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The Perception of Inequality and Poverty in the Most Segregated, Affluent Neighborhoods

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In the urban fabric of large metropolises, the borders of poverty correspond almost symmetrically to the borders of wealth (Selimanovski 2008). The upper social categories are at least as highly concentrated in the most affluent neighborhoods as the poorest are in the stigmatized neighborhoods of the urban periphery (Musterd 2006; Préteceille 2006; Le Roux et al. 2017). The segregation suffered by the underprivileged strata of the population corresponds, as an almost identical mirror image, to the self-segregation of the richest, who are sometimes grouped together in what might be called “golden ghettos” (Pinçon and Pinçon-Charlot 1989, 2007). The traditional upper middle class along with the new elites of globalization (Wagner 1998) occupy and defend reserved spaces in large metropolises to preserve their identity and social status.

In most large cities, spatial segregation has increased significantly over the past few decades. The “upper-class neighborhoods” seem to be increasingly cut off from the other neighborhoods. Based on a detailed socio-professional typology of the neighborhoods of the Paris metropolis, Edmond Préteceille has been able to demonstrate that not only do the upper classes have significant weight in the most affluent neighborhoods relative to the price of land and real estate, but they are also increasingly highly concentrated there. His work has led to the conclusion that

Inequalities in Geographical Space,

coordinated by Clémentine COTTINEAU and Julie VALLÉE. © ISTE Ltd 2022.

the social exclusivity of the upper-class neighborhoods has been reinforced over the last few decades, both in terms of their socioeconomic profile (Préteceille 2018; Préteceille and Cardoso 2020) and their ethno-racial characteristics, with immigrants from Africa or Asia being virtually absent from the majority of these neighborhoods, even though their presence is increasing in the city as a whole. This process of self-segregation among the upper classes has played a part in increasing inequality and weakening social cohesion on an urban scale. In other words, the gap has widened between the upper classes, who have real economic power, and the other social classes, including the middle classes, who are increasingly forced to live in more economically accessible areas on the outskirts.

Affluent neighborhoods have become increasingly exclusive because of how the market works. The price of commercial real estate, and of home ownership more generally, is the first link in the process of social selection in wealthy neighborhoods. Some property owners in these affluent neighborhoods have seen their real estate assets increase by enormous amounts, sometimes within a decade or two, as they have watched their less affluent tenant neighbors leave. But the market does not entirely explain this process of spatial concentration of the richest. Michel Pinçon and Monique Pinçon-Charlot (1989), sociologists looking at the bourgeoisie and the upper class, have studied how high society constitutes a dense network of associations, committees, councils and circles. The objective of these, in addition to the pleasure of meeting in an affinity-based environment, is to maintain close relations with both the holders of economic power and the representatives of political power, in particular to preserve the quality of their living spaces in terms of the maintenance of public spaces and the enhancement of their heritage, but also in terms of the exclusion of populations considered undesirable (Pinçon and Pinçon-Charlot 2007). Social attachment to a place can translate into collective mobilizations¹ (Sébastien 2018). In the case of wealthy neighborhoods, these appear as strategies that are sometimes discreet, often hidden, but nonetheless effective in defending the interests of their inhabitants.

1. The concept of social attachment, inspired by the sociology of Emile Durkheim, starts with the different types of bonds that attach individuals to each other and to society. These bonds ensure, in an unequal way, protection and recognition in four distinct spheres of moral life (domestic, associative, professional and civic). This concept of social attachment makes it possible to analyze how they intersect in each individual throughout the socialization process, and how each society contributes to this by setting and regulating the rules of collective life (Paugam 2016; Paugam et al. 2020). Social attachment to a place aims to explore how these ties intersect at the scale of a territory and maintain collective memory.

Often inspired by American work on urban segregation, research carried out over the last 20 years has made it possible to better analyze both the mechanisms of the socio-spatial confinement of the poor and the parallel mechanisms of affinity aggregation of the rich. Yet, curiously enough, this research has not intersected. It is striking to note, for example, that the relationship of the upper social categories to poverty has very rarely been studied as such. This may seem all the more surprising given that, on the basis of research on the first half of the 19th century, the historian Louis Chevalier established that urban inequalities could be explained by the bourgeois elite's perceptions of the working classes, which were seen as dangerous classes (Chevalier 1958). By referring to workers in deprived neighborhoods as "barbarians" or "savages", and by reducing the working-class condition to biological traits and physical behaviors, the bourgeois elite and its observers of the time did indeed maintain in the consciousness of their contemporaries the idea that social separatism was justified as a state of emergency when faced with insalubriousness and criminality².

The constitution of the urban "self" of the upper social categories has been studied over the last 20 years almost exclusively from the angle of affinity aggregation motivated solely by the interests of the accumulation of different types of capital. However, it has recently been observed that this residential choice of the most affluent is also motivated by particular representations of urban poverty, by a specific relationship with the precarious working-class categories³. Thus, two processes reinforce one other: the affinitive aggregation of the rich is in fact supplemented by what might be called a discriminatory segregation of the poor (Cousin 2014). While studies have shown that a low preference on the part of the upper categories to live next to those who resemble them is enough to make the space ultimately segregated (Schelling 1971, 1978; see Chapter 6), it seems legitimate to ask how the rich justify their choice to live in a segregated

2. The opposite social relationship, of the poor with regard to the rich, has not been the subject of such in-depth historical studies. Pierre Birnbaum, however, has studied in a more general way the myth of the "privileged" versus the "people", something that has been widely disseminated since the end of the 19th century (Birnbaum 1979). This perspective deserves to be re-examined today on the basis of direct surveys of the populations of deprived neighborhoods.

3. In his survey on redeveloped neighborhoods of the Paris region, characterized by a population of business executives and engineers, particularly in Courbevoie and Levallois-Perret, Bruno Cousin was able to verify that the inhabitants talk about teenagers from outside the neighborhood, who meet in the wooded alleys or public gardens of these residential spaces, and whom they spontaneously associate with suburban youth gangs and popular juvenile delinquency (Cousin 2014).

neighborhood, and whether this choice is the result of a clearly expressed desire to free themselves from the presence of those social categories considered inferior.

Following a presentation of studies on the perception of poverty and the rationale for localized and comparative research based on in-depth interviews with residents of highly segregated, affluent neighborhoods, this chapter analyzes how these residents describe their neighborhoods in terms of the moral values they attribute to them. We then examine how they manage to free themselves from the proximity of the working classes, by protecting themselves from the risk they attribute to them of insecurity and possible physical contamination, due to their behavior which is deemed to run contrary to the rules of cleanliness and bodily hygiene. Finally, it seems essential to question how these privileged categories living in inward-looking neighborhoods justify the social inequalities and poverty.

5.1. Studying the perception of poverty

When we look at the issue of poverty, our spontaneous reflex is to start by defining who the poor are, so that we can count them, study how they live and analyze the evolution of their situation over time. However, research on the social representations of poverty, i.e. the meaning that individuals give to this phenomenon according to their lived experiences and the processes of exchange and interaction that characterize life in society, are more rare. If, in line with Max Weber, we can consider social representations as a vector of individual action, it is important to study in greater depth what “floats in the heads of real men” (Weber 1971), especially when they see and try to explain the phenomenon of poverty, especially since each society adopts policies to address poverty, which shape its particular meaning and specific function (Simmel 1908; Gans 1972; Paugam 1991).

5.1.1. A perception that varies in time and space

Historians have tried to explain how the social relationship to poverty has changed over the centuries (Polanyi 1983; Geremek 1987; Castel 1995) and sociologists have succeeded in demonstrating that the explicit or underlying functions attributed to the system of assistance to the poor have varied greatly over the course of the 20th century, in particular according to the phases of development of industrial society and economic conditions (Katz 1986, 1989; Paugam 1993; Piven and Cloward 1993; Gans 1995). Thus, using the example of the United States, Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward have established that the main function of welfare is to regulate the temporal eruptions of civil disorder during phases of recession and mass unemployment. This function then disappears in phases of

economic growth and political stability, to be replaced by a completely different function, that of encouraging the poor to join the labor market by reducing the benefits they had previously received, sometimes drastically (Piven and Cloward 1993). In the first phase, the poor are seen as victims, and the challenge is to prevent them from rising up against the existing social system; in the second phase, they are seen as potentially lazy, and only a policy of “moralization” is deemed likely to transform their behavior. These analyses focus on economic cycles and their consequences for the organization of welfare, but they inevitably encompass several dimensions and do not directly address the perception of poverty. Upstream of these changes in welfare policies, however, we can hypothesize that there is a transformation of the representations of poverty (Paugam 1993). Policies intervene in the wake of events that influence public opinion and change perceptions.

It is important here to clarify what we mean by the “perception of poverty”. Building on recent work by social psychologists, we can distinguish between collective representations and social representations (Moscovici 1982). For Durkheim (1960), the former are different to individual representations and imply a strong stability in their transmission and reproduction. They endure through generations and exert a constraint on individuals. The latter imply, on the contrary, both a greater diversity of origin, both in individuals and in groups, and the possibility of evolution under the joint influence of the mechanisms of reproduction and acquisition during the many interactions of social life. By perception of poverty, we mean the social representations of poverty, which means that we admit that there are many such representations within a single society – and, a fortiori, when comparing different societies – and the possibility of their evolution according to the economic situation.

Since the mid-1970s, a great deal of attention has been paid to representations of poverty in Europe (Riffault and Rabier 1977; Rigaux 1994; Paugam and Selz 2005; Paugam 2013); the main studies have focused on the statistical and comparative use of Eurobarometers. Of all the questions asked in these surveys, one in particular concerns the causes of poverty. It distinguishes between two traditional and radically opposed explanations of poverty: one that emphasizes the laziness or unwillingness of the poor, and one that emphasizes, on the contrary, the injustice that abounds in society. The laziness explanation refers to a moral idea based on a sense of duty and work ethic. In this explanation, the poor are somehow blamed for not taking enough care of themselves, and therefore the government should not help them more. According to this approach, each individual is responsible for themselves, and they can only escape poverty through their own fortitude. The explanation of poverty by

injustice, on the contrary, refers to a more global conception of society. The poor are above all victims of a system that condemns them. In this spirit, the public authorities have a duty to help the poor in order to achieve greater social justice. Thus, the laziness and injustice explanations correspond to contrasting opinions, the ideological and political meaning of which is not lost on anyone. It has thus been possible to trace the evolution of the laziness and injustice explanations by country since 1976 (Paugam and Selz 2005). These two explanations vary, in fact, both by country and by survey period. If we compare, for example, France and the UK, it appears that the laziness explanation is always, whatever the reference period, more often given in the UK than in France. In order to interpret these differences, one should take into account not only the type of welfare state but also the way in which inequalities are discussed in each country, which is related to past experiences in the fight against poverty, to the actors involved in this field and, more generally, to the modes of social intervention (van Oorschot and Halman 2000). It is also striking to note how strongly the injustice explanation of poverty varies over time. In nine out of 11 countries, it peaked in 1993, at a time when economic conditions were very unfavorable, with a very high unemployment rate in most countries and a very low, even negative, growth rate. The injustice explanation for poverty decreased sharply in 2001 in all countries except Greece, where it stabilized at a high level. Finally, it rose sharply in 2009 in all countries, a rise that can be seen as an effect of the 2008 financial crisis (Paugam 2013).

Of course, these analyses do not allow for a sufficiently granular level of interpretation at the level of a specific urban unit or a particular social stratum. This is why localized surveys based on in-depth interviews are valuable and complementary.

5.1.2. How do the wealthy justify their choice to reside in a segregated neighborhood?

Analyzing the social relationship to poverty at the more detailed level of territory than that of the nation, in particular the urban district, makes it possible to introduce additional hypotheses. In particular, it offers the possibility of studying the relationship between urban segregation and the process of social distancing from the populations most exposed to poverty. The literature on urban segregation is extensive – particularly in the United States – and it is not possible to present it in detail here. Those works emphasize that the permanent causes of urban segregation are to be found not only in the discriminatory practices observable in the housing market but also in the stereotypes of poverty that are conveyed among the middle

and upper classes and, particularly in the United States, among the white population (Farley et al. 1994; Massey and Denton 1995).

To analyze the link between the perception of poverty and urban segregation, this chapter draws primarily on a recent comparative survey of three metropolises: Paris, São Paulo and Delhi (Paugam et al. 2017, see Box 5.1). The general premise of this survey is that differences in individual and local resources, in access to them, and in the measurable effects of segregation are important but that they must be analyzed in relation to contemporaries' awareness of social and urban inequalities and the conclusions they draw from them to inform or justify their practices. Studying representations of poverty among the upper social categories who have chosen to live in a self-segregated neighborhood involves analyzing the relationship between concrete self-contained practices and representations of the world of poverty. These representations may be based, as we shall see, on the notion of insecurity and the representation of the poor as a danger to people and property (risks of theft, physical or verbal aggression, etc.), but also on the fear of being somehow contaminated by lifestyles considered culturally undesirable or intolerable in the public space. Children are often considered to be the first potential victims of this cultural contamination, against which it is advisable to protect oneself by exercising strict control over who they spend their time with. Thus, living in a neighborhood "protected" by the high social level of its residents and the prices of the real estate market could correspond not only to a search for prestige and a strategy of social reproduction, but also to a desire to distance oneself from the poor and to seek a local order free of all the problems and costs that the upper classes associate with an open and socially mixed space.

In this type of survey, the quality of the interviews is highly dependent on the interviewer's attitude toward the interviewee and their ability to put the interviewee at ease. In their daily lives, the interviewees do not have to report on their practices to a stranger. The statements made by the interviewees in this experimental and artificial setting cannot, therefore, be considered as the direct and spontaneous expression of their factual actions or of the real motives that lead them to act in a particular way. However, this investigative technique, which comes under the heading of comprehensive sociology, takes the approach of studying lived experiences and constitutes an excellent means of identifying the processes that create and rationalize the meaning of the latter. In this survey, the aim was therefore to gain a general understanding of how the most segregated upper classes consider the poor, establish a moral boundary toward them or not and justify the social order of the structure of class and the socio-spatial order of the city.

The sociological survey conducted in 2012–2013 in the major metropolises of Paris, São Paulo and Delhi (PSPD survey) is based on a qualitative and comprehensive approach. It is based on 80 in-depth – or semi-structured – interviews per metropolis, i.e. 240 in total, with people living in highly segregated affluent neighborhoods. This number, which may seem rather high at first glance, was justified by the need to have a sample in each metropolis to take into account the variety of neighborhoods and reach the various components of the elite in satisfactory proportions. What are the characteristics of these three metropolises? What are the neighborhoods in which the survey was conducted? By choosing the Paris metropolis, which, like other European metropolises, is still strongly affected by tensions and urban revolts in the suburbs, and two other metropolises located in emerging countries characterized by strong economic growth and the development of mass consumption, the objective was to compare the representations of poverty among the upper social classes in contrasting economic and social contexts. On the one hand, there is insecurity and social malaise in an environment of job shortages for the least qualified and immigrant populations. On the other hand, there is economic take-off in a society where inequalities inherited from the colonial context and traditional forms of domination have long deprived the vast majority of the population of the possibility of escaping from poverty and hoping for social ascension. Thus, while the Parisian metropolis is confronted with new inequalities that can be considered a threat to social cohesion, the metropolises of São Paulo and Delhi are making great strides in catching up in terms of economic development and are offering certain segments of the population new opportunities to improve their living conditions. What these three metropolises have in common, however, is that they are all, each in their own way, the scene of profound changes that are gradually redefining social relations. In each of them, the upper classes may feel the need, as a result of these changes, but for possibly different reasons, to group together in selected and sometimes secure residential spaces. The selected metropolises are also very different from one another in terms of the history of their urbanization and the real estate market.

In each metropolis, the choice of neighborhoods was made following a pre-survey. Visits to several neighborhoods and a comparative analysis of them based on ethnographic observations, statistical indicators and historical or sociological documents made it possible to determine the choice, using similar selection criteria in each metropolis. In the end, 12 of the most privileged areas in the three metropolises were chosen for investigation: they correspond to the top two levels (out of 18) of the hierarchical typology of Parisian neighborhoods constructed by Prêteceille (2003), to the top level (out of 16) of the typology developed by Prêteceille and Cardoso (2008) to describe São Paulo, and to the most luxurious districts of Delhi identified, in the absence of precise data on their inhabitants, by mobilizing several indirect indicators of their socio-professional and economic levels.

The districts selected in the three metropolises are historical districts that are very well known at the city or metropolitan level. They are distinguished in particular by the price of real estate. Their geographical delimitation is self-evident to the inhabitants and has never been raised as a concern for them. In Delhi, these are the neighborhoods of Sunder

Nagar, Chattarpur Farms, Noida 15-A and Gurgaon, and in São Paulo the neighborhoods of Higienópolis, Morumbi, Jardins and Alphaville. In Paris, two of the four selected neighborhoods are located in the 5th and 16th arrondissements and correspond, respectively, to much superior types of space (“bourgeoisie space with a slight predominance of intellectual categories” and “bourgeoisie space with a predominance of company managers and executives”) taken from in the middle of other similar bourgeois spaces. Another neighborhood, located in the commune of Ville-d’Avray and composed of a mixture of single-family homes and multi-family housing, although occasionally bordering on average areas, was also mainly integrated into the territories of the western part of Île-de-France that are characteristic of the upper classes. Finally, a fourth district was chosen in the commune of Le Vésinet (Yvelines), in order to add an area located a little further from the center of Paris to the three others. This district is the oldest example of a suburban bourgeois housing estate in the agglomeration.

Once the neighborhoods in each metropolis were selected, the next step was to recruit the people to be interviewed. Several methods were used. For the Île-de-France survey, it was possible to rely, for each of the three neighborhoods located, respectively, in the 5th and 16th arrondissements and in Ville-d’Avray, on lists of residents belonging to an upper-class household who had already agreed to respond to a previous questionnaire survey (the “Health, Inequalities and Social Divisions” survey, SIRS). In the commune of Le Vésinet, the interviewees were recruited mainly through direct contact in public spaces in the commune (in parks, on the streets, in front of shops and after mass, etc.) by the survey coordinator. In the neighborhoods of the other two metropolitan areas, the “snowball” technique was most often used. This technique consists of asking the interviewees to indicate other people they know who might be willing to be interviewed, based on initial contacts in the neighborhood. Thus, by first selecting neighborhoods with a very high concentration of high-income households and then selecting residents of these neighborhoods characterized by their particularly high standard of living, the PSPD survey was able to reach the upper-class minority living in the better neighborhoods of the three cities studied.

Box 5.1. Investigating uptown
Paris, São Paulo and Delhi

5.2. The constitution of a moral boundary

What is the point of the richest people being free of the presence of categories considered socially inferior in their neighborhoods and therefore fighting any public policy aimed at promoting social diversity? The answer is to ensure the best chances for social reproduction. To achieve this, they feel it is necessary to build what might be called a moral boundary.

5.2.1. *An idealized self-contained bubble*

The upper classes living in these highly segregated neighborhoods most often agree on the foundations of a moral order in accordance with their representation of the territory in which they live. This moral order appears, according to Durkheim (2012), to be the product of the individuals' attachment to social groups and to society as a whole. It is based first of all on a spirit of discipline, which implies a consensus on what constitutes good and respectable ways of behaving toward one another and, conversely, on the behaviors which must be outlawed because they are unanimously considered to be in breach of the etiquette, way of speaking and interpersonal skills which characterize the bourgeois *ethos*. The defense of a moral order thus very often refers to a strategy of class distinction based on the idea of the superiority, or even the predisposition, of the rich to create and transmit to their children a complete and rigorous moral education, which they consider to be distinct from other strata of society. The rich neighborhood residents interviewed in the PSPD survey were almost unanimous in expressing their belief that they are socially, and especially morally, superior to other segments of the population. Their shared feeling of residing where they should, in accordance with their social status, allows them to live in harmony with one another and their fellow human beings, and to avoid the tensions, misunderstandings or altercations that they sense are inevitable in the presence of other social classes. They thus openly recognize the advantages of self-segregation. The world in which they live is, according to them, incomparable because it is based on specific moral values. Thus, the defense of a moral order may refer to a strategy of class distinction understood in a broad sense, i.e. based on the idea of the superiority of the rich and their predisposition to create and perpetuate a moral education distinct from other strata of society. In other words, the strategies of distinction of the upper classes, which the work of Bourdieu (1979) has shown to be inscribed in cultural practices, are also based on various forms of justification of their moral superiority (Lamont 1995). These are translated in the discourse by the definition of a kind of social barrier, to take up the metaphor of the barrier and the level proposed by Goblot (1925) in his study of the French bourgeoisie. This metaphor is still particularly suggestive today, since the segregated bourgeois neighborhood is most often presented as a space protected by a symbolic barrier designed to make it clear to potential intruders that they do not belong there, since the latter brings together people who are most often united and supportive in preserving the superiority of their social level.

For households with children, living in a “good” neighborhood also provides access to a “good” school and, consequently, to a “good” education (see Chapter 1). In the representations of the people interviewed, the social composition of the school

is one of the major criteria for determining its quality, given that there is no doubt in the minds of the parents that their children will progress more quickly if they are surrounded by children of a comparable social level. The school is at the heart of the neighborhood and is the center of gravity in terms of the social world of children and adolescents. It is therefore essential for parents to ensure that they also have the best possible chance of associating with peers who share the same interests and moral values. While school choice has also become a central issue for the middle classes, who most often wish to avoid the “school on the periphery” (van Zanten 2001), the analysis of the effects of school mapping, which is intended to distribute pupils according to their place of residence, nevertheless leads to the observation that the upper classes generally benefit most from this. In the most widespread representations, the self-contained “bubble” mentality is associated with school performance and is therefore a necessary part of it (Oberti 2007).

While social relations in this type of neighborhood are highly intertwined, this does not mean that all residents are intrinsically linked. What happens in the neighborhood may, however, be what Sampson (2012) calls “collective efficacy”, that is, a combination of mutual trust and shared expectations of social control. What unites the inhabitants of a self-segregated neighborhood presupposes the existence of a consensual normative framework, the common reference to values deemed essential. It is not necessary for everyone to know each other; it is enough to share the certainty that they can trust each other, possibly come together to address problems that affect the neighborhood as a whole, and even develop collective strategies to defend specific interests concerning order, security and the well-being of residents.

5.2.2. A moral order within neighborhoods

Nor should the wealthy, segregated neighborhood be seen as perfectly homogeneous in terms of their values. Dissonant voices can sometimes be heard.

In the wealthy bourgeois neighborhoods of Paris, such as the 16th arrondissement for example, some inhabitants espouse resolutely progressive values that are explicitly opposed to the conservative tendencies of the majority of the inhabitants. This causes them to feel disgusted with what they often consider to be hypocritical and socially dominant behavior. In other words, the widespread belief among elites that they share with their neighbors a community of values and interests based on the same class membership – which predisposes them to maintain a moral order that is considered superior – does not preclude struggles for social distinction within the bourgeoisie.

Thus, in each metropolis, there is both a more or less strong desire for the social enclosure of wealthy neighborhoods within themselves, in the form of self-segregation practices that are all the more effective because they correspond to strategies that are most often skillfully developed by most of the inhabitants, and also, in some neighborhoods more than others, a desire to guard against the risk of leveling down, especially when newcomers introduce habits that are not entirely in keeping with the traditional bourgeois ethos.

5.3. Keeping out the working class

While social cohesion is considered by the wealthiest as a guarantee of social peace in their neighborhood, most of them nevertheless share the conviction that this guarantee is entirely relative and that it is absolutely necessary to remain vigilant in the face of all disruptive threats from the outside. One of the challenges is, for example, preventing the construction of social housing in these bourgeois neighborhoods or communities. However, the French law of December 13, 2000, known as the “SRU” (solidarity and urban renewal) law, obliges municipalities of a certain size to have a social housing stock equivalent to 25% of all dwellings (“Duflo law” of 2013). This measure, considered to be one of the key elements of a housing policy that is both supportive and Republican, is nonetheless strongly contested by the administrators of these upmarket communities, who see in it the risk of an awkward cohabitation with lower social categories. Some municipalities, under pressure from wealthy and influential families, have opted to pay very high fines out of the municipal budget. This is how some municipalities have maintained a very low rate of social housing (less than 3%, for example, in Neuilly-sur-Seine, a very bourgeois city, where former president Nicolas Sarkozy was mayor from 1983 to 2002, whereas the neighboring municipality of Nanterre, with a working-class tradition, has more than 50%). Let us also recall here the massive, relentless and well-publicized rallying in 2016 among the inhabitants of the 16th arrondissement of Paris against the project to build a shelter for the homeless and refugees on the edge of the Bois de Boulogne. This determination is the expression of a fierce desire on the part of the inhabitants of these privileged neighborhoods to preserve their inner circle by pushing the poorest people to the margins of society and the urban periphery. It is therefore a question of keeping out the working classes and the problems they are likely to bring to the neighborhood.

5.3.1. Distrust and repulsion of the poor

The security threat has reached its height in metropolises like São Paulo. Not only is income inequality highest there (the Gini index is 0.56, compared to 0.42 in

Paris), but crime rates are also very high⁴. In the PSPD survey, insecurity as the first thing respondents mention when asked about poverty. Protecting themselves from the poor, who are perceived as dangerous, becomes their daily struggle, as it involves constant vigilance. The rich live in a climate of real tension and adopt protection strategies in all acts of daily life. They rarely walk within their neighborhoods, and even less so in other parts of the city. They very rarely take public transport, preferring the safety of their own car, which is sometimes armored. Some even say they prefer not to go out in public spaces such as restaurants, or avoid going there late at night if they do. Cultural outings are sometimes out of the question. They do not go to the movies, preferring their home theaters. There are even stickers that identify the cars of neighborhood members who are allowed to drive near public places, such as schools.

Faced with the threatening nature of their urban environment, the wealthy take refuge in the comfort of the domestic interior, which must reflect their social status and the norms that accompany it. They also place great importance on the building in which they live. The search for signs of ostentation goes hand in hand with the sophistication of the means of securing the space. The more secure the space is and the more ostentatious the signs of wealth, the more satisfied the inhabitants are. Condominium meetings are often an opportunity to outbid each other in this area. Risk is everywhere, so social life is more limited. Among the people interviewed, some admit to being very isolated in their neighborhood, many say they do not know their neighbors, and most of them retreat to their domestic space and family bonds. The rich often choose an affluent neighborhood because they want to be surrounded by people of the same social status, political opinion and cultural level – it is important to them that their children attend socially homogeneous private schools – but the general context of insecurity drastically limits their relationships within it, compared to what may exist in some neighborhoods of Paris or Delhi. There are, however, variations from one neighborhood to another. When the neighborhood is more homogeneous, as in the case of the Jardins district, the members of São Paulo's patrimonial bourgeoisie nevertheless manage to recreate a significant and dense sociability among themselves, notably through their regular participation in very selective and exclusive clubs.

The issue of dirtiness and lack of hygiene is also present but it is usually a secondary factor. The people interviewed rarely talk about the *favelas*, even though they are sometimes located near their homes. It is another world that they know very little about and to which they feel totally alien. It would be inconceivable that they

4. For example, at the time of the survey, the homicide rate per 100,000 was 25.2 in Brazil, compared to 5.5 in India and only 1 in France (source: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2012 data).

might enter these *favelas*. On the other hand, they willingly speak of the poverty of the city center, associating the dirtiness of the latter with the insecurity which reigns there. The “Cracolândia”, a crack house located in the city center next to the new theater (Sala São Paulo), is often cited by the interviewees as a place of real repulsion. In this urban area, the concentration of the poor and homeless frightens them, but also disturbs them, if only because of the smell of garbage and excrement that stains the streets. It is a very real face of São Paulo, of which they are fully aware, but which they try to ignore by all means, carefully avoiding going there, even though some recently restored cultural places, such as the Municipal Theater or the great Mário de Andrade Library, are located there and should logically attract them.

Any contact between the rich and the working classes is made through the intermediary of domestic workers, and the issue of hygiene is also raised on this occasion. Several people interviewed admitted to exercising strict control over their domestic staff to ensure their absolute cleanliness and irreproachable habits in this area. This is a hiring requirement and would be a reason for immediate dismissal. The fear of being contaminated is therefore very real and leads to constant surveillance, especially in the handling of kitchen utensils and foodstuffs. In order to justify this, the upper classes invoke a benevolent attention – of a paternalistic nature – even mentioning the civilizing mission that they have with the poor people they encounter in this way.

More generally, if one were to summarize the representations of poverty among members of the São Paulo elite, one would have to emphasize the social function of violence. It is indeed the permanent insecurity that allows the rich to legitimize their concern for distancing themselves from and protecting themselves from the social categories that are considered threatening. But this protective withdrawal is more a withdrawal into the domestic sphere than a withdrawal into the neighborhood. In this respect, the apartment building is similar to a fortress, where security criteria are combined with esthetic criteria to signify the social prestige of the households that live there. Social life remains limited. While there are exceptions and specific places of bourgeois sociability in certain neighborhoods, for many of the people interviewed, this mostly plays out in the private sphere. Family bonds are the preferred ties of proximity, given that they are easy to rely on. In order to ensure the comfort of domestic life, domestic workers from working class categories are selected, educated and often more or less integrated into the family in a domination–protection relationship.

The metropolis of Delhi has many similarities with the metropolis of São Paulo in terms of the reaction to the presence of the poor in the urban space. While

violence is lower in Delhi than in São Paulo and is less of a concern overall, the issue of insecurity is nonetheless crucial. Several interviewees explained that their neighborhood is the primary guarantor of their safety. Living in a wealthy neighborhood, inaccessible to the poor or other categories of the population, is seen as a source of protection. The rich have the city map in mind and know how to distinguish the safe zone – which one of them even calls his “comfort zone” – from other areas deemed unattractive, even when they involve middle-class or even upper-middle-class neighborhoods. The residence space is most often fenced in on two levels: the gated community and the home. The security system is generally similar in complexity to that of the wealthy neighborhoods of São Paulo. It is also important to note the insecurity that specifically affects women, due to the frequency of sexual assaults. This concern, which is mentioned in a discreet way by women, also causes anxiety among husbands with regard to their wives and among fathers with regard to their daughters. Insecurity also refers to the chaotic nature of transport and the numerous traffic accidents that most of the interviewees attribute above all to the incapacities and incivilities of drivers deemed “uncivilized”. Finally, some people are concerned about the probable frustration of domestic workers with the lavish spending of their bosses, and some of them even worry about the threat of social revolt. In other words, the insecurity felt by the rich is widespread and is reflected in a daily vigilance that leads them to reduce the urban space to a few enclaves and to move, as some say, “from island to island”.

This distrust of the potentially dangerous poor, who live in areas that should be avoided at all costs, is nevertheless coupled with an additional apprehension, which in Delhi takes on considerable proportions with regard to the dirtiness and lack of hygiene that characterize most of the public spaces in the metropolis. Some interviewees insist on the disgust they feel toward the insalubrity, the dirtiness and the disastrous state of the infrastructure. Of course, many are used to it and no longer pay much attention to it, simply avoiding those areas considered repugnant, where the people are heavily concentrated and live in a misery perceived as appalling and repulsive. As in São Paulo, the elite selects the places that are possible to frequent and those that should be avoided. Old Delhi, but also the eastern and western districts generally, inspire a strong sense of disgust. But surprisingly, this spatial ostracism also affects certain areas in the South, such as urban villages, middle-class “colonies” and crowded markets. Their inhabitants are perceived to be uncivilized, both noisy and not respectful toward the environment. Faced with this unhealthy environment, the elite protect themselves on a daily basis by further shrinking their vital urban perimeter. In other words, the issue of hygiene is omnipresent in the attitudes and perceptions of the rich with respect to the poor, and sometimes even toward other strata of the population, and it constrains their geographical practices and mobilities. The lack of cleanliness of public spaces and

certain semi-public or private spaces is mentioned again and again to justify the distancing of specific, but ultimately quite numerous, fringes of the population. In a much more radical way than in São Paulo, the criteria for demarcation, both spatial and social, are based on a certain idea of hygiene and the more or less civilized character of the different social groups.

5.3.2. A growing feeling of insecurity in the rich neighborhoods of Paris

It is worth noting right away that these two reasons are less often mentioned by the rich in the Paris metropolis. This does not mean that the Parisian elite is not concerned about its security. In Paris, as elsewhere, the feeling of insecurity is even on the rise, as shown by the growing expectations for increased video surveillance at the entrances to private residences, but also in urban spaces in general. In stores and public places, there are increasing numbers of security guards. Finally, the discussion about security, in Paris as elsewhere, is spreading through the supply of services and equipment – security is a flourishing market – as well as in the manifestos of political parties, both left and right. Although the Parisian elite is not immune to this trend, it is rare for them to mention insecurity as a fundamental concern and to call for preventive measures that would restrict freedom of movement and circulation. The Parisian interviewees regularly take public transport, whether it be the bus, the metro or the RER, which is unthinkable for most of the Brazilian or Indian interviewees⁵. In Paris, public spaces, where people from different social backgrounds potentially meet in a continuous flow, are not experienced as a threat but rather as a common good that is accessible to all and should remain so, and as the true symbol of and location for urban life. It is true that some people, especially women, report that they avoid taking public transport late at night, especially when dressed up for a night out, or that they do not wear valuable jewelry on the metro, but these precautions seem basic, if not commonplace, as they seem to correspond to widespread practices in many social strata (see Chapter 2).

This relative tranquility of daily life in Paris does not mean that the interviewees are unaware of the specificity of the “working-class” neighborhoods of Paris and the metro stations that serve them, but since these neighborhoods are not the places they regularly frequent, they do not constitute a particular problem for them. In other words, living in a wealthy district of the Paris metropolis is rarely mentioned as the result of the imperative need to protect oneself from the insecurity linked to the

5. The segregation of wealthy Île-de-France residents is weaker during the day than at night, as their daily movements lead them to mix with other social groups. Even so, the rich remain more highly segregated in Île-de-France than the poor, regardless of the time of day (Le Roux et al. 2017).

supposed danger of the poor. The security threat refers more to a widespread feeling that runs through the whole of society (Castel 2003), before being directed toward a specific group of the population, in this case the poor. On the other hand, when the threat is perceived as coming closer to home, as was the case in the 16th arrondissement of Paris after the decision to build a shelter for refugees just near the Bois de Boulogne, many inhabitants do not hesitate to mobilize collectively to show fierce hostility toward underprivileged populations, who are said to be likely to disturb the neighborhood and to represent a danger to them and their families. The question of insecurity immediately comes to the fore. But it is not a major problem so long as it can be put at a distance. As long as the rich feel protected by their own privacy and by the spatial configuration of their neighborhoods, which distances them geographically from working-class neighborhoods, they generally do not feel in danger.

Moreover, in the interviews conducted in Paris, the issue of a lack of hygiene among the poor and the risk of contamination is even more rarely put forward than that of their dangerousness. Most of the interviewees considered Paris to be a generally clean city. It is striking to note that a fairly recurrent problem, at least in the 16th arrondissement, and to a lesser extent in the fifth arrondissement, is linked above all to the presence of dog excrement on the sidewalks, a nuisance that is not due to the undesirable presence of the poor but rather to the practices of the dog owners living in the neighborhood. Hygiene does not seem to be a major concern of the bourgeoisie with respect to the poor, as it was in the 19th century. The picture described by Chevalier (1958) no longer corresponds to reality. That said, some interviewees mentioned the inconvenience they sometimes experience on public transport at busy times, when crowding becomes oppressive for them, when bodies are stuck together and the smell of perspiration spreads. But these people themselves often put these inconveniences into perspective, and only a few people mentioned the risk of illness (otherwise benign, such as the common cold or the flu⁶). Moreover, if certain practices are condemned, such as leaving rubbish lying around or tearing open plastic garbage bags to get at their contents, these criticisms are not directed at the poor in general, but at certain categories considered negligent, careless and irresponsible young people and immigrant populations, particularly from the East, considered dirty and poorly educated. In other words, apart from these sporadic annoyances, the question of hygiene seems to have been resolved overall, and in any case does not constitute a major source of unease among the upper classes of the Paris metropolis living in the most exclusive and formerly bourgeois neighborhoods. This is largely explained by the history of urbanization and health reforms. Unlike São Paulo and Delhi, Paris has undergone a profound

6. The PSPD survey was conducted before the Covid-19 pandemic.

and structural reorganization since the 19th century, based on planning that is both hygienic and safe, leading to the expulsion of the poor to the periphery or to specific districts far from the bourgeois neighborhoods. The process of radical expulsion of the poor that we are observing today in Delhi and São Paulo actually existed in Paris a century and a half earlier. It is therefore easier for the people interviewed in Paris, compared to those interviewed in the other two cities, to be more measured in their views of the poor, since the latter appear to them to be further away overall, thereby lowering the risk of being directly affected by their supposed nuisances. It would probably have been different if we had interviewed rich people living in less segregated neighborhoods or in the immediate vicinity of poor neighborhoods: the concern for the safety and protection of the poor would certainly have been much more prevalent.

The representations that underlie the rationalization of the undesirability of the poor are therefore organized differently in the three metropolises. Issues of insecurity and hygiene appear less central in Paris. The rich use these arguments less frequently to justify their self-segregation practices, not because these issues are totally absent from their concerns, but mainly because the spaces they frequent or through which they transit within the Parisian metropolis appear to be generally protected from these risks, which are considered major in the other two metropolises. In contrast, in São Paulo and Delhi, poverty is used as a deterrent to the rich, and the arguments of the dangerousness and lack of hygiene of the poor are mentioned without restraint. But while these two motifs are jointly used in both cities, they do not have equal importance. In São Paulo, the feeling of insecurity is much more intense, while in Delhi, the issue of the lack of hygiene is prevalent.

5.4. Justifying class inequality and poverty

Beyond the evocation of the undesirability of the poor, the rationalization of social inequalities invokes another narrative register to justify self-segregating practices in urban space. The latter is more constructed than the former, in the sense that it goes beyond the spontaneous repulsion of the poor. It appeals to a conception of the social order based on arguments that are mostly ideological and that, around the naturalization of poverty and determined conceptions of merit, mobilize a sense of justice and social and social cohesion (Reis and Moore 2005).

5.4.1. *The neutralization of compassion*

The theme of worthiness and shaming of the poor, for example, can be intertwined with the naturalization of poverty, especially since laziness can be

attributed to a cultural trait or naturalized type of personality. In Delhi's affluent neighborhoods, the naturalization of poverty takes place first of all under a religious register. According to the theory of karma, the poor are born poor because of their actions in previous lives (Weber 2003). Beyond this religious dimension, there is a widespread belief that social groups, because of their caste and class culture, or regional origin, cannot mix (Naudet 2014). Thus, the poor are naturally disposed to certain ways of life. Note that, in its extreme form, the naturalization of poverty can even lead to its negation: people designated as "poor" are so in relation to other social categories; they are not poor if one considers that they belong to another world, characterized by specific criteria of family organization and social integration. Rich people in Delhi often show their disdain and contempt for the poorest without restraint. This is class racism based on the belief that the poor are a separate humanity and that, under these conditions, separatism is the best solution. This racism translates into a radical opposition to any program of social mixing, especially in the school system, because of the supposed impossibility of the poor to interact with other social strata and, a fortiori, with the elite. Some rich people even go so far as to admit that, for them, in the event of a serious accident, it would be more appropriate to rescue their fellows rather than the poor, since the latter are less valuable. Empathy toward the poorest remains marginal and, when it appears, it is often only under the hypocritical veil of the absolute refusal of the egalitarian principle. It is true that people who have lived in Western countries sometimes find it difficult to fully support the unequal order of their country, but the culture of class separatism is so pervasive that they find it impossible to change it, especially as it benefits them and reinforces their status. The naturalization of poverty is very present in India, but it is part of a much more extensive process of naturalization of the social order.

The theory of karma does not imply an unsurpassable assignment to the social position of birth, since a certain redemption is possible according to past or present acts. It thus maintains a certain connivance with the ideology of merit: everyone is judged to be responsible for their own actions. It is thus striking to note a certain porosity between the religious reference which founds the argument of the naturalization of poverty and the reference to meritocracy – hence the regular denunciation of the laziness and dishonesty of the poor. Some interviewees lament the total lack of energy for work that they observe in many poor people. Others attack profiteering beggars. These observations very quickly lead to a radical questioning of all social programs intended to reduce poverty, of which there are very few in India, or of all the policies of positive discrimination based on the establishment of quotas, particularly in universities. Some see this not only as an injustice, but also as a risk of degeneration with respect to the Indian elites. More generally, the interviews revealed a relatively consensual adherence to the neoliberal

ideology and the meritocratic principle on which it is based. In other words, in the case of India, the naturalization of poverty, and more generally of the social order, which takes extreme forms, constitutes a major argument in favor of the self-segregating practice of the rich, but it does not prevent its relatively flexible and effective adaptation to the ideology of merit and, consequently, its contemporary anchoring in neo-liberalism as it unfolds at the international level. The Indian elites thus appear to be both traditional and, at the same time, in step with the dominant ideology that guides global capitalism.

This process of naturalization of poverty is also found in Brazil in the discourse of the inhabitants of the upper-class neighborhoods. The latter see the poor as a population so marginal to society, so far outside of civilization, that they must either be kept out by a sophisticated system of security (fencing off private space, video surveillance systems, permanent security guards at the entrances to buildings, etc.), or their education must be started from scratch, which is what is envisaged when it comes to turning them into domestic workers (Giorgetti 2015). A traditional relationship of domination, partly inherited from the time of slavery (abolished quite late in this country), tinged with benevolent paternalism, is then grafted onto this perception of inferiority, deemed natural to the poor. Unlike in Delhi, the naturalization of poverty and inequality is not formulated in a religious register. Interviewees very often explain inequality as primarily a natural process. Many refer to an individual's talent or IQ to explain their "success" (or lack thereof). Their reasoning is then most often stated in biological terms, sometimes even based on scientific studies, and invokes the mechanism of natural selection. One interviewee relies on personal observation and points out that inequalities among siblings can be very high despite the fact that everyone has received the same education, which he believes proves that the differential abilities are biological. The naturalization of poverty results in its normalization. There is no need to be offended by this, since people are born unequal and, if they remain unequal, it is primarily a sign of fate. Compassion for the suffering of others may nevertheless occasionally manifest itself, at the sight, for example, of very young children in the bosom of destitute mothers abandoned on the street, but it is somehow very quickly neutralized, both by mechanisms of rationalization based on the shared belief in the natural inevitability of this type of situation, and on processes of convincing oneself that nothing can be done to stop it. People can deplore it deep down, without being overly moved by it, since there are so many scenes of misery, which merely express the reality of the social order, which is undoubtedly severe but nevertheless ordinary, and which becomes "normal" through habit.

However, it should not be concluded that all the upper classes in the metropolis of São Paulo share exactly the same beliefs on this point. In particular, there are

variations between the four neighborhoods we studied. In the neighborhood where the old patrimonial bourgeoisie is the most concentrated, the Jardins District, biological determinism is the most common. On the other hand, in Higienópolis and Morumbi, where the more artistic and intellectual professions tend to live, the interviews revealed a greater tendency to include the effect of social environment in the causes of poverty and, therefore, of the inequalities resulting from the environment and education. We also sometimes find a kind of interpenetration of the biological and social arguments to explain the persistence of poverty. But despite these differences, the naturalization of poverty and inequality is still common in São Paulo, although its ideological basis is different and more difficult to grasp than in Delhi. While many interviewees rely on naturalizing conceptions of poverty (biologization of differences, prejudice against “*Nordestinos*”, etc.), the direct expression of racism remains taboo. These repertoires are latent. The concern to appear “politically correct” has undoubtedly led many respondents to measure, understate or even censor their remarks.

To justify inequality and poverty, the elite of São Paulo also draws on the register of meritocracy. This type of argument is actually, at least partially, compatible with that of naturalization. When people attribute their success and social superiority to their work or to that of their parents, they are in fact only implying that the poor do not show as much determination in their lives, as much dedication to work, and that this can also be seen as a trait of their personality. In other words, it is possible to “naturalize” merit. When the São Paulo interviewees mobilize this register, it is more often than not to persuade themselves – and the interviewer – that they cannot be held responsible for the plight of others. The income gap between rich and poor is so wide in this country that it requires the former to justify and exonerate themselves. It is striking to note that many of the interviewees feel this need intensely, as if there were still a bad conscience in them that could only be dispelled by argumentative self-persuasion. Drawing on their personal or family history, they recount episodes alluding to the courage, the temerity and the will to succeed that they or their ancestors have shown in the course of their lives, in order to convince themselves that they owe nothing to society and that it would even be absurd to think that they could be, even if only indirectly, responsible for the misery that is rampant around them. They often derive a sense of pride, of personal or family glory, which they do not try to conceal. What they have acquired, they claim, is above all down to merit and to the law of natural selection, which rewards the most gifted and the most tenacious. The idea that the poor could be victims of a fundamentally inegalitarian and unjust system is, on the contrary, foreign to them – given that they make no mention of this. Some even regard them as parasites.

Such unanimity in the self-justification of their supposed merit leads to a discourse of fierce hostility toward the national anti-poverty program (known as *Bolsa Família*) promoted by the government since the presidency of Lula and that of Dilma Rousseff. Thus, the arguments defended are not unfamiliar; they are derived directly from their perception of poverty and inequality. The poor who receive this type of aid are destined to become even lazier and harder to discipline. They are, by the very fact of receiving state assistance, encouraged to turn away from the ethos of work, saving and foresight.

5.4.2. Controlled victimization of the poor

In the Parisian metropolis, well-off residents living in wealthy neighborhoods talk about poverty in significantly different terms. While many recognize inequalities at birth – physical beauty, abilities, artistic gifts, character traits and so on – Parisian interviewees almost always, and far more frequently than those in Delhi, emphasize social determinism. For most of them, the social and familial aspect is absolutely the major factor, while that of natural talent, on the contrary, is rather negligible. Thus, in the neighborhoods studied, there is a tendency, depending on the individual, to sociologize poverty – in other words, to see it not as the effect of an inevitable natural process, but primarily as the effect of unequal opportunity. The absence or low level of education, the difficulty of finding a job, especially when one is poorly qualified, the fact of living in neighborhoods where difficulties are concentrated and where the infrastructure is lacking, and the cramped conditions of housing that deprive children of sufficient space to work are all factors put forward to explain the reproduction of poverty and inequality. For example, one of the interviewees stated that the poor have been “parked” against their will in spaces that have become conducive to all kinds of excesses and reprehensible behavior. In many interviews, we also find forms of denunciation of the dysfunctions of public action in all the areas that contribute to reinforcing the mechanisms of social reproduction, particularly in terms of employment, training and urban planning. These arguments are more about the victimization of the poor than the naturalization of poverty.

However, one should not jump to conclusions too quickly. In fact, an in-depth analysis of the interviews reveals elements of explanation that borrow from the language of the culture of poverty. The poor are partly what they are because of their cultural habits, including lack of courage and willpower, lack of appetite for effort and discipline, and inappropriate or even reprehensible practices, such as alcoholism, excessive fertility, neglect of children, and so on. In this culturalist register of the explanation of poverty, populations of foreign origin appear to be the

ideal target of stigmatization. Roma populations, in particular, are mentioned to highlight certain specific features of this cultural poverty, but families of sub-Saharan or Maghreb origin are also mentioned, since it seems obvious to some interviewees that they are not sufficiently integrated into French society, if only because they do not have a sufficient command of the language and, under these conditions, are unable to integrate into the world of work and support the academic success (and therefore the social mobility) of their children.

Yet, strikingly, these culturalist and moralist arguments are only revealed at the margin of a discourse which remains organized overall around structural problems and the many widespread factors they give rise to. The economic crisis and the level of unemployment are mentioned as an extreme form of injustice that primarily affects the weakest and least qualified. The contextual factors linked to globalization, and sometimes even the nature of capitalism, complete the picture and mitigate the direct responsibility of the poor for the accumulation of their misfortunes. Some interviewees even have a sympathetic view of the poor, who are forced to live in overcrowded, unsanitary areas, cut off from opportunities and experience “suffering from a distance” (Boltanski 1993).

While the tendencies toward the naturalization of poverty remain relatively subtle in the remarks of the interviewees of the Parisian metropolis, compared to those of the two other metropolises, the question of merit is also approached there in a more nuanced way. The upper classes living in the four districts selected are often divided between recognizing the need to support the poor, in the name of a principle of national solidarity, and denouncing what they see as the excesses that lead many recipients of social assistance to fail to take sufficient responsibility for themselves. Almost all of the interviewees approve of policies such as the *Revenu de solidarité active* (RSA), as well as the efforts of the State to combat poverty. However, they often deplore the lack of effectiveness, and especially the low efficiency of these measures. They do not want the social state to be withdrawn, but rather to be improved.

On the other hand, the general approval of the principle of solidarity with the poor does not prevent restrictive moral arguments from being introduced, which have often been commented on and debated in the media in recent years. Some interviewees, for example, link poverty to the failure of families to educate and care for their children – hence the proposals put forward by certain right-wing politicians to suspend family allowances to parents whose children are regularly absent from school or are prosecuted for delinquency. The argument visibly appeals to certain Parisian interviewees. By mentioning it, they are simply subscribing to a universe of moral values and a belief system based on the importance of the family and

education. In some interviews, we also find traces of neo-liberal ideology, in the form of a denunciation of the excess of regulatory constraints and social benefits charges that would weigh on companies and hamper their ability to hire the personnel they need (and thus reduce unemployment). This register also indirectly leads to the questioning of a generalized inertia, which the poor are seen as partly responsible for, in the sense that some of them may be satisfied with social benefits without really looking for work. In some interviews, the guilt-tripping of the poor and the unemployed appears as an underlying theme, without constituting the ultimate and sufficient explanation for poverty (interviews that are fully, or almost fully, based on guilt-tripping are extremely rare).

To sum up, in Paris, the well-off inhabitants of wealthy neighborhoods most often declare themselves in favor of solidarity with the poor, and sometimes make it their job to ensure it, but remain attached, despite everything, to the base of moral values with which they have always identified – the essential role of family education, the virtue of effort and work (now often mixed in with the neoliberal valorization of individual initiative and self-reliance) and the valorization of merit – which they would like to see inculcated more systematically in the poor. In other words, if the victimization of the poor at least partially explains the support of the upper classes for the welfare state, and even motivates their commitment to solidarity in certain cases, it cannot offer a full explanation for it, since it seems obvious to them that an excess of assistance can lead the poor to be complacent with regard to their situation.

It is thus striking to note that the upper classes encountered in Paris, unlike those interviewed in São Paulo and Delhi, often have a rather nuanced discourse on the poor, from which can emerge both the justification of “solidarism” and the social state as a guarantor of a minimum level of social cohesion and the justification of the statutory inequalities necessary for the organization and proper functioning of society. In both cases, it is in the name of an idea of belonging to a social whole composed of different and complementary parts that one avoids both the excessive guilt-tripping of the poor – which does not mean that this tendency is totally absent in social representations – and their victimization, which would justify a conception of social justice based on absolute egalitarianism. This ambivalence can be understood by pointing out that, in the representations conveyed by the Parisian interviews, the poor are not considered to be outside the social system, even if they are in some way the last layer of it. But if all categories, however different, are recognized as having the right to a social status that is acceptable in terms of the principle of civic equality, this does not imply social leveling. This is why individual merit continues to be mobilized to justify socioeconomic differences. Thus, it is not a question of accusing all poor people of laziness, because they may have

extenuating circumstances linked to their living conditions, but of valuing those who compensate for their constraints through their work.

We can therefore speak of a controlled victimization of the poor. In this sense, it leads to the maintenance, often without explicitly formulating it, of a system of tolerance with regard to statutory inequalities, especially when it is seen as a condition of economic and social regulation based on the interdependence of functions and individuals. This does not prevent some of the interviewees, once they have conceded that the poor have extenuating circumstances, from sometimes vehemently denouncing the risk of assistance, especially since this register has become more common in recent years, particularly in the ranks of the French right, which has used it as a political argument to defend the value of work. Controlled victimization is therefore coupled with a muted sense of guilt-tripping.

5.5. Conclusion

The challenge inherent in social sciences, and in particular in comprehensive sociology, is to interpret the behavior of men and women living in society on the basis of their social perceptions and their lived experiences, according to their position in social and geographical space. In other words, it is a question of exploring individual consciences in all that relates to the specificity of social relations, the hierarchies and the distinctions between groups, the statuses and social roles, the relations of power and domination, as well as the forms of relegation or social disqualification. In this perspective, studying the perception of poverty is a thread that can be drawn to analyze not only poverty as such but the overall social structure and the relationship that different social groups have with a population deemed to be poor. Thus, it is interesting to study more specifically what rich people living in segregated – and relatively inward-looking – neighborhoods think of the poor. This chapter assumes that the analysis of urban segregation can be enriched by an in-depth study of representations of poverty – and inequality – and the discourses that the richest inhabitants of metropolitan areas living in exclusive spaces use to justify their concrete and spatial practices of seeking to be in their own self-contained bubble.

On the basis of a comparative survey carried out in the rich neighborhoods unanimously considered to be the most upmarket and the most segregated in three large metropolises, we have been able to study several complementary dimensions: the establishment of a social distance through the production of a moral order considered superior by the inhabitants themselves; the desire to protect oneself from the poor, a category often associated with a dangerous and/or repulsive class; the justification of an inferiority deemed natural or deserved by the poor and,

symmetrically, the superiority of the richest, as well as the neutralization of compassion toward the most disadvantaged strata of society. The comparative analysis has brought out both the transversal character of these perceptions and rationalizations in the neighborhoods studied, but also the specificity of the representations according to the configuration of each metropolis. Beyond the neighborhood, it is indeed the metropolis as a whole that must be taken into account, since the neighborhoods are distinguished from one another within an urban mosaic that encompasses them all and also has its own specificities in relation to the forms and configurations of the socio-spatial division specific to other cities. The characteristics of each of these metropolises, in terms of insecurity, crime, insalubrity, maintenance of public space, urban infrastructure and transport, distribution of wealth, etc., provide elements of explanation. The history of the city, of its urbanization and of its institutions helps to shape the arguments put forward by the people interviewed.

At the end of this review, it is clear that the perception of poverty by wealthy people living in the most segregated neighborhoods is an explanatory dimension of urban segregation. When they talk about their neighborhoods, the wealthy emphasize the benefits of their bubble for themselves and their families, and most often express a clear desire to keep at bay the segments of the population that pose the greatest threat to their peace of mind and the maintenance of their privileges. However, this observation deserves two nuances.

First, while the survey was exclusively conducted in the most segregated affluent neighborhoods to facilitate a comparison between the three metropolitan areas, this does not mean that the results can be extrapolated to all affluent neighborhoods. Urban sociology has made it possible to distinguish between several types of neighborhoods. The neighborhoods selected in the survey correspond to what are often called “uptown neighborhoods”, characteristic of patrimonial bourgeoisie and a secular class. To this very easily identifiable type, we can add at least two others, not taken into account in the survey. On the one hand, the type that Cousin (2013) described as “refounded neighborhoods”, made up of high-end residential buildings built over the last two decades and populated mainly by business executives working in the business centers. On the other hand, there are the so-called “gentrified” neighborhoods, composed of formerly working-class areas now made up of senior executives, but also, and this distinguishes them from the “refounded” neighborhoods, of intellectual categories, middle-class professionals, artists and liberal professionals. Research outside of the PSPD survey has analyzed the variations of the “bubble” in these three types of neighborhoods in Paris and its agglomeration and has verified whether or not the social ties of these categories are anchored in the territory of

residence, using the SIRS survey⁷ (“Health, Inequalities and Social Divisions”) (Cousin and Paugam 2014). In the former (the “uptown neighborhoods”), the “bubble” is more family and community based. By surrounding themselves with relatives who they can rely on, who share the same values and whom they can trust, the inhabitants of these neighborhoods often have the feeling of living in a peaceful village, where they feel completely safe. They also know that their children will have “good relationships” from an early age and will benefit from a protective environment. These neighborhoods are also those in which religious practice is strongest. In the neighborhoods inhabited by senior executives (“refounded” neighborhoods), the local anchoring is more individualistic in nature. Although their inhabitants want to be surrounded by people of the same social status, which is supposed to ensure peace and security, it is not essential for them to cooperate in social life, especially since their professional life is busy and does not really allow for investment in neighborhood relations. It is a sort of “everyone in their own home” (Cousin 2014). Finally, the inhabitants of gentrified neighborhoods appreciate, and sometimes seek, a less socially compartmentalized social life, but they prefer contact between relatives, if only to defend the interests of gentrification. They do not neglect relationships with neighbors, but they do not seek to form families or communities, which would be perceived as a sign of conservatism. Fewer of them also like their neighborhoods, which suggests that some of them have chosen this residential option as a stopgap⁸. These three types of neighborhoods thus refer to three forms of appropriation of the local territory and the constitution of symbolic boundaries between the different fringes of the elites. They correspond to three distinct forms of intersecting social bonds at the origin of different strategies of social reproduction and distinction. Thus, there are contrasting ways of considering social withdrawal and the constitution of a moral boundary. We can therefore put forward the hypothesis that the perception of poverty is also, at least partially, differentiated.

Second, discrimination against the poor is not limited to the upper social classes. It is a process that can spread to many layers of society, especially among the middle

7. The SIRS survey was conducted longitudinally in 2005, 2007 and 2010 in 50 neighborhoods in Paris and the inner suburbs, with a total sample of 3,000 households. The neighborhoods were chosen based on Edmond Préteceille’s typology (2003), in order to diversify the different types of urban social spaces.

8. This type of neighborhood has been the subject of numerous surveys in France, but also abroad. In the South End, a gentrified neighborhood in downtown Boston, where a certain social and ethnic mix still exists, Sylvie Tissot found, for example, that the associations are almost exclusively composed of white, property-owning members, and that there is even a discreet selection process at the entrance, proof of the determination of the upper classes to control the spaces and the contours of their neighborhood (Tissot 2011).

classes. To the traditional question about the causes of poverty, a recent French survey⁹ allows us to analyze the variations between professions and socio-professional categories (SPCs): (1) the explanation of poverty by laziness remains in the minority (13.8%) and concerns more self-employed people, employees, retired people (except former executives and intermediate professions) than the upper categories; (2) among executives and higher intellectual professions, there are strong variations according to status, with public service executives explaining poverty much more by injustice than business executives (52%, compared to 37.8%); (3) employees are not a homogeneous group either, with civil servants explaining poverty proportionally more often by injustice than others, especially private sector employees; (4) retired former farmers are more likely to explain poverty by laziness than other retirees; (5) business executives and intermediate professions (in the private sector) are distinguished by the fact that they consider poverty to be an inevitable phenomenon in the modern world¹⁰. These findings make it possible to qualify the analyses produced by the PSPD survey. If there is a mechanism of discrimination against the poor, which can take many forms and appear in a concentrated way in certain rich neighborhoods when events occur that make it even more visible, it can neither be exclusive to these neighborhoods nor represent an absolute obstacle to any expression of solidarity. Among executives and higher intellectual professions in France – who do not all live in segregated neighborhoods – the explanation of poverty by injustice is, in this case, much more frequent than the explanation by laziness.

5.6. References

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9. Dynegal-GEMASS/CMH/PACTE survey (2013). The use of this nationally representative base was carried out in Paugam et al. (2017) with respect to pre-submitted data (i.e. 3,913 individuals).

10. This survey also made it possible to verify that there are no major variations in the response to this question depending on the size of the city, with the exception of the Paris metropolitan area, where the explanation of poverty by injustice is statistically significantly more marked than in rural areas and in medium-sized cities or regional metropolises.

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