

## Women, urban space and public services: the south São Paulo case

Mujeres, espacio urbano y servicios públicos: el caso del São Paulo sur

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**Abstract.** Frequently, public makers formulate and implement public policies from "broad outlines" to specific contexts. For that matter, they often create services for a "neutral" citizen, mostly the white heterosexual male citizen, disregarding different needs of minority groups, such as women. We state that when urban planning, transportation system and services distribution do not take into consideration women's needs, the result is the increased vulnerability of this group. In order to understand these specificities, a qualitative research was conducted in a suburban region of São Paulo city. The results show there are much more disconnections than connections between services, and that these disconnections contribute to vulnerability. This study hopes to expand understandings about how social policies work in people's everyday lives, in order to improve public action in the local level.

**Resumen.** A menudo, los gestores públicos tienden a formular e implementar políticas a partir de "líneas generales" hacia contextos específicos. En este sentido, los servicios se crean para un ciudadano "neutro", generalmente el hombre blanco heterosexual, desconsiderando las diferentes necesidades de los grupos minoritarios, como las mujeres. La hipótesis de este estudio es que cuando la planificación urbana, los sistemas de transporte y la distribución de servicios no tienen en cuenta las necesidades de las mujeres, el resultado es el aumento de la vulnerabilidad de ese grupo. Para entender estas especificidades, una investigación cualitativa fue realizada en una región periférica de la ciudad de São Paulo. Los resultados muestran que hay muchas más desconexiones que conexiones entre servicios en los territorios, y que estas desconexiones aumentan la vulnerabilidad. Este estudio espera contribuir al entendimiento sobre cómo las políticas sociales funcionan en la vida cotidiana de las personas, a fin de mejorar la acción pública a nivel local.

**Palabras clave.** Connectivity; vulnerability; gender; urban space.

**Keywords.** Conectividad; vulnerabilidad; género; espacio urbano.

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### Introduction

Frequently, public makers formulate and implement public policies from "broad outlines" (plans, policies, budgets, programs, directives and maps) towards specific contexts. This is called "governmental planning language". In this perspective, it is usually assumed that a generic plan can be sketched, to be later implemented and adapted anywhere (P. Spink, 2017). The results are services designed for a "neutral" citizen, mostly the white heterosexual male citizen, disregarding needs of minority groups, such as women, elderly, blacks, and LGBTs, among others.

This generic perspective is frequently adopted in urban planning. Imagine the traditional process of building an urban mobility plan for any given region: sitting in their city centre cabinets, the public makers would probably build this plan according to official maps and feasibility studies based on statistics. Surely these instruments are essential for developing public policies, and we do not propose to dismiss them; however, these instruments alone say very little about how people experience urban mobility in their everyday lives. To understand this experience, it is better to look at the daily route to the bakery, the bank or the children's schools. To do so, one must go through the thousands of neighborhood's alleys and stairways, which are probably not even in the maps used by public makers.

These everyday journeys are mostly done by women, as they are responsible for taking the children to school, the elderly to health centres, and doing grocery shopping. That is, they reflect historical relations of the sexual division of labor, which lead to the reproduction of gender inequalities and have perverse effects on women's opportunities. Because of these activities, women's<sup>1</sup> mobility necessities differ considerably from men's (Beall, 1996).

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<sup>1</sup> The category "woman" is wide and the focus of intense debates. We recognize that the urban trajectory of transsexual women is different than those cisgender. However, for the purpose of this article, we will use the category "women" to refer to the general experience of cisgender women.

This article aims to understand how mobility and access to public services in poor areas of large Latin American cities are affected by gender. Our hypothesis is that, when women's specific needs are not considered by those who formulate mobility and urban policies, this group becomes more vulnerable.

A qualitative field study was conducted in a poor area of São Paulo city. For three months, six women were interviewed. The results show there are much more disconnections than connections between services in their home areas, and that these disconnections increase the families' vulnerability.

The article is divided into five parts, in addition to this introduction. In the first part, we broadly discuss the issue of governmental urban planning. On the second part, we present women's specific needs regarding urban mobility. Next, we present the method and the territory where the research took place. On the fourth section, the cases and analysis are presented. At last, we present our conclusions and point out possible research development.

### **A new perspective on everyday mobility**

What is everyday mobility? What is an everyday activity? This article assumes a "radical" approach designed by M. J. Spink & Spink (2017) and P. K. Spink (2008) for whom there is nothing else but everyday activities. It is a fact that we live in a routine: we wake up, take a shower, eat, get on the train - even presidents, state representatives and celebrities have their own rituals to go through everyday. In this sense, the "everyday" is part of our normal range of possibilities throughout a day (M. J. Spink & Spink, 2017).

This perspective is centred on a post-constructivist ontology (Mol, 1999), which recognizes reality as a social construction, based on an ordinary and local point of view. There are no external reality to the observer, but it is rather enacted by human or non-human agents within multiple practices. If there are multiple practices, there could be multiple realities coexisting. That is why Mol (1999) states the existence of different *ontologies* —yes, in the plural. The challenge is to understand how these different realities are (or not) connected, and how can we move forward to create a space of common coexistence.

This is not the predominant language used in public policy analysis, which focuses on laws, plans, budgets and normative. Despite the importance of such perspectives, we advocate an emphasis on the materialities and socialities (MOL) that compose public policies. In other words, policies do not take place in an "empty space", but they are enacted by specific individuals in specific places, mediated by concrete relationship networks and material relations. In this perspective, the idea of "territory" plays a fundamental role – not in a normative sense, such as in the generic maps used by public makers, but in its everyday sense, which approaches the notion of "place" (P. K. Spink, 2008) or "lived territory" ("território vivido"), as in Santos (2009, p. 8):

Territory is not only the set of natural systems and overlaid things. It has to be understood as the used territory, not the territory itself. The used territory is the ground plus identity. Identity is the feeling of belonging to what belongs to us. Territory is the foundation of work, the place of residence, material and spiritual exchanges, and the exercise of life.

This new relation between public services, urban mobility and territory implicates another starting point for public policy analysis, shifting from a top-down to a bottom-up approach. Consider this image: from the public maker's point of view, the State is a hand —there is a "centre" (the palm) planning all actions and several secretaries (Education, Health, Housing, Transportation, represented by the fingers), delivering services independently to the people (Spink, 2017). However, for common citizens, the point of view goes the other way around, from the concrete reality to higher levels of abstraction. People are embedded in what Friedman (1992) calls the "living space of the family", a secure place which is not limited to the housing space, but also involves the neighborhood and ties to the nearby community. In our previous image, this space would be represented by another hand palm. When people need to solve

daily problems (an elderly woman who wants to retire, an informal employee who wants to be registered, or a single mother who needs health care for her son), they move from this “secure space” (palm) towards schools, health centres, or welfare facilities (represented by the fingers). This happens in the territory level. Because of these different points of view, people’s daily relation with the State is composed by disconnected services that are delivered by different agencies and organizations (Spink, 2017).

If there is balance between both points of view (where public makers take citizens everyday needs into account, and these find access to public services), there would be a positive impact into the citizen’s life quality. Looking back at our image, it would be as if the fingers of one hand would connect with the fingers of the other hand, thumb with thumb, index finger with index finger, and so on, creating a flow of positive connectivities. Yet, if this balance does not exist, that is, if the official overlooks people’s daily issues (in other words, if the specificities of the territories where public policies take place are not incorporated in planning), the result could be an increase in their vulnerability (P. Spink et al., 2015).

### **Women, services and mobility**

Over the last decades, there has been a higher involvement of gender issues in urban planning, as present at the United Nations’ Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) resolutions. The New Urban Agenda<sup>2</sup> defends, among other things, the development of more inclusive cities through the promotion of *“age- and gender-responsive planning and investment for sustainable, safe and accessible urban mobility for all and resource-efficient transport systems for passengers and freight, effectively linking people, places, goods, services and economic opportunities”* (Habitat, 2016, p. 7).

Developing an urban planning project sensible to the gender issue it is still a challenge. Not only necessary to understand women’s specific needs (which are related to their roles as females characters in our society), but also their experiences in the city (Moser, 2003), which are frequently defined by structural inequalities.

It is widely known that women are responsible for care work within families. This means caring for children, the elderly and people with disabilities, besides managing the household routine. In 2018, Brazilian women spent almost twice as much time as men performing domestic activities: 21.3 hours a week on average, compared to men’s only 10.9 hours (IBGE, 2018). This kind of work is, mostly, invisible, undervalued and unpaid and has negative consequences for gender equity. As time is a limited resource, every minute a woman spends on unpaid care work represents less time to spend on market-related activities or to invest in vocational skills. Hence, this has important implications for their ability to take part in the labor market or to qualify for better opportunities (Ferrant, Pesando & Nowacka, 2014).

Social and political choices around care work can expand women's choices, contributing to gender equity, or confine them to traditional roles of caregivers and mothers (Ferrant, Pesando & Nowacka, 2014). This is why we need to study how the State deals with gender issues when formulating and implementing public policies.

Bringing this discussion to the urban mobility debate, it becomes clear that the transportation system and public services’ distribution are not designed to meet women’s needs (Beall, 1996; Gomide, 2003; Íñiguez-Rueda & Oliveira, 2017; Tobío, 2014). Large Latin American cities, such as São Paulo, usually face severe spatial segregation between centre and suburbs: the poorest live on the edges, in locations with few jobs and bad public services, while the city centre concentrates jobs and quality public services. As so, the entire transportation system is structured around the idea of daily taking millions of workers from the suburbs to the city centre.

<sup>2</sup> The New Urban Agenda was adopted at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) in Quito, Ecuador, on 20 October 2016. It was endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly at its sixty-eighth plenary meeting of the seventy-first session on 23 December 2016.

However, not all urban public transport users are wage workers. On the contrary, groups such as women, who perform care work, have distinct patterns of urban mobility. Their displacement is more complex than men's, with different destinations and numerous stops during the day (ITDP, 2018). For example, before arriving to work, a woman would probably stop by the pharmacy, drop her son at school and pay the bills at the bank. In this sense, they need fast transportation that operates within the neighborhood, not large buses that lead directly to the city centre.

The female mobility is also influenced by public services' distribution. Generally, services such as health centres, education or other facilities are unequally distributed in the city areas (Tavanti, Spink & Matheus, 2015; Íñiguez-Rueda & Oliveira, 2017). For example, in São Paulo, a central neighborhood has 48.42 hospital beds for each 1000 inhabitants, while a poor one has only 0.04 hospital beds (RNSP, 2018). This means that a poor woman is more likely to be sent to another district for health services than a wealthier one.

### **How the research was conducted**

This study's hypothesis is that when urban planning, transportation system and services distribution do not take into consideration women's needs, the result is the increased vulnerability<sup>3</sup> of this group. In order to shed light into these processes, it is necessary to understand women's specific needs and their daily experience in the city. For that, we propose a theoretical and methodological approach that starts from individuals and their relationships instead of focusing on macro and institutional processes.

Our general strategy was a qualitative methodology, inspired by the "pesquisador-conversador" method (P. Spink, 2008), as it is considered the best way to understand circuits, flows and access provided by policies in people's daily lives. For three months, we kept up with daily lives of six poor women, all residents of a suburban neighborhood in São Paulo, Jardim Ângela. Of the six, three were selected for the analysis, as they represented better aspects of everyday mobility in vulnerable areas. We decided to work in a specific neighborhood for two reasons: choosing one single area provides greater control over context situations, such as access to public services and infrastructure; and due to our previous contact with local actors. Since 2016 our research group has been working in Jardim Ângela and we already had connections with local organizations. Thus, we were introduced to the families by the *Serviço de Acompanhamento Socioassistencial (SASF)*, a public service linked to Social Assistance which is implemented by civil society entities<sup>4</sup>.

For each woman, we posed questions about life and work trajectory, access to public services and strategies to overcome poverty. We also tried to map the physical and informational routes to public services, always departing from the everyday life and not from a normative perspective, which is consistent with our methodological approach. For example, when asking about their access to public services, we did not pose normative questions such as "which services do you have access to?", but we

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<sup>3</sup> Vulnerability is mainly related to risk and lack of security. In other words, it is the sum of experiences and/or possible events that lead to situations that could harm an individual or a community (Alwang, Siegel & Jorgensen, 2001) The concept of risk can be classified in three different elements of the "risk chain": (i) the event, (ii) the way people deal with it and (iii) its effects on people's lives. These three elements are connected: the result of risk events (that is, life conditions and well-being of families and groups) depends on the events itself, as well as the way these groups deal with adversities (Alwang et al., 2001). For example, if there is flooding in a community, the results in terms of well-being will be related not only to the intensity of the flood, but also to the type and quality of resources that the community has access to, and how they can use these resources at their advantage —if they have strong bonds inside the group, financial resources or access to public services. As opposed to what is usually noted, vulnerability and poverty are two different concepts —a woman can be vulnerable because she has a high risk of being sexually harassed, even with a high income. However, in contexts of poverty, it is common that the poor are also considered vulnerable, and vice-versa, because the necessary resources that could help people to overcome their adversities are fewer.

<sup>4</sup> In São Paulo, much of the assistance network is based on agreements with civil society organizations. About SASF work in São Paulo, see Amâncio (2008) and Ramos (2016).

rather asked “how was your week? What have you done each day? What were your main difficulties in doing this activity?” and so on. Thus, we were able to compose a picture of the women’s daily demands and strategies, based on the interviewees “mental map”.

All the interviews were conducted with the support of a fieldwork notebook, where we reported not only the interviews’ content, but also the description of the neighborhood and houses. Subjective aspects of the interaction were also reported by the researchers.

### *The territory*

Together with Jardim São Luís, Jardim Ângela is one of the two neighborhoods under the jurisdiction of the M’Boi Mirim regional government. The population of both neighborhoods is 563.305 people (PMSP, 2018), the equivalent of a medium size town. Jardim Ângela, alone, has 295.434 people (PMSP, 2018).

Jardim Ângela’s landscape is composed by kilometers of overpopulated housings, spread over a hilly topography. The district is placed in the border of Guarapiranga reservoir, which brings challenges to territorial management, such as the current 50 risk areas that are subject to landslides and floods (IPT, 2018). Also, the neighborhood is considered a violent region, in the 1990’s, it was considered the most violent area in the world. Finally, this region also stands out by the high social vulnerability range of its population.

Despite the existence of some data on territorial vulnerability, it is worth noting the difficulty to find reliable information about the location specificities, especially regarding people’s life conditions. In fact, the vast majority of maps do not have enough information about the territory. In many cases, irregular housing is represented on official maps as blank spaces. The result is the social invisibilization of vulnerable populations. Because we believe maps are part of political strategies that play with visible and invisible aspects of social life, throughout the research we created our own maps, inspired by the work of M. J. P. Spink, Iñigues-Rueda & Spink (2015) and P. K. Spink (2015). The maps were built on Google Maps platform.

### **The everyday mobility of women in the south periphery of São Paulo**

There is great diversity in the family’s living standards. Even though they live in the same neighborhood (the average distance between households does not reach 1km), families have different compositions and levels of integration with labor market, social policies and personal networks. These specificities will be detailed in each case below. However, some aspects are common to all of them. All interviewees live in the same suburban district in the city, sharing the structural deficiencies, the lack of public services, the violence and the stigma of living in such territory. They share the same schools, the same health centre and the same hospitals. All are or have already been beneficiaries of the government cash transfer program, *Bolsa Família*<sup>5</sup>, and currently all of them receive support from Social Assistance. In addition, the majority is migrant, black and have low schooling.

For each case below, we will introduce the family, their sources of income, their access to public services, their “lived territory” and their daily mobility experience.

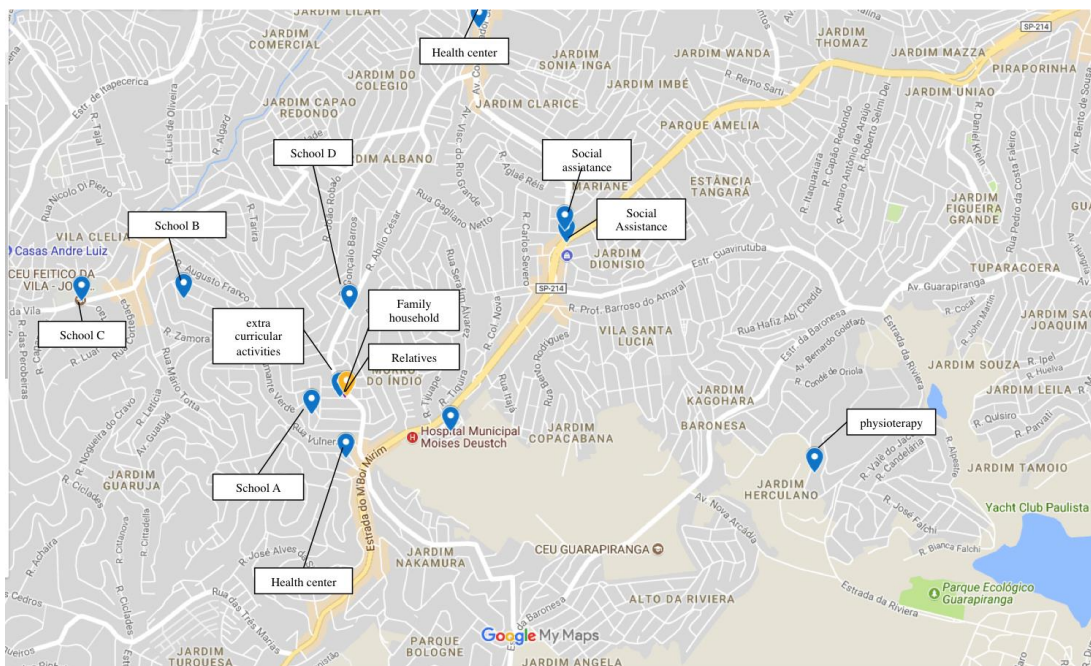
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<sup>5</sup> The *Bolsa Família* Program is the largest cash transfer program in the world, reaching approximately 46.6 million beneficiaries (Brasil, 2016). The program focuses on families living in poverty, with monthly per capita income of up to R\$ 170 (around U\$S44), and who have children from 0 to 17 years old. The average value is R\$ 177.07 (around U\$S46). The cash transfer is linked to health and education conditionalities such as compulsory vaccination and school attendance. Despite its importance for poverty reduction, the transferred value is small and is not sufficient to remove families from the condition of vulnerability.

Case 1 - Lack of connectivity

Tania (30) is a single mom, with six children (16, 14, 9, 8, 4 years old and a baby of 8 months old). She lives in her own house in a vulnerable area of the neighborhood, close to some other relatives. Tânia works as a cleaner once a week and receives food support from her parents. She is also a beneficiary of *Bolsa Família* program.

Throughout the research, we mapped the locations where Tânia and her family mostly travelled to. The most important places attended by the family are: relative’s house, children’s school, extracurricular activities, local health centre and physiotherapy centre. Also, we kept track of which public and private services they used the most, which resulted in a map built together with the family. Map 1 represents a direct look into her “lived territory”. Most places are within a 3 kilometers radius of her house.



Map 1. Tania’s family “Lived territory”

Table 1 shows the family’s access to public education. In all, there are four different educational institutions. Besides school, Tânia’s children attend two other locations for after school activities: a centre for young people and children (*Centro para Crianças e Adolescentes*, CCA), and tutoring lessons at the church. These are important locations to the family, not only because they guarantee cultural activities, but also because they are safe places where Tânia can leave her children while she works.

The great number of educational institutions the family takes part in creates logistical difficulties for them. The extensive demand is overwhelming: she has to manage five children going to four different schools, in three different time periods (morning, afternoon and at night), by four different transportation methods (public transportation, private transportation, mother and niece assistance). Not to mention the extracurricular activities, such as CCA and tutoring classes. Just imagine the number of teachers, directors, pedagogical coordinators, classmates, books, notebooks, school trips, parent meetings, notes in the notebook and other materialities and socialities (Law e Mol, 1995) that this mother has to deal with. By means of this, it is possible to understand the difficulty to manage and to keep her children in school, which affects her participation on social programs like *Bolsa Família*.

Name	Age	School Year	School's Name	Hours in School	Getting to School	Extracurricular Activities
João	16	Junior High School	School A	19h (night)	Niece pushes his wheelchair down the streets for 1.5 kilometers	None
Daniel	14	7th Grade	School A	13h - 18h20		None
Diego	9	4th Grade	School B	7h - 12h	TEG (public school transportation)	Centre for children and young people (Mondays to Fridays, from 13h-16h); Tutoring at Church (Mondays to Fridays, from 17h-19h), Sunday activities at Church
Giovana	8	3th Grade	School C	13h - 17h30	Private transportation (paid with the money received from <i>Bolsa Família</i> )	Tutoring at Church (Mondays to Fridays, from 19h-21h), Sunday activities at Church
Isabela	4	Daycare	School D	7h - 16h15	Mom takes her by foot	Sunday activities at Church
Amanda	8 months	doesn't go to school	-	-	-	-

Table 1. Summary of children's education

This scenario only exists because of the extensively fragmented public school network, managed by two different instances (Municipal and State) that sometimes overlap (duplicating the school offering) and sometimes creates institutional “holes” (not enough vacancies for a determined year), resulting in students transfer to other districts. In Tânia's case, each previous institution was responsible to lead her children to the next school, individually. Therefore, there was not an articulated plan to accommodate this family's needs as a whole.

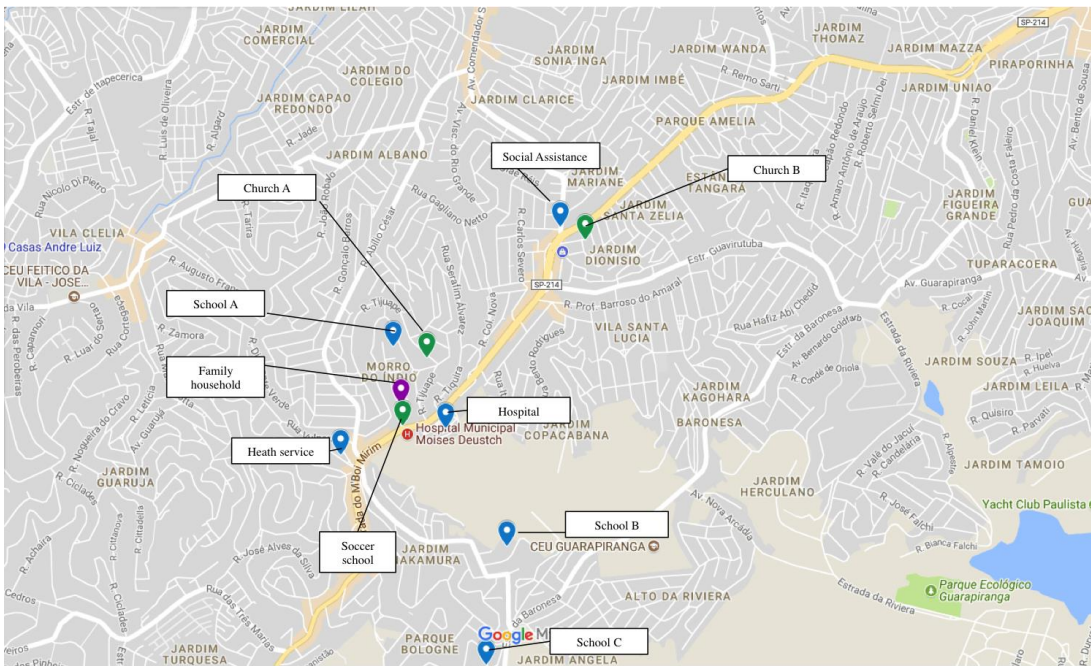
In the case of a large family such as Tânia's, all children should be enrolled in the same school and at the same time, helping the family's displacement. If this happened, Tânia could work more and supplement the household's income and not dependent on her parents' financial help.

### Case 2 - lack of public services

Mrs. Glauce is 57 years old and lives in a small house with six family members: her husband (56), their three children (30, 25 and 18 years old) and two grandchildren (9 and 4 years old), both of them with physical and intellectual disabilities.

Glauce has always been a housewife, but lately she has begun babysitting for her neighbors' children. Her husband used to work as a cleaner assistant, but he is currently unemployed, working occasionally as a mason. Of her children, only the oldest has a job, the other two dedicate their time caretaking the disabled grandchildren. The family also receives government cash transfers and income from a rented bedroom in their house.

Due to her grandchildren's health problem, the family's greatest needs are health services, as shown in Map 2.



Map 2. Glauce’s family “Lived territory”

Name	Age	Health Necessity	Services	Going to health facilities
Glauce	57	High blood pressure, diabetes	Local health centre	On foot
Valter	56	High blood pressure, back pain	Local health centre	On foot
Paulo	9	Mental and physical disabilities	Local health centre, Hospital, physiotherapy	In his mother lap; bus; bus
Catarina	4	Mental and physical disabilities	Local health centre, Hospital	In her mother lap; bus

Table 2. Summary of family’s access to health services

Table 2 analyzes the household’s health demands. As their condition demands consistent assistance from doctors, psychologists and other experts, the family needs to take turns with the appointments in order to keep up with their treatments. However, since the family does not own a car, they have to travel by public transportation, which results in great mobility difficulties. For example, in order to get to the specialized hospital for disabled children, which is 21km far from her house, Glauce has to take her grandson on her lap, by bus. Because of this, the family lost some medical appointments and, after the third absence, they missed their right to the treatment.

In another example, Glauce’s grandson was enrolled in a Municipal School, but he was no longer attending classes. This happened because there was no communication between the transportation



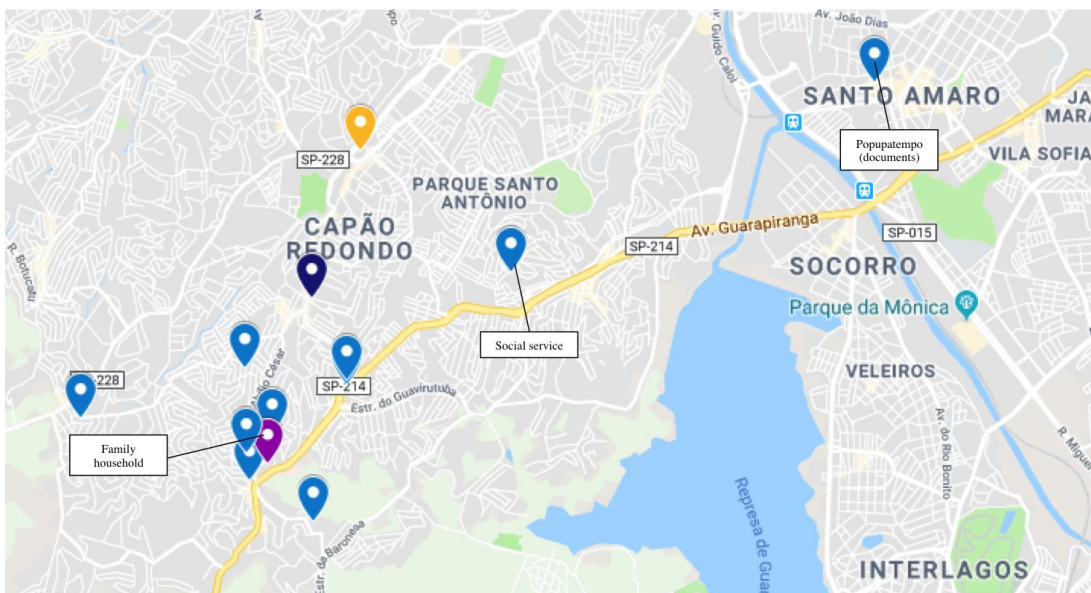
services and the educational institution: once he left Kindergarten and went to Elementary School, he changed schools, losing his right for an adapted public transportation. As a consequence, he had to interrupt his studies. Throughout the year 2017, the family tried to insert him back into the transportation system, without success. He was, then, held back that year. As a worse consequence, since *Bolsa Família* program is directly connected with the child's attendance in school, his constant absences have caused the family to be notified, under penalty of losing the monetary benefit. Only after contacting the social assistance service they were able to justify their child absences and keep the benefit.

In this case, the problem is the lack of public services, that is, the demand is simply greater than supply. By offering access to health care and school, but not providing the means to reach them, the government eventually excluded Glauce and her family from their right to health and education.

### Case 3 – lack of equity in services' distribution in the territory

Valéria (36) and her husband (45) live with their eight children (17, 15, 13, 11, 9, 6, 4 and 1 year old) in a highly vulnerable territory, with drug trafficking close to their home. Valéria works as an artisan and sells her handcrafts in the neighborhood, along with recyclable materials she collects. Her husband works in the local street market. None of their children works. They have no other source of income, as they receive no social benefits. The fact that all family income comes from informal work makes them vulnerable, as they are subject to several uncertainties: if it rains, Valéria cannot leave the house to sell her handcrafts.

Due to their poverty, the family practically does not have access to public services and remains mainly in their street region. This could be related to their recent insertion in the local social protection network. During the fieldwork we noticed that families that had longer relationships with social assistance system are more likely to access different services in their neighborhood.



Map 3. Valeria's family "Lived territory"

Valéria's case illustrates how the lack of equality in services distribution affects people's vulnerability. Previously she has been a beneficiary of cash transfer programs (*Bolsa Família*), but she was no longer receiving it, as it is a challenge to keep her children in school. With her children going to different educational institutions (their displacement pattern is similar to what we saw in Case 1), along with several

mobility issues (drug trafficking so close to their residence), the students had many absences at school. Eventually Valeria ended up losing the benefit.

After receiving support from the social assistance service, Valeria tried to include the family again into the program. However, she had to register the entire family into a social assistance centre, which required their personal identification documents. The problem is that not all family member had their personal documents. So they had to travel to a service station 10km far from their house (“Poupatempo”). Just imagine the difficulty of managing eight children to travel to the service station by public transportation. This was such a big challenge that it took the family almost two years to acquire all their necessary documentation.

In this case, the problem is the inequality of distribution of public services in the territory, a common problem in poor regions of Latin American metropolis, where much of the services are concentrated in the city’s central areas. As Valéria has to handle a very complex everyday life, involving the routine of eight children, and since the spatial distribution of services does not consider the needs of poor women like her, it becomes practically impossible to have access to basic services such as documentation. The result was the loss of their right to social protection.

### **Discussion and conclusions**

This study aims to contribute to the debate on urban planning, mobility and the provision of public services from a gendered perspective. We state that urban planning, transportation system and the services’ distribution in the territory are not built based on women’s needs. Our hypothesis is that this leads to an increase in families’ vulnerability. In order to understand how these mechanisms works, we conducted a qualitative research focusing on the daily life of six poor women. A post-constructivist theoretical-methodological approach was chosen, emphasizing the materialities and socialities of public policies.

The results indicate that some problems arise directly from the inability of the State to provide public services in an articulated way at the territorial level. This is called “institutional vulnerability” (P. Spink, 2017; P. Spink; Tavanti, 2015) and consists on a paradox: at the same time the State seeks to reduce vulnerabilities, it is also accountable for its reproduction because of the way it is structured (planning policies from the center rather than specific contexts). When we look at vulnerable territories, these problems overlap and multiply, as these regions have accumulated problems.

We have identified three common challenges. The first one is the lack of connectivity. Although there are public facilities (such as schools, nurseries and health centres) in poor regions, this institutional network is disconnected, without effective articulation. In Tania's case, the problem was the school system’s fragmentation (each child allocated in a different school with different shifts), which led her to allocate much of her daily time in school logistics management. The second challenge is the lack of public services: in many cases demand was greater than supply and the State could offer enough services to all population. In Glauce's case, her grandson did not get adapted school transportation, which influenced their access to health, education, and social benefits. Finally, there is a lack of equity in service’s distribution in the territory. Displacements to other neighborhoods to perform simple activities, such as medical appointments, are common among poor families. Glauce had to take her grandson to the health centre in the city centre; and Valéria had to go to another neighborhood to get documents for her children. All these cases show the difficulty of establishing a local network of public services and a mobility system that meets women’s needs.

Despite the important expansion of public services to the poorest in recent decades, offering the services is not enough—they must “talk to each other” so this network can work. In other words, services must connect. When things get connected, the possibility of action also increases. For example, when we

connect a house into the city sewage or electricity network; when we accept a new friend into your group; or when public makers start talking to people in their “living territory”, new frontiers of collectivity can be reached. In our case, this happens when the school teacher interacts with the doctor from the local health centre; or when social workers affiliate with the public defender. In this sense, connectivity is a fundamental characteristic of any community and an important aspect from its ability to respond and resist (P. Spink & Tavanti, 2015).

When services communicate, the result is citizenship’s strengthening, but this does not occur when policies are disconnected. In fact, we saw much more disconnections than connections between services, and in many cases these disconnections increased the family's vulnerability. We advocate the need to deepen the studies on connectivity of public services, in order to increase the synergy between governmental actions at the territorial level.

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