



People and “Territories”: Urban Sociology Meets the Livelihood Approach in the South

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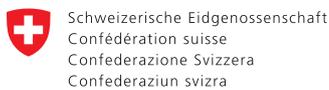


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Left: Urban fragmentation in Caracas. (Photo by Y. Pedrazzini). Right: People of the Horno de Cal slum, in Caracas. (Photo by N. Savary)

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1 Introduction

The process of urbanisation is a global phenomenon in constant progression all over the globe; however, it distinguishes itself today in developing countries through its particular speed, scope and consequences in terms of spatial fragmentation and social exclusion. The magnitude of the challenges differs by region: only one third of the population in Asia and Africa is urban, while in Latin America, this proportion is close to 75%. These regions also face some similar challenges, though: precarious urban life conditions, social as well as economic vulnerability for a majority of citizens, and degradation of the natural and built environments.

One way to refine our understanding of these problems is to look at the everyday experience of urban life, i.e. at how people are able to *access and shape space* in the city and thus live a “worthwhile life” (Sen, 1999). We therefore draw on the literature on the livelihood approach and its attempts to analyse the “multidimensionality of daily life” by describing people’s actions and strategies (De Haan and Zoomers, 2003). The focus of our analysis is therefore the various activities required to access and shape space in the city.

In a much summarised way, accessing and shaping space in the city can be seen as a matter of finding and shaping a place to live in and obtaining adequate means of subsistence. In this paper, we argue that it is necessary to link these two components – which are essential for a decent quality of life in the city – with the issue and concept of “territory”. In doing so, we call for a further refinement of the livelihood approach along the lines defined sixty years ago by Evans-Pritchard in his “ecological approach” (Evans-Pritchard, 1940).

Stressing the ecological dimension of livelihoods is important in order to avoid a functionalist approach that tends to reduce seeking a livelihood to a matter of “strategic action” within a given “context” (Rakodi, 2002). Such a functionalist approach is rather unsatisfactory for at least two reasons:

- *First concern:* as a functionalist approach focuses on strategic action, it does not account for the diversity of activities required in order to secure a livelihood and ensure a worthwhile life in a broader sense. Many authors working on livelihood approaches have already given this concern serious thought (Bebbington, 1999, De Haan and Zoomers, 2003). To address it, they have called for a less functionalist approach to assets by asking for two shifts of analytical focus. The first one invites us to pay more attention to the dimension of *experience*: “people’s capital assets affect poverty status and quality of life by affecting human experience as well as income” (Bebbington, 1999). The second one recommends that we consider a broader spectrum of the various elements around which a livelihood is built: “health, security, self-respect, justice, access to goods and services, family and social life, ceremonies and celebrations creativity,

the pleasure of place, season and time of the day, fun, spiritual experience and love" (Chambers, 1995, 196). As we will argue, in order to take these shifts into account we need to further refine our anthropological understanding of the various types of actions and experiences related to these different elements, by tackling the concept of strategic action.

- *Second concern:* both functionalist and non-functionalist livelihood approaches do not give enough attention to the spatial dimension of the livelihood concept. We propose in this paper that the fundamental question of the relation between human activity and the material environment, i.e. the various manners in which human activities both transform and rely on the surrounding environment, is the core of the livelihood concept. Indeed, the various activities through which a livelihood is constituted take place in time and space. Therefore, they not only *take place* in a context but are made possible through specific and various affordances of the material environment, which are taken advantage of and shaped by those who carry them out. From this perspective, we can say that the shaping of livelihoods is embedded in the shaping of the city.¹ In most livelihood approaches, the type of actions developed by the population in their use of space, and the modalities of embedment of these practices in various "territories" are insufficiently described and analysed. The consequence of this limitation is that operational uses of the concept of livelihood fail to allow for a dynamic account of the relation between individuals' shaping of livelihoods and collective shaping of territories. As we will argue, we need to refine our understanding of the concepts of "context" and "territory" in order to account for this relation.

It is therefore essential to develop concepts and analytical tools that make it possible to tackle both the various logics of action constitutive of human activities and the spatial setting of their contexts at the same time. This should allow for a better understanding of the orientation and scale of public policies in the realm of urban territories, especially in cities in the South.

In order to more precisely describe the embedment of human activities within territories, we formulate methodological and theoretical propositions aimed at analysing the shape of territories in the city at the same time as the modes of living that occur in these territories. The nodal concept that helps to understand the way territory relates to human activity is "situated action" (Suchman, 1987). By focusing on situated action, we open up the two central categories of livelihood approaches that lead to more problems than solutions, i.e. *context* and *strategic action*, and propose a more integrative concept.

¹ To state that livelihoods are embedded in "territory" is a strong but necessary conceptual and methodological proposition. Indeed, as Mark Granoveter claims when he describes the embeddedness of institutions in social relations, to construe "them as independent is a grievous misunderstanding" (Granoveter, 1985, 482). The concept of "setting" developed by Amos Rapoport (2005) draws a similar relation between human activity and its environment.

For the purpose set in this paper, we define territory as a “*spatial setting* allowing for the development of specific activities”. By *setting* we mean the various *conventional* and *material equipments* that frame and enable specific actions.

We differentiate between four types of territory, each relating to the spatial embedment of a major field of human activities and experience: the *dwelling territory*, the territory of social relationships or *sociability territory*, the *merchant territory* and the *functional territory*. These territories set the various frames within which city dwellers are able to develop sustainable livelihoods and worthwhile lives.

This paper is divided into three parts. In a first part, we offer theoretical and methodological considerations leading to a conceptualisation of livelihoods as embedded in four types of territories (Chapter 2). In a second part, we briefly test the heuristic qualities of this approach, using the example of urban slums (Chapter 3). Finally, the last part of this paper presents a list of questions aimed at developing an agenda for operational research (Chapter 4).

2 Livelihood and territory

2.1 Territory as an “equipped”² space or network

A territory is linked with the carrying out of human activities in space and time; it is therefore not a simple and passive “receptacle” of activities that are performed in it. Instead, through its fittings it offers the affordances for a *situated activity*. The concept of situated activity is essential to get away from a purely sociological approach focusing solely on analysing “power relationships” and the “symbolic” appropriation of a territory.³ In particular, the concept of situated activity suggests considering the environment as offering “affordances” for the carrying out of different activities (Gibson, 1979).

Human action is thus very tightly linked to an entirety of encompassing objects that make it possible. Actor Network Theory⁴ and pragmatic sociology (Boltanski and Thévenot, 2000, 2006), have shown this importance of objects in the composition of relations between human beings. As Bruno Latour (1996) provocatively argues, sociology must not be reduced to a description of relations made exclusively of face-to-face and constantly reassessed relations. On the contrary, humans have equipped the world in order to manage and stabilise relationships, allowing the development of large communities and networks. By taking into account all objects used over time and space, one may determine the formation and scaling of a territory along human activities.

However, this approach needs to be clarified, in particular the spatial nature of territory. In this regard, there are two competing approaches. The first considers territory as a materially or symbolically enclosed space (Levy and Lussault, 2003), where territory is above all an area. In a second approach – a larger one inscribing itself in the vicinity of the works of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1980) – territory may also be viewed as “reticular”, perhaps even “rhizomatous”. This second approach is in our view a richer one when it comes to considering the relationship between space and society in countries in the South, as it defines various logics of territories. Broadly speaking, there are two views of territory: *sedentary territory* and *nomadic territory*. The first corresponds to the classical definition mentioned earlier of a territory defined as an *enclosed space, delimited by borders and governed by an authority*. The second *follows people and builds upon their movements across space*. A person can thus be said to move with his or her territory. A person’s presence within an area shapes that territory through the social habits that he or she develops and the artefacts this person brings along, as is the case in nomad lifestyles. This second view has the considerable advantage of depicting territory as an attribute both of locations and the people who live in them, placing the question of appropriation of space and itinerant capability at the heart of the debate.

² We adopt the concept of “equipment” developed by Laurent Thévenot. See his article on “equipped humanity” (Thévenot, 2001).

³ For a critique of these approaches, inspired by the Chicago School as well as by Goffman, see Joseph, 1998.

⁴ For a good presentation of this approach by one of its “founders”, see Latour, 2005

A second step is needed if we follow this idea, as it is not enough to only conceive of two opposed views of territory (sedentary and nomadic). Indeed, if we reflect on the idea of a variety of logics of action (going from the more intimate to the more public), we need to consider various *ways* in which people move around and appropriate space (starting from the formal establishment of borders to private property and informal momentary appropriation through personal use). As a direct consequence of these two shifts of focus, we need to abandon a static view of the concept of context, as was suggested in the introduction, in favour of a more dynamic one based on the idea of co-production of human activities and their spatial settings or territories. It is only then that we will be able to consider the dynamic building of various territories and the way these territories interact, either enabling or hindering sustainable urban livelihoods and habitat.

2.2 Opening the concepts of "context" and "strategy"

As was stated in the Introduction, in order to connect this debate with the search for "better" cities, it is worthwhile delving into the literature on the "livelihood approach" and its attempt to look at poverty not only as a quantitative problem (low level of income) but also as a specific experience of the world (Bebbington, 1999; De Haan & Zoomers, 2003), characterised by various forms of vulnerability and deprivation partly compensated by creative and innovative capabilities. Livelihood approach are interesting in our attempt to link action, territory and social order, as they invite us to consider that *poor people actively shape their lives and thus local development*. The relation between people's activities and the dynamic contextual qualities of their surrounding is therefore at the centre of this approach.

To a certain extent, this focus is already that of Evans-Pritchard's classical study of the "livelihoods" of the Nuers people⁵ (Evans-Pritchard, 1937). The issue for him was to understand the links between the "ecology" of the Nuers' lifestyle (i.e. the way in which they interacted with their environment) and their political organisation. This desire to understand both the practical roots of human activities and the moral and political organisation of society is also what fuels the work of the Chicago School of urban sociology (Park, Burgess and MacKenzie, 1925). This seminal work invites us to examine the relationship between the material world and the cognitive categories around which a human society organises itself. As was already stressed above, this relationship is always a dynamic one – it cannot be reduced to either material determinism or radical constructivism.

Contemporary livelihood approaches⁶ – and the emphasis they put on "assets" and "strategies" – can be seen as an attempt to find a middle way between determinism and

⁵ The book is subtitled "A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People".

⁶ As the first publication date of Evans-Pritchard's book shows, the concept of "livelihood" has been used for a long time already in ethnology. We find it also quite early in economy, especially in the writings of Polanyi. When we talk about contemporary approaches, we refer to the practice-oriented conceptualisation of the concept through a collection of studies encompassed in the thematic and political field of sustainable development (Chambers and Conway, 1992; Rakodi, 2002; Carney ed., 1998).

complete freedom. As Rakodi summarises it, the livelihood approach gives back an active dimension to individuals whose livelihoods appeared to be more the result of various strategies than just a direct outcome of a specific context. The concept of “livelihood” must therefore be seen as a “realistic recognition of the multiple activities in which households engage to ensure their survival and improve their well-being” (Rakodi, 2002).

This diversification of activities means more than an increase in the time spent working and number and types of jobs. It implies activities with very different natures such as short-term immigration and urban farming, as well as family solidarity, etc. It entails therefore a variety of types of relations between people and with the built environment. Each of these activities implies a specific spatial setting (objects and scales).

Consequently, from the perspective of research for sustainable development, which aims at finding solutions with and for a variety of actors, urban policies must therefore adjust their scale of intervention in order to be able to encompass the various elements pertinent to the type of activities or experience they want to regulate (whether to encourage or hinder them). Fighting against vulnerability is thus not just a matter of targeting people and assets but also of contextual transformations. But what do we mean by contextual transformations?

2.2.1 Bringing the concept of “context” back into play

The last set of remarks invites us to open up the concept of “context” in order to point out all the different aspects it covers. The concept of context generally serves the purpose of enumerating – in preparation for a political intervention – the different external elements that may help people find the means to exist. The elements thus enumerated are often very disparate and it is difficult to determine them beforehand in a static way. As has been shown in analyses relating to the constitutional dynamics of “public problems” and “collective mobilisations”, it is only in the course of an activity that the elements that constitute its relevant context appear (Dewey, 1991; Snow, 2004; Cefaï and Trom, 2001). In the same way, a territory establishes itself alongside the spreading conditions that favour the pursuit of certain activities.

Therefore, a context takes shape in relation with specific activities that make specific features of an environment more relevant than others. For example, a same element of street scenery such as “a homeless person sitting in a street corner” can be either ignored or taken as a pertinent feature of the context, even as an “infrastructure” (Bordreuil, 1992). The simple “passer-by” may go by without noticing the homeless person, just perceiving him or her as part of the scenery, whereas an “inhabitant” – to whom the neighbourhood is a matter of concern – might perceive the person as a sign of increasing “degradation” of the neighbourhood (Stavo-Debaugé, 2003). This implies that it is problematic to delimit a “context” and deduce a priori the implications it may have on the pursuit of a specific way of life. Thus, a given policy should never limit itself to referring to a context as a static framework: instead, it must always strive to take into account the people by whom this framework is used and experienced. There-

fore, urban policy focusing on the quality of tourists' experience of a city will not consider the same contextual features as a policy concerned with the quality of the dwelling experience, even if they apply to the same place.

To a certain extent, we find here again the criticism often expressed against the excessively "functionalist" character of the framework for livelihood analysis (Beal, 2002, 72). The latter, underlain by an economic model, tends to conceive of all the elements that contribute to the subsistence of people - be it money, social relations or public transportation - as "assets" to be distributed. Nevertheless, as Beal points out, one does not deal with the manipulation of money in the same way as handling a social network (Beal, 2002). It is therefore necessary to consider the dynamics of production and uses of these various so-called "assets". Most of the time, assets do not exist as independent objects leading to a pre-determined result when used. It is only within the framework of a specific use that certain objects, relations or legal dispositions become assets. In other words, as Sen (1999) insists, it is not sufficient to distribute certain items to ensure equal conditions for all. You also need to consider the extent to which people are able to reach their goals when they use these items.

One can conclude that there is no strict division between a given context on the one hand and "strategic" actors on the other: instead, there is a continuum and entirety of processes that lead to the activities that enable a certain way of life. This movement leads us to touch upon theories of action that underlie the livelihood approach and, in particular, the figure of the strategic actor.

2.2.2 Opening up the concept of "strategy": the pluralism of "action logics"

We have argued that in many occasions, context cannot be regarded as an aggregate offered for a "functional use".⁷ However, it is possible to identify the conditions under which the actors can act in a strategic way. Indeed, there are undoubtedly moments when people set up action plans and carry out deliberate choices when using specific goods. However, the drawing on certain entities such as "social capital" or "natural capital" - regarded as "assets" by livelihood theories - can hardly be described in terms of a strategy. Such an analysis supposes that a person is capable of having a very specific relation with his or her surroundings and the various objects used (autonomy, reflexivity, etc.⁸). It seems, however, that a majority of actions occurring within the framework of social relations or in relation to "nature" do not correspond with such a picture. For example, many actions that relate to social capital require a certain degree of reciprocity; such reciprocity does not occur when money is saved as an asset. Nor is it possible to set aside a friendship in order to use it several years later. Social capital must be understood in relation with the development of social relations, which also require specific settings and capabilities, different from the ones needed for strategic activities.

⁷ The functional use is the one that is guided by a script congruent with planning and anticipation.

⁸ In the theory of action, this is described as "agency" (Taylor, 1997). Thévenot offers a specific description of the conditions required to act in a planned and strategic way (Thévenot, 1999).

The occurrence of different activities required for instilling a specific way of life thus stem from variable capabilities, logics and temporalities. This diversity is not simply contingent; it is a constituent part of the various types of common goods⁹ sought in ways of life, e.g. security, effectiveness, conviviality, confidence and love.¹⁰

We call this conjunction of a specific setting of the environment and specific capabilities of the people who act in it – which are necessary to develop an activity and more generally to allow for the realisation and experience of a certain good – *action-logic*, or more specifically, *pragmatic regimes* (Thévenot, 1999).

For example, to be able to act in a manner that one can describe as “rational and functional”, two things are necessary. On the one hand, you must have reference marks that allow you to calculate and compare (various prices, schedules, etc.). On the other, such contextual elements are useless if there is no-one capable of doing the cognitive operation that such information requires, i.e. a “rational and autonomous agent” (Pattaroni, 2005). The ability of a person to minimise his or her time spent commuting, for example, depends both on the existence of a public transportation system based on criteria of efficiency (speed, flow, schedule, etc.) and the capacity the person has to make use of this equipment (i.e. ease in navigating among the signals, aptitude for reading schedules, understanding of the commuting time so that it may be minimised, etc.).¹¹ Only when these two conditions are fulfilled can the common good of “efficiency” become a reality for the person seeking it.

Given this conceptual premise, we can consider that all urban equipment focusing on the efficiency of movement and the coordination of individuals in the city make up the “functional” territory of the city. Apart from this territory – or rather mixed with it – there are other territories that accommodate other types of obligation. Social relations require places where people can meet and interact in a familiar¹² way. Therefore, the existence of a social capital has to be thought of in relation with a specific setting – a territory. Social capital does not reside in people’s heads, nor is it the mechanical result of an accumulation of abstract social relations. It has a distinct spatial dimension related to places and ways of coping with distance.

The political dimension of the interplay of these territories comes from the fact that the implementation of a specific territory such as a functional one – heavily equipped with roads, signs, and infrastructure to ensure speed, etc. – may threaten the ease and pleasure of other ways of engaging in activities in the city, based on other rhythms and ways of moving around.

⁹ On the concept of “common good”, see Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006.

¹⁰ The article by Conticini (2005) on street children shows, for example, that feelings of love and trust in friends are an indispensable part of their livelihoods.

¹¹ In this sense, Vincent Kaufmann (2002) developed the concept of “motility,” aiming to seize cognitive competences and the objective conditions that are necessary to allow people to be potentially mobile (possession of a car, a driving license, accessibility of spaces visited, etc.). For the necessary competences to move around with public transportation, see also Flamm, 2004.

¹² On “familiarity” as a mode of engagement, see Thévenot 2006.

This analysis can be extended to all the different types of activities that must coexist within a city. As mentioned by Brown and Lloyd-Jones in their studies on the territoriality of livelihoods, infrastructure aiming at controlling traffic or regulating public health can sometimes make public spaces inadequate for activities suitable for an informal economy (Brown, Lloyd-Jones, 2002, 195). One should note that, at the scale of the city, the desire for some forms of common good – such as security – is always likely to express itself tyrannically vis-à-vis certain activities and even modes of living, because of the way they are embedded in a territory; as a result, alternative modes of living that jive with the desire for security cannot take place in the city anymore.

Therefore, pointing out the different logics of action of the citizens and the conditions for their success is not only necessary to make the framework of the livelihood analysis more coherent. It is actually essential to work out urban policies that aim at interacting in this setting. Indeed, to be efficient, such policies need to be based on an understanding of the particular dynamics of each of the components of a livelihood process, as well as the tensions that arise between them. It is not enough to confine the analysis to the level of public debates and principles: one must continue investigations at the level of people's everyday lives, where urban policies take shape and consistence.

The relationship with the territory allows for the observation of action-logics that are quite variable depending on the people and their environment, and that vary from functional use of the city to friendly interaction within nearby common spaces. It is around this diversity that modes of life are composed, and through it citizens are able to find their place in the city, their means of existence and self-fulfilment.

2.3 Four types of urban territories

In order to now sketch the various territories – and the concomitant scales – within which the urban modes of living evolve, we need to identify and “follow”¹³ the different networks of objects and actors involved in the building what they might consider as a just organisation of the city.

As we suggested above, livelihood related activities are embedded within different territories. Therefore, identifying these territories and analysing how they are interrelated are essential steps towards an integrative approach of urban dynamics. These steps help to approach social practices, urban planning, and the moral and political question of a just order at the same time. From this perspective, urban planning can be considered as the process of organizing human activities spatially according to various “ordering principles” (efficiency, security, equality, etc.). Building a just city is therefore always also a matter of spatial and temporal ordering of social practices and the various artefacts that come along with them.

¹³ We refer here to the methodological principle of “actor network theory”, which invites us to “follow the actor”, i.e. to describe all the operations done by actors when carrying out a specific activity.

We have identified four different territories relevant to different policy purposes: the “functional”, “merchant”, “sociability” and “dwelling” territories. The building of a livelihood is almost always embedded in all of these four territories and it would be erroneous to consider them as separate entities without interrelations. However, distinguishing between them helps understand the different aspects that need to be taken into account for different kinds of policies. Each of these territories can thus be characterised through a specific organisational principle and deliverance of a specific good, i.e. a valued way of organizing human activities (see Table 1 below).

2.3.1 The functional territory

The functional territory connects the necessary elements for a good functionality of cities and territories (electricity infrastructure, sanitation systems, etc.). The questions of standards and expertise are essential, here, and the scale at stake often surpasses that of the city (as in the case of electricity, for example). Alongside this territory, we find “qualified” people: users of various services and different technical infrastructure, as well as professionals required for development and maintenance. These entities are organised through normalisation and standardisation processes that make it possible to increase the efficiency of the entire system. Such a setting allows for efficient coordination between people who do not need to know each other. It allows everyone to pursue their own planned activities and projects. This territory might also be an insurmountable challenge for the poor, who cannot access services and infrastructure because of a lack of capability, financial assets and enabling networks.

2.3.2 The merchant territory

Apart from the functional territory, or rather intertwined with it, city life also involves a merchant territory. Here the networks summoned are those where one fixes the price of land and construction, as well as those where the law regulates real estate and exchange of real estate. The merchant territory is shaped by *promoters* eager to maximise profits, *tenants and owners* worried about their *interests*, and homes that are presented as merchandise (i.e. that have a price and can be sold or rented).¹⁴ We also find supermarkets with fixed prices and *clients* able to *compare prices*. The ordering of such a network of people and objects is done on a competitive basis supposed to bring forth more valuable solutions and therefore prosperity.

Another striking feature of the contemporary merchant territory is its spatial organisation as a *network*, connecting very distant people and objects in a same competitive frame, as exemplified by the “global cities” described by Saskia Sassen (1991). The development of merchant activities in a city’s specific neighbourhood can therefore totally disrupt local development – i.e. the setting of economic activities around a spatially continuous territory – and link the destiny of part of this neighbourhood (people, buildings, activities) with other places in the world.

¹⁴ New approaches in economic sociology have described all the conventional and material settings required to build a market as such. See Callon ed., 1998, and Thévenot, 2001.

Therefore, the development of such a territory sets up local barriers and leads to overcome them with more informal merchant activities and modes of urban residency.

2.3.3 The sociability territory

The territory where space is characterised by issues of interpersonal relations (cohabitation, neighbouring) is the sociability territory. The networks here vary from person to person. They encompass the *places* where a person may meet familiar people and socialise with others,¹⁵ as well as the means of communication that make it possible to maintain relations of proximity beyond the borders set by spatial distance. These relations – and therefore this territory – are organised according to the ideal of *reciprocity* expected in interpersonal relations. When they exist, such relations are essential to develop *solidarity* or more generally what is now known as “social capital”. From this perspective, the development of social capital is linked to the development of a specific territory (i.e. of the spatial setting enabling the relations – and skills – necessary for the building of a “social capital”).

2.3.4 The dwelling territory

This territory includes the various places where a person feels at ease and is able to develop the routines necessary for his or her own “ontological security”.¹⁶ This territory does not necessarily follow the limits between the private and the public or the walls of one’s house. It is related to the possibility of being familiar enough with a place in order to feel safe and at ease. There too, the qualities of the setting as well as the way people engage with it are both essential to the deliverance of the related “good”. Therefore, understanding the dwelling territory is essential to understanding the movements and flows of people residing in several places (long distance commuters, seasonal migrants, homeless, poor city dwellers, etc.) and the ways in which they are able (or not able) to seek a livelihood over time.

Table 1: Urban territories in which livelihoods are embedded: organisational principles and goods delivered.

Type of territory	Organisational principle	Good delivered
Functional territory	Normalisation	Efficiency
Merchant territory	Competition	Growth/prosperity
Sociability territory	Reciprocity	Solidarity/social capital
Dwelling territory	Comfort/ease	Ontological safety

¹⁵ Conticini has shown that the possibility of appropriating “places” is an essential condition to allow children in the streets to develop the sociability that is essential for their livelihoods (Conticini, 2005: 12).

¹⁶ On the concept of “ontological security” as a condition for a person’s self-confidence and autonomy, see Giddens (1984). For an approach which links this concept to spatial and material conditions and a specific logic of action, see the very stimulating work of Marc Breviglieri (2002).

2.3.5 Regulation of territories through urban order

Implicitly, the constitution of any urban order also draws the model of the related “good city dweller”. In order to move within the territories defined above and summarised in Table 1, be it within a “pure” territory or in a “hybrid” one, a person needs a variety of capacities. Depending on the type of involvement – strategic planning, social customs, routines or value-oriented action – he or she will also be accountable in very different ways. At the same time, the various attempts to plan urban development rely mostly on standardisation processes, which are necessary to coordinate activities on larger scales. Therefore, city territories tend to homogenise the types of relation that take place in a city. The immediate consequence is that certain activities (e.g. those related to informal economies) are hindered and certain people – especially the poor – are excluded.

These considerations open up broad perspectives for social investigation, calling in particular for analytical tools making it possible to tackle the relation between the individual or household pursuit of a worthwhile life (i.e. considering what matters to people and what they do for it), and the shaping of a just and good city (i.e. considering what matters to the community at large and what is done for it).

The connection between individual/household needs and community needs is very important, as this is where exclusion processes emerge. Indeed, the shaping of a city always implies the material and conventional constitution of a specific urban order, based on specific common goods sought by the community, such as security, efficiency, and equality. The setting of a specific urban order therefore implies that individuals and households need certain capacities (financial means, physical capacities, social relations, nationality) in order to partake in accessing and shaping a territory. The urban order always also comes with discriminating effects, characterising who can take part in a territory and in what way. This appears most clearly when we look at the difficulties encountered by certain categories of people when they attempt to live and make a living in the city (the poor, the homeless, immigrants, elderly people, etc.).

In order to avoid such discriminations and build more “inclusive cities” (Evans, 2002), we therefore need to carefully monitor these processes of exclusion. This implies in turn a refinement of our understanding of the relation between the structural and conventional elements that give a shape to the urban context, and the capabilities required to access and shape it.

It is therefore necessary take the analysis of these questions one step further, and to distinguish between the conditions of production of the places where people live and work and the conditions that make these places able to offer the expected experience, i.e. the possibility of accessing different common goods (security, public health, access to work, intimacy, ease, sociability, etc.). Research must thus be pursued in two directions at the same time. On the one hand, there is a need to analyse how institutional control of the four territories can develop at a pertinent scale. On the other hand, we need to understand contemporary vulnerabilities regarding the conditions under which people – in particular marginalised people – can have access to these territories.

2.4 The conditions of accessibility

The concept of access is central in livelihood approaches (Chambers and Conway, 1992; Bebbington, 1999; Beal, 2002; Brown and Lloyd-Jones, 2002; Meikle, 2002). It suggests that access to a decent livelihood is not only a question of infrastructure to be built, but also one of enabling the meeting and matching of people and "assets".¹⁷ Here again, we must insist on the importance of understanding the different modalities of people's involvement (or action-logics), because it is through these modalities that we reach the question of "capabilities" (Sen, 1999), i.e. the capacity of people to access and transform an asset into an actual resource needed to reach certain goals and experience certain goods.

We need to be particularly wary of systematic reductions to a set of ready-to-use "assets" of the different elements that people need to live a decent life. Following the theoretical propositions of pragmatic sociology, it is possible to refine this question of access to assets by referring to the concept of the "test" (Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006). The idea of the *test* is that access to a specific good – be it material or symbolic – is always linked with a person's capabilities, and that *these capabilities are tested*. In order to enter a job market a person must prove his or her competence (e.g. through a diploma) and be able to take advantage of a network. In order to be part of a network, one must prove that one is a member of a specific group, and so on. Even social capital is linked with the ability of a person to keep up social relations, which depends on such capabilities as knowledge of specific norms, ability to care, etc. (Agre, 2004).

Assets never come in a "ready-to-use" form: they always require specific capacities of the person who wishes to reach a certain goal. These capacities are embedded in material and conventional settings, and constitute the conditions of accessibility. Therefore, the question of accessibility may be treated more globally by investigating the tests defined by each model of urban order – and the various territories composing it. To be able to access and shape territories in the city, people must have the ability to move through them and experience the type of relations and the benefits each one procures.

Territories are the product of human activities, especially of collective action. When people cannot durably access a territory, they usually have two possibilities: either they are able to modify the institutionalised conditions of access (through mobilisation of public opinion that can end in political and legal action) or they find other ways of organising the activity or experience they are seeking, building another territorial setting through alternative social practices. We must therefore always consider the dynamic processes linking individual experience, collective action and institutionalised territories (and their access conditions).

¹⁷ Andrea Catenazzi (2004) has demonstrated that in the context of privatisation of water distribution networks, not only is it necessary to ensure coverage in terms of infrastructure, but it is also necessary for each household to be able to connect to it, therefore requiring the necessary means for such a connection (money, technical know-how).

3 Urban territory as livelihood: the case of the slums

With the identification of the four main territories that are present in various degrees in each city, we come back to the more fundamental question of the way in which a city may be organised by giving way to people and their respective diversity. Evans defines a “liveable city” as one which offers a newcomer the possibility of both living in it and settling down for longer periods of time, and providing “jobs close enough to decent housing with wages commensurate with rents and access to services that make for healthful habitat” (Evans, 2002). This requires shaping numerous activities and networks – from roads to real estate market rules, not to mention sanitation education. The various territories of the city – and therefore its peculiar shape – arise from the spatial setting of these various activities. Related issues are density, urban spreading, co-education, the extension and accessibility of public transportation, social housing projects, etc.

We must not forget, however, that this “ideal” vision of urban habitat is confronted with the realities of cities in developing countries, where city planners and managers – be they professionals or politicians – have not necessarily used the above-mentioned coherence principles. Thus, such cities have adequate management of urban planning only for a small proportion of territories, leaving large neighbourhoods to rely only on the resourcefulness of their inhabitants. This decreases the part attributed in the city to functional territories, and therefore the possibility of allowing for coordination based on the principle of efficiency.

The questions of habitat and livelihood are at the heart of the problems that a majority of cities in the South currently face in their development. Indeed, they are confronted both with rapid increase in and spread of slums, and an increase in and impermeability of borders favouring socio-spatial segregation (gated communities, restrictions caused by informal economies, tolls, etc). In this respect, slums illustrate the links between livelihood, habitat and territory particularly well. This does not mean that territories accessed and shaped by the poorest are the only ones that may be problematical, but that the extension of slums in developing countries – a common product of 20th and 21st century urban growth – represents the most significant social and territorial inscription of dysfunctional urban processes (Bolay, 2006). Slums may therefore be considered as a tense mirror image of the city and offer the researcher an opportunity to analyse a city’s contradictions in their most striking manifestations (Pedrazzini, 2005).

A recent estimate made under the aegis of the United Nations Habitat programme mentions one billion people living in slums worldwide, i.e. 31% of the urban population.¹⁸ Attempts have been made to eliminate slums but they have almost universally failed

¹⁸ 128 million people are quoted to be living in slums in Latin America, representing some 32% of the urban population (<http://www.citymayors.com/report/slums.html>).

because they do not address the various urban models and the social inequalities which are the root cause of slum development. A slum is characterised by the precarious nature of its habitat. But it is much more than that.

Referring to the socio-territorial approach we have developed in this paper, we can look at slums as a combination of territories where modes of living develop that are not the ones required in the planned design of urban order. Indeed, classical urban planning principles are based on a comprehensive planning regarding land allocation, infrastructural organisation and decisions about technical services and networks. Such planning draws heavily on normalisation and standardisation processes. Therefore, it implies the constitution of functional territories and requires the "making of" city dwellers¹⁹ capable of integrating such forms and regulatory frameworks.

In developing country cities, this approach is undermined in two ways. On the one hand, large parts of the city space are not equipped to constitute a functional territory. On the other, whole sectors of the population do not and cannot comply with the expectations of such modes of regulation, due to their poor living conditions and – for many of them – to their lack of prior urban experience.

These actors resort to their own emergency solutions when facing urban integration problems; they do so at the micro-level at which these problems are posed – generally the level of a plot of land, a house, or at most the neighbourhood. In most cases the result is an individual, family or community construction on a plot of land which is occupied either illegally or by informal agreement, without being connected to the customary utilities.²⁰

In a socio-territorial perspective, we may say that this *territory of informal economy* is a combination of the merchant territory and the sociability territory. The constitution of such a territory implies quite different settings and scales than that of a territory allowing for the development of a formal economy. Indeed, formal economy requires the conjunction of a functional and a merchant territory. Social relations – and places to hang around and discuss daily matters and concerns – are less important in formal economy, as interactions are fuelled mainly by exchange of money.

The reality of housing conditions in cities in the South implies that although poor citizens recognise the importance of infrastructure and urban services for their well-being, they do not expect them as a minimum requirement and do not wait for them before they move in. The immediate consequence of this situation are:

¹⁹ Schools and social work have been at the centre of educational and disciplinary efforts required to produce adequate actors for the various settings that help build a common order. These efforts are always ambiguous, as they oscillate between emancipatory policies and repressive ones (Wagner, 1994). A good example of such efforts can be found in the HLM system in France (social housing). Indeed, the development of standard social housing, partly destined to be used by a rural population, was implemented at the same time as social work organisations aiming to help dwellers to live well in these housing units (Donzelot and Jaillot, 1998).

²⁰ The first things that come to mind are drinking water supply, wastewater disposal, electricity, and a land telephone network.

- *For the users:* buildings are of inadequate quality, town districts have poor infrastructure, equipment and community services, and suffer from various forms of environmental degradation;
- *For urban planners:* it becomes impossible to apply classical models of spatial organisation. It also becomes necessary to improvise and offer remedial solutions based on existing social and territorial conditions.

This discrepancy may lead to two opposing tendencies: the denial of the inner logic of such alternative development by urban planners and the corresponding implementation of a repressive policy aiming to destroy whatever infrastructure or housing has been created outside official regulations and standards, or the establishment of alternative policies aiming to reorganise and rehabilitate slum areas on the basis of what the resident communities have undertaken themselves.

As this brief summary suggests, the existence of townships, shanty towns and other barrios or favelas reveals both the importance and the norms of urban infrastructures (Drummond, 1981; Davis, 2006). Slums draw out a territory, enabling certain social practices that are not necessarily compatible with the larger territory instituted by technical and political infrastructures. They might constitute a dwelling territory and even a merchant territory, but they disrupt the functional territory that develops at a larger scale. This functional territory is also of utmost importance, as it is the means through which social and security policies (construction standards, health services, education, security, etc.) can be developed.

To address this problem, we must therefore seek to better understand the dynamic articulation between social processes and the needs of formal planning. The question of *habitat* lies precisely at the heart of such an articulation since it concerns human behaviour in its most specific manifestations on the one hand, and on the other the forming of a set of technical norms needed to ensure the constitution of a larger urban order.

It is therefore necessary to investigate in greater detail the junction between citizens' habits and expectations, and the norms that organise the city at a larger scale. We therefore need analytical tools capable of grasping the dynamics of combined territories leading to the making and ordering of a city. As we suggested before, the nodal question is that of the relation between formal and material settings and the various logics of action characteristic of human life. This opens up a whole program of research that we attempt to briefly describe through research questions in the following chapter.

4 Livelihoods, habitat and territory: research questions

4.1 Transformations of space and transformations of the relation to space

Before the spread of motorised transport and means of telecommunication, the morphologies of human habitat corresponded to the “territorialisation” of modes of life; and the borders of neighbourhood corresponded to functional borders drawn by social practices. In other words, everyday life was circumscribed by clear territorial frontiers, mirroring perceptions just as much as realities, representations and mental worlds. With the development of rapid transport and telecommunications and the speed they engender, social practices free themselves of these inherited borders and draw new spaces (Kaufmann, 2002). In the case of cities in the South characterised by inequitable access most notably marked in urban areas, this phenomenon is accompanied by the creation of new, particularly striking forms of segregation and fragmentation. The territorial exclusion of some social actors corresponds to the immobilisation of others.

Inhabitants of contemporary cities can be considered as fully integrated when they are at least able to access the four types of territories we presented here – each of which requiring specific conditions of access: places to dwell, places for sociability, the functional space of amenities and the merchant territory of formal or informal economy. Together, these four types draw a “daily life setting” that offers inhabitants more or less resources that may potentially be used to ensure livelihoods, well-being and comfort. This “daily life setting” is specific to people and groups and generally tends to be spatially discontinued and formatted by different kinds of borders. In other words, there is an interplay of superposition and separation between the identified types of territories, drawing spatially reticular ways of living.

As territories of people’s experience and livelihoods, the four territories we have described in this paper are undergoing rapid transformation. In order to live a worthwhile life people need to cover increasingly long distances and enter various networks of relations and objects that link their destiny to remote places and people. We need to be able to describe the dynamics of these transformations, their impact on people’s lives and their effect on the shape and structure of society.

4.2 Research questions and agenda

When we link these concerns regarding the transformation of space with the aim of improving poor people’s living conditions, our new approach to urban livelihoods suggests three major fields of investigation: a) the *field of practices* – living, moving around, encountering the other, anchoring oneself, extracting oneself – which we must identify, conceptualise and interpret; b) the *field of obstacles* constituted by the historical and territorial context with which these practices are confronted; c) the *field of in-*

novations, i.e. responses invented to surmount these obstacles in an attempt to fulfil the aspirations of individuals and groups. The corresponding research questions are:

- When and why are the four types of space – and the activities they enable – spatially superimposed or, on the contrary, built in separate ways?
- What is the nature of obstacles (cultural, economic, segregational) met by poor people in their practical experience of these four types of space? How do they build upon different types of borders, real and symbolic?
- What do the poor expect with regard to these four types of space in terms of habitat, sociability, amenities, access to formal economies and use of informal economies?

In order to answer these three general questions, it will be essential to focus on the mobility of the people concerned, both in terms of their capacity to find solutions for moving around, and of their experience of these moves, which are also solutions to deal with their territories and roots, i.e. the capacity of getting freely “out of their context”. Working on the four territories briefly described above effectively implies going beyond a static approach of urban phenomena in order to grasp them from the viewpoint of the inhabitants themselves and of that which influences them.

Beyond knowledge, the operational objective of these analyses is to depict the measures that might be susceptible to improve habitat conditions. This will for the most part require reconciling experiences of “daily life settings”, their material characteristics and their institutional implications. The research undertaken will therefore necessarily have to incorporate this practice-oriented objective. This implies questioning the strategies and modes of engagement that people – i.e. both people with power but also people who experience the power exerted by the first group as an obstacle to their desires – adopt when they are in contact with different types of limitations, borders and barriers (Pedrazzini et al., 2005). The analysis of practices of confrontation, as well as of appropriation, trickery, denial, recoding of these limitations, of their status and of their political, social, economic or cultural founding, will make it possible to formulate the modalities of articulating urban sociology and the livelihood approach as an interdisciplinary endeavour, and elaborate recommendations for governing and decision-making parties.

Indeed, the three research questions help focus on separate concerns that need to be dealt with separately in research for sustainable development of urban areas: (1) the exploration of territories will help understand all aspects related to living in specified territories (spaces of fluxes, networks, etc) as well as their (external and internal) frontiers. (2) Similarly, it is pertinent to group research projects around the obstacles that social groups (particularly less advantaged people) encounter in their daily struggle to live in a place and be recognised as legitimate inhabitants of that place. (3) Finally, the ambition of such legitimacy may not be fulfilled without a society determining the internal limits within which living is a legitimate act and beyond which the fact of living

somewhere appears as a transgression (of the law, conventions, habits and ordinarily admitted practices). This last field is that of innovative cultures, the field of lived experience transformed into projected experiences and potential changes (Agier, 1999; de Certeau, 1980; Chombart de Lauwe dir., 1981; Garcia Canclini, 1999).

The whole question of the “social fabric” of cities is contained in this adjustment: it is because of this and for this that we trace borders. It is also to face the obstacles that stem from the barrier function of a border (national or urban), or to benefit in the best possible manner from the possibilities inscribed within the limits drawn by different powers (“I can get supplied from over there but no further”), that associations are constructed, based on a merchant exchange (relative borders between a formal economy and a so-called informal sector) or the creation of networks of sociability and solidarity (relative borders between groups excluded and included). The attitude of an individual or a group towards a border is often unexpected. Between those people whom a border reassures and those that a border imprisons, many modes of living are constructed that may well constitute a problem just as they may be a potential for beneficial development.

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The process of urbanisation is a global phenomenon in constant progression around the world; however, it distinguishes itself today in developing countries through its particular speed, scope and consequences in terms of spatial fragmentation and social exclusion. In this paper, we develop a framework for analyzing these phenomena, starting from the description of the multidimensionality of people's experience of everyday urban life and linking this with an analysis of the spatial setting of their lives.

We argue that the essential components of a worthwhile life (a source of livelihood, ontological security, social relations, political recognition) are closely linked with the possibility of occupying and shaping various urban territories. To deal with the mutual dynamics through which individual lives and the city are shaped, we broaden the sociological concept of "territory" and merge it with insights from the livelihood approach, developing an understanding of "situated human action". The resulting distinction between four territories – the functional, merchant, sociability and dwelling territories – enables us to describe the dynamics of urban life and urban order in a slum, and suggest ways of improving our understanding of the orientation and scale of public policies in urban territories, especially in cities in the South. We conclude the paper with suggestions for a research agenda based on our methodological insights and the underlying concept of "inclusive cities".

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