and Katzman (2001, 2007 and 2013) and Katzman and Retamoso (2005), for Montevideo. As far as the black ghetto is concerned, the works by Wacquant (1997, 2008 and 2014) and works on the relationship between poverty suburbanization and neighborhood effect in cities of the United States, Sampson, 2019 may be consulted.

cases in London, show that access to opportunities and resources for low-income populations "does not depend on or improve according to the level of tenancy mixture in the neighborhood. On the contrary, the integration of both policies becomes of vital importance: neighborhood integration policies and people-centered policies, as well as de-commoditized access to welfare services (such as education, training and employment opportunities). "Consequently, the production of urban inequalities does not seem to be linked to territory by territory itself, but rather because it allows access to welfare services and institutions.

In Latin American cities, several studies have indicated that relegation is more evident (in this regard, see footnote no. 28). Despite this, a recent study by Ruiz-Tagle (2016) on the neighborhood of La Florida, Santiago -a neighborhood with a history of land seizures, social housing projects that recently received a new population of middle and high-middle class people-, shows the complexity of this coexistence, and how segregation has moved from housing to other socialization spheres. Again, Ruiz-Tagle emphasizes the need for an institutional and critical view on the effects of social mixture of territory and of the territorial redistribution of resources in the production of inequalities.

Thus, over the last decades, far from diminishing, differences have deepened. Many experts suspect that globalization has meaningfully contributed to this deepening and, therefore, to the fragmentation of urban populations and the districts they live in (Sment and Salman, 2008). In addition, it seems to have contributed to the development of segregation processes in multiple and different scales and modalities. Therefore, the complexity currently enshrined in different forms of territorial inequality requires greater attention in the context of the analysis of local welfare policies.

Thus, the spatial dimension of inequalities becomes an especially critical, though much more sophisticated, less evident and never mechanical, factor.

#### 4. End highlights

Lower income groups' daily lives in capitalist societies and, therefore, their insertion in the city are structured based on wide range of state interventions. These interventions are articulated in the general welfare system and contribute to the development of somehow socially-oriented and equitable residential contexts.

This work aimed at accounting for the way in which residential context expands or limits the production of inequalities. There is little doubt that neighborhood characteristics affect familiar and individual daily life and opportunities. Although, we do not know enough about the causal mechanisms which operates them, the state, through its policies, programs and territorialized interventions, constitutes an important driver socio-territorial differentiation. Thereby, the state enables or limits the effective possibilities of families to respond to the demands of their daily lives.

These interventions impact on the development of socio-territorial inequalities. We understand the relationships existing between the production of inequalities and public policies as a sequence of agreements and disagreements among state interventions, their beneficiaries and the effects these interventions cause in the spaces where they reside. When analyzing relationship pattern in which low-income households meet daily needs, it is noted that public institutions (schools, health care centers, social policy makers, etc.) are the main characters of this network, even though their role is not developed as a harmonious and articulated performance (Di Virgilio, 2008). Quite the contrary, on many occasions, conflict is a modality by means of which these relationships evolve. In this context, when we speak of public state-owned institutions, we are referring to multiple interventions that from different instances and governmental levels can shape families' daily lives and the environments where they live: particularly, we refer to programs and public

welfare institutions deployed at the territorial level (Blanco and Subirats, 2008, Di Virgilio, 2011).<sup>26</sup>

These interventions produce important scars in the daily life of low-income families and in their insertion into the city, as they contribute to defining opportunity structures.<sup>27</sup> Access<sup>28</sup> to these opportunity structures constitutes a heterogenization factor among poor groups. Insofar as it enables or limits the effective possibilities of families to respond to the demands of daily life. Access to *opportunity structures* is linked, on the one hand, with the characteristics of the residential context. On the other hand, with the conditions of their location associated with different forms of access to housing, services, urban facilities, workplaces, etc. Therefore, *opportunity structures* enabling (or not) public interventions in the territory are associated with micro sociological processes contributing to the (re)production of inequalities.<sup>29</sup> As pointed out by Allard and Small (2013: 6), “the fewer the resources to which people have access, the more their circumstances will depend on the organizations in which they participate, the systems in which these organizations operate, and the institutions governing the behavior of both”.

<sup>26</sup>In the 1970s, a good deal of urban research defined a series of urban services, transportation and collective facilities which delivery was carried out by the state -as part of a broader policy of employment and universal services that, until the mid-1980s, regulated minimum standards of living conditions - as collective consumption goods (Castells, 1974), complex use values (Topalov, 1979) and basic use values of spatiality (Jaramillo and Cuervo, 1993) which nowadays have a much more limited scope (Martinez Franzoni, 2008).

<sup>27</sup>Opportunity structures are defined here as "the probabilities of access to goods, services or the performance of activities. These opportunities affect household welfare, either because they allow or facilitate the use of their own resources by household members or because they provide them with new resources. The term structure refers to the fact that welfare routes are closely linked, so that access to certain goods, services or activities provides resources that in turn facilitate access to other opportunities "(Katzman, 1999: 9).

<sup>28</sup>The notion of access and / or accessibility refers to the degree of adjustment existing between the architecture of welfare-characteristics, location and distribution-and the resources available to households to take advantage of it (Hernández, 2012).

<sup>29</sup>We will refer here to the social interventions by state that find their specificity in the fact that there is a direct orientation to life conditions -and life reproduction- of different sectors and social groups and to operate especially during secondary income distribution. In this way, urban social policies indicate "moments of maximum activity in the regulation and conformation of differential social reproduction patterns" (Danani, 1997: 138), forcing us to think about the existing mediation between structure and subject, society models and daily organization, between socio-economic and family structures.

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