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A Critical Reading of Neighborhood-based Policies and their Geography

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A large number of interventions developed by institutional actors target a small number of circumscribed areas, with the aim of reducing social inequalities. These policies exist in different countries, such as France, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United States. In France, we speak of the “*Politique de la Ville*” (and of the “*quartiers prioritaires de la politique de la ville*”). In the United Kingdom, the term “neighbourhood-based policies” refers to Area-Based Initiatives (ABIs) developed within the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund. The term neighborhood-based policies is also used in other countries to designate actions carried out, for example, within the framework of the “Metropolitan Development Initiative” (Sweden) or the “Big Cities Policy” and the “40 Neighbourhoods Programme” (Netherlands). For each of these neighborhood-based policies, the spatial reference is explicit, with a two-level scale: the city, then the neighborhood. However explicit it may be, this reference to geographical space raises more questions than it solves. What goals guide the institutional division of “priority” neighborhoods? Do not the public policies implemented in specific, well-defined territories lead to a watering down of the role of geographical space when they focus on the extreme spatial manifestations of social inequalities, rather than on the structural mechanisms at play? How do the time and the trajectories of neighborhoods and individuals manage to be incorporated (or not) into neighborhood-based policies whose geography is often frozen? These are the three

Inequalities in Geographical Space,

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

main questions that will be discussed in this critical chapter about neighborhood-based policies and their geography¹.

7.1. A geography plagued by contradictions

Like any institutional division, areas concerned by neighborhood-based policies must ensure the *sustainability of spatial forms of institutional actions* on a territory. In this respect, it is similar to an “investment in form” (Thévenot 1986) in the sense that this division of geographical space (which has an immediate cost for those who design it, but also has benefits for all subsequent periods) must allow for the passage from an indeterminate thing (the areas where action is needed most) to a “class of shared equivalence” (the priority neighborhoods constructed, designed and instrumented by the actors² who find a common interest there). However, this transition to a class of shared equivalence is perhaps even more difficult to achieve for areas targeted in neighborhood-based policies than for other institutional divisions, because the *aim is twofold*: to pinpoint pockets of poverty (in order to offer targeted assistance to poor populations) and to delimit the areas that have an effect on populations (in order to organize rallies and collective actions and to improve local living conditions).

7.1.1. The dual purpose of “priority” neighborhoods

Territorial regeneration, which was initially a means of indirectly addressing the issue of exclusion and poverty, has been progressively replaced by an entry into so called “priority” or “critical” neighborhoods (Tissot 2004). This double shift (from poverty to territory, and then from territory to priority neighborhoods) is based on various arguments that make it possible to understand how neighborhood-based policies are currently legitimized and put into practice: (1) intervening in a limited number of neighborhoods is a cost-effective strategy in theory, especially when problems are spatially concentrated and cumulative; (2) modifying some

1. Territorially selective policies aimed at rebalancing the economy between countries, regions or metropolises, or those dealing with a specific dimension of social inequalities (e.g. educational inequalities (see Chapter 1) or inequalities in access to employment (see Chapter 4)), will not be explicitly dealt with in this chapter, even though their geography often responds to the same principles and contradictions.

2. Neighborhood-based policies are steered and implemented by various actors (national government services, local authorities, associations and economic agents). These agents, their coordination strategies and their power relations (which vary over time) will not be described in this chapter but have been studied elsewhere (Le Galès 1995; Warin 1997; Estèbe 2005).

neighborhoods and the living conditions they offer to the population appears to be more feasible (and more visible) than intervening directly in populations; (3) targeting neighborhoods is politically more acceptable than targeting populations according to their ethnic or racial profile, especially in countries like France, where universalism is a high priority (Hancock et al. 2016); (4) developing actions in specific neighborhoods makes it possible to propose a response that is in line with citizens' expectations of greater local democracy, and with the expectations of local elected officials of greater local scope for action, as well as a decentralization of means and prerogatives; (5) adapting public action to local specificities appears to be an obligatory step – and even a pledge of modernity – at the beginning of the 21st century, where finely localized data (and the tools to map them) are multiplying³.

Behind these arguments, however, we can distinguish two different rationales: when public actors decide to implement actions in small and circumscribed areas, their objective may be (1) to reach the poor people or (2) to improve the living conditions of the neighborhoods. However, it is not necessarily the same priority areas that should be targeted, depending on whether the first or the second reasoning is opted for.

In the first case, neighborhood-based policies are a way of restricting the actions to be carried out on areas where there are maximum chances of reaching the target public, because of the spatial segregation processes that lead populations with the same social profile to concentrate in the same place. The geographical space is then merely the revelation of social inequalities: it is a question of identifying the priority neighborhoods as being those which concentrate the “priority” populations in order to carry out targeted interventions for people (help in finding a job, public health prevention campaigns, etc.). This is the *logic behind the “neighborhood-container”* approach.

In the second case, neighborhood-based policies are prompted by the recognition of the role of space on employment, education or health (the “place effects”⁴). The

3. It should be noted, however, that this last argument is relatively recent: at the time of the first neighborhood-based policies, the challenge was, on the contrary, to collect and distribute localized data that had been lacking until then. These policies thus played a “pioneering role in the prolific territorial production” that has been observed since the 1980s (Estèbe 2001, p. 25).

4. Neighborhood effects (or place-based effects) refer to different mechanisms by which geographical space affects individuals. These mechanisms can be grouped under four broad rubrics, depending on whether they relate to prevailing social processes among the locally present population: exposure to harmful environments (such as violence, pollution), geographical location (and, by extension, distance to places of power, employment, education, health care, and so on), or institutional patterns, such as those that play into the quality of services or the reputation of neighborhoods (Galster 2012).

challenge is then to list the living conditions of the neighborhoods that have an effect on the employment, education or health of individuals, and to identify the neighborhoods whose living conditions are harmful to the populations that frequent them. This is the *logic behind the neighborhood-agent* approach.

Following the “neighborhood-container” approach, the objective of neighbourhood-based policies would then be to limit the effect of individual poverty on the pathways (educational, professional, health, etc.) of individuals. On the other hand, following the “neighborhood-agent” approach, the objective would be to limit the harmful consequences of *collective* poverty on people’s lives. The choice of one or the other of these approaches is often made in terms of a trade-off between *place-based* policies, which focus on the endogenous revitalization of neighborhoods, and *people-based* policies, which are concerned with improving the chances of individuals to escape poverty (Kirszbaum 2009). There is no doubt that these people- and place-based policies complement each other and should go hand in hand (Manley et al. 2013). However, they do not necessarily target the same priority areas. In the first case, the focus will be on neighborhoods with a high concentration of poor people, for whom targeted interventions will be carried out (the neighborhood-container approach). In the second case, the focus will be on the neighborhoods whose deteriorating living conditions are detrimental, particularly for the poorest residents (the neighborhood-agent approach). By formalizing the priority neighborhood as both a population container and an agent with an impact on the population, neighborhood-based policies thus, in a way, “play both sides of the fence”, which is not without consequences when it comes to delineating “priority” neighborhoods: *depending on the logic that is favored, the size and shape of the priority neighborhoods will not be the same.*

7.1.2. Challenges of size and shape

The *spatial scale* to be used to delineate neighborhoods is a thorny and widely debated issue, both in the literature on *place effects* (Vallée et al. 2015; Petrović et al. 2019) and in the literature on segregation (Andersson and Musterd 2010). The Holy Grail of delineating the neighborhood object is all the more difficult to achieve in neighborhood-based policies because their geography is subject to the tensions between, “on the one hand, the territory, a space of equivalence associated with institutional action and liable to be cut up, and, on the other hand, the locality, the support of a social, economic and political life with multiple components, described

from the point of view of its inhabitants or its leaders⁵” (Desrosières 1994, p. 46). This is one of the difficulties of the neighborhood-based policies, which must make it possible to “create standardized, legible and – at least in part – debatable policies while opening up local public arenas where the mobilization of those involved, necessary to deal with both general and specific situations, can be played out⁶” (Estèbe 2001, p. 26).

Spatial grids created by official statistics to disseminate aggregated data (e.g. population censuses) are often used as the basic geographical units for neighborhood-based policies. This is the case for the “Îlots Regroupés pour l’Information Statistique” (IRIS) in France⁷, Dissemination Areas (DAs) in Canada, Output Areas (OAs) in the United Kingdom or Census Tracts in the United States. These zonings combine two major trends: (1) one consists of dividing the city into *small portions* – in the literal sense of the French term “quartier” (quarter); (2) the other consists of grouping the inhabitants (neighbors in the literal sense) into *socially homogeneous zones*. These national zonings are, in fact, constructed in order to disseminate census data without violating the principle of confidentiality of personal data. The number of inhabitants per spatial unit varies from country to country: about 2,000 inhabitants per IRIS in France, from 400 to 700 inhabitants per DA in Canada, 310 inhabitants on average per OA in the United Kingdom, and from 2,500 to 8,000 inhabitants per Census Tract in the United States. These elementary grids are also designed to maximize social homogeneity. Aggregate data are made available in built-up areas, with the declared aim (by the statistical bodies responsible for delimiting them) of being as homogeneous as possible with respect to population characteristics, economic status, and living conditions (U.S. Census Bureau) or with respect of tenure of household and dwelling type (Office for National Statistics, UK). This quest for homogeneity refers to the idea that a neighborhood only makes sense if it is socially homogeneous, as if “seduced by the image of the neighborhood in late 20th-century European culture, we tend to believe that if an area is not socially homogeneous it is not a real neighborhood” (Crossick 1993).

The elementary spatial grid created by official statistics is, in fact, much more than a way of formatting data. It is *prescriptive*, insofar as it imposes itself as a

5. Original citation: “d’une part le territoire, espace d’équivalence associé à une action institutionnelle et susceptible d’être découpé, et, d’autre part, la localité, support d’une vie sociale, économique et politique aux composantes multiples, décrite du point de vue de ses habitants ou de ses responsables”.

6. Original citation: “Construire des politiques normées, lisibles et – pour partie du moins – discutables tout en ouvrant des scènes publiques locales où peut se jouer la mobilisation des acteurs, nécessaire pour traiter des situations à la fois générales et singulières”.

7. In France, a new gridded zoning has made available demographic and socioeconomic data aggregated in 200-m squares since 2013.

norm, but also performative, because it channels questioning, processing and interpretations. Rather than using these elementary grids directly, actors and scientists could nevertheless aggregate them in order to delimit neighborhoods that make sense in the eyes of the processes studied (or combated). However, such aggregations are still rare in academic work and institutional approaches, as if it was necessary to choose the smallest and most homogeneous unit possible. Many authors point out that “the strongest context effects are generally those that succeed in defining the immediate environment of each individual as precisely as possible” (Maurin 2004, p.43). However, this statement is open to discussion: it is also possible to think that this context effect is strong precisely because it corresponds more to an “aggregated” individual effect than to a place effect as such. Favoring small spatial units makes sense when one reasons according to a neighborhood constructed to be a proxy for the socioeconomic situation of individuals, or a roundabout way of targeting the individuals who live there in the best possible way and at the lowest cost. However, this logic is much more questionable when one considers the neighborhood as an agent-neighborhood in which populations interact. In this case, for what reasons should the geographical space that would make sense for the populations, and have an effect on them, necessarily be designed as a small and socially homogeneous space? A study conducted in Paris (France) has, in fact, shown that in order to obtain a size comparable to that of the neighborhoods perceived by the inhabitants, it would be necessary to aggregate an average of 12 IRIS in Paris and nearly two IRIS in the large peripheral Parisian municipalities with more than 50,000 inhabitants (Vallée et al. 2016). A study conducted in Bristol, UK, also showed that neighborhoods represented by local activists or residents are more socially mixed than areas created automatically on the basis of a criterion of social homogeneity (Haynes et al. 2007). *The “smallest” and “most homogeneous” arguments possible, which were legitimate when applied to the neighborhood-container, become inappropriate when transposed to the neighborhood-agent.*

In all countries where neighborhood-based policies are implemented, priority neighborhoods are defined as socially homogeneous micro-neighborhoods. The zoning instituted in the new neighborhood policy implemented in France in 2014 is a good example as it is based on the spatial concentration of poor people in small spatial areas⁸. When they reason solely according to a neighborhood-container, the actors of neighborhood-based policies then de facto limit the effectiveness of the measures they

8. Based on household tax incomes in a 200 × 200 m grid, areas where more than half of the inhabitants are below the low-income threshold were identified and discussions were held with local elected officials in order to adjust, if necessary, the perimeters of priority neighborhoods. For each urban unit, a different low-income threshold was calculated based on the median income of metropolitan France and the median income of the urban unit, in order to be able to isolate areas whose households were out of step with the rest of the urban unit (Darriau et al. 2014).

put in place. Indeed, they implicitly consider that poor households can only interact within a socially limited space: the very fact of wanting to maximize the social homogeneity of neighborhoods is tantamount to denying a priori the effect (and the interest) of social mixing, which is often, however, one of the aims of neighborhood-based policies. Moreover, it is common to point out the risk of stigmatization that the labeling of “priority neighborhoods” could provoke by projecting an image of these neighborhoods and their inhabitants that is symbolically violent. (Hancock et al. 2016). Moreover, by reasoning solely according to a “neighborhood-container” approach, these policies neglect the fringe of the population that does not live in the neighborhoods with a high concentration of poor households, but whose living context is degraded. This criticism has recently gained visibility in France with the mobilization of the “*gilets jaunes*” in the winter of 2018: claims against territorial inequity then emerged “with the idea that the inhabitants of the priority neighborhoods would be unduly privileged, benefiting both from access to the resources of metropolitan development and from more favorable treatment of public authorities, in comparison with rural areas, peri-urban areas, and medium-sized cities that are neglected, or even despised, by the political elites” (Epstein and Kirszbaum 2019, p. 37). Finally, by reasoning on the basis of micro-neighborhoods, whose difficulties are highlighted, a dual vision of geographical space is introduced by artificially reinforcing the territorial fractures between these “isolates” and the rest of the territory, even though one of the aims of these policies is precisely to achieve greater inclusion of neighborhoods – and populations – in the whole territory. We thus find here, in several forms, *the performative effect* that the very choice of a spatial division can have on the phenomenon that is described, measured and on which we want to act. However, as Epstein (2021) points out, it is necessary to carry out counterfactual analyses to estimate the negative effects associated with the inclusion of an area in neighborhood-based policies, and to see whether these negative effects are really less than the benefits that this labeling brings. This question could also be asked differently, if we are interested in the size and shape of the priority neighborhoods: Does this ratio of benefits to negative effects vary according to the spatial delineation of the priority neighborhoods?

The question of the size and shape of priority neighborhoods echoes another question: that of the number of people left out by neighborhood-based policies, even though they are theoretically part of the target. Here, we can make a link to “critical representation”, which refers to the representativeness of priority neighborhoods in relation to the location of priority populations (van Gent et al. 2009; Sharpe 2013). This question of representativeness arises as soon as we adopt the “neighborhood-container” reasoning. It can be discussed by combining two indicators: (1) the number of poor people in priority areas compared to the total number of poor people in the country as a whole, i.e. what proportion of the total individuals reached are

poor (*completeness* rate); (2) the number of poor people in priority areas compared to the total number of people in priority areas, i.e. what proportion of the target population of poor individuals is reached (*efficiency* rate). These two rates are closely linked: an increase in the completeness rate will automatically decrease the efficiency rate and vice versa.

Studies have estimated this completeness rate. In Sweden, 5% of the country's poor people reside in the 24 neighborhoods targeted by the "Metropolitan Development Initiative" (Andersson 2004); in the Netherlands, 8% of the country's poor people reside in the "40 Neighbourhoods Initiatives" (van Gent et al. 2009); in the United Kingdom, 57% of the country's income assistance recipients reside in the 88 neighborhoods identified as priorities under the "Neighbourhood Renewal Fund" (Tunstall and Lupton 2003). In France, 23% of the country's poor people (below the poverty line) live in the priority neighborhoods ("*quartiers prioritaires de la politique de la ville*"), according to our calculations based on data from the "*Atlas des quartiers prioritaires*" (CGET 2017). Regarding the effectiveness rate, work in the United Kingdom estimates that 15% of residents in neighborhoods targeted by the "Neighbourhood Renewal Project" claim Income Support (Tunstall and Lupton 2003). In France, 43% of the population in the "*quartiers prioritaires de la politique de la ville*" live below the poverty line, according to our calculations based on data from the "*Atlas des quartiers prioritaires*". The rates of exhaustiveness and effectiveness therefore vary widely across countries. These differences are due to differences in the distribution and concentration of disadvantaged populations at the national and intra-urban levels, but above all to the political and methodological choices made when delimiting priority areas (number of neighborhoods to be retained, spatial grid for analysis, "poverty" indicator taken into account, etc.).

7.2. Reductive policies

After analyzing the way in which "priority" neighborhoods are delimited and the ins and outs of these choices, the aim is to broaden the focus and discuss the *reductive vision of geographical space* conveyed by these neighborhood-based policies, which focus on the concrete forms of urban marginality rather than the generic mechanisms that produce it (Wacquant 2008).

7.2.1. A diversionary operation

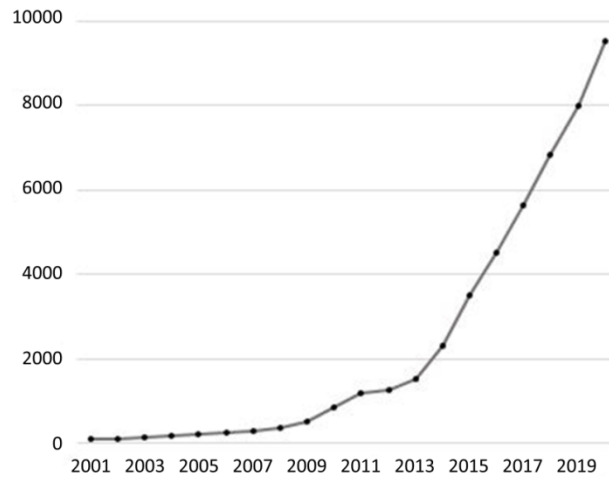
Neighborhood-based policies become a dangerous subterfuge when they *divert attention from the deep structural causes of inequality*. This diversionary operation – which consists of dealing with problems only where they are most visible – amounts to

transforming problems specific to a type of society into problems caused by a certain type of space, and thus confusing problems in the city with problems of the city (Busquet 2009; Garnier 2010). Here, we find the criticism of the uses that can be made from place effects: by giving “a falsely depoliticized vision of urban inequality” when they are merely “the effects of the State inscribed into space” (Wacquant 2008, p. 284; 2009, p. 109), place effects constitute “an instrument of accusation, a veiled form of class antagonism that conveniently has no place for any concern over what happens outside the very neighbourhoods under scrutiny” (Slater 2013, p. 124).

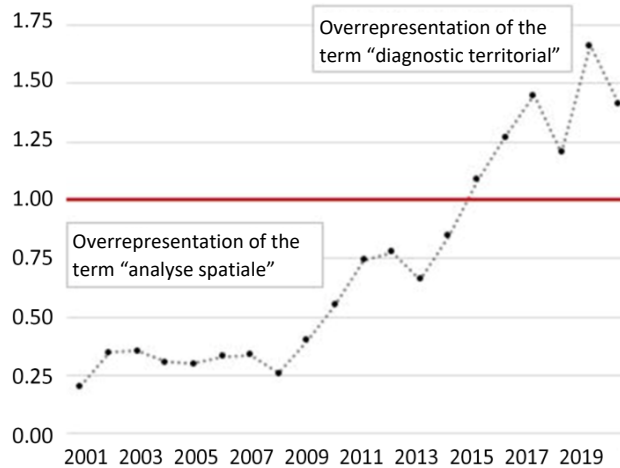
This diversionary operation not only concerns the place effects and the use made of them by neighborhood-based policies: it occurs for all territorial assessments produced upstream. The French term “*diagnostic territorial*” (which is difficult to translate into other languages, but which is similar to *neighborhood assessment* in English) refers to the local assessment of the population’s living conditions and needs. The idea of using geographical space as a means of accumulating and relating observations on the social world, by giving it a specific explanatory power, can be found early in the history of public statistics (Desrosières 1994). In France, the term “*diagnostic territorial*” has gradually entered the vocabulary of territorial actors (Jeannot 2001), with a very significant increase in the use of this term since the early 2000s (see Box 7.1). This “golden age” of neighborhood assessment also coincides with the growing competition between territories, brought about by the deployment of local performance indicators, the preferred instruments of New Public Management (Epstein 2015). By pushing local actors to mobilize around a measurable objective of reducing the gaps between neighborhoods, national agencies are promoting competition that is maintained by the granting of funding through selective calls for projects and the awarding of labels and other signs of territorial distinction (Epstein 2015).

The growing awareness of neighborhood assessment on which national and local actors rely, both to describe the world and to act on it, is part of the same logic as that of neighborhood-based policies: *incriminating certain specific territories* and putting them in competition with each other without, however, addressing the *more structural causes of inequalities between territories*.

Almost non-existent at the beginning of the 21st century, the French term “*diagnostic territorial*”. This is shown by the sharp increase in the number of web pages that include this term, both in absolute terms and in comparison with the older term “*analyse spatiale*”, which is used here as a reference (a term made up of two words and whose semantic field is fairly similar). We can thus see that, as of 2015, the term “*diagnostic territorial*” is more present on the web than “*analyse spatiale*”.



a) Number of web pages with the term “*diagnostic territorial*”



b) Overrepresentation of the number of web pages with the term “*diagnostic territorial*” and the number of web pages with the term “*analyse spatiale*”. For a color version of this figure, see www.iste.co.uk/cottineau/inequalities.zip

These figures are the result of a query made in April 2021 via the Google search engine for the number of pages containing the term “*diagnostic territorial*” (and “*analyse spatiale*”) year after year (from January 1 to December 31).

Box 7.1. *The golden age of “diagnostic territorial”*

7.2.2. An impoverishment of the interdependencies between agent and structure

This diversionary operation can be directly linked to the status afforded to geographical space: by compartmentalizing what relates to the individual, on the one hand, and to the space in which they live, on the other, we come to transform geographical space into a simple medium whose complexity is impoverished. This question is more broadly related to the *agent/structure debate in the social sciences*, and the way in which the choices and actions of individuals result from the structures that they bring about. In the face of the conservative tendency to blame socially excluded groups (e.g. the unemployed, ethnic minorities, or low-income households) for their living conditions and behaviors, researchers working on social inequalities have argued that the behaviors of vulnerable groups are largely explained by the social and spatial structures in which they are embedded. In the late 1980s in the United States, Wilson drew attention in *The Truly Disadvantaged* (1987) to the fact that the effect of individual poverty is greater in neighborhoods with concentrated poor populations. In this case, poor people often face a *double burden*: not only do they have to deal with the multiple problems arising from their own lack of income, but also with the often-deteriorating conditions of the neighborhoods in which they live. By introducing the notion of “concentration effects”, Wilson suggested that poor people might be particularly vulnerable to neighborhood effects because they lack the collective resources and “social buffers” that more advantaged people enjoy, which would enable them to overcome the deteriorating conditions of the neighborhoods in which they live. This concentration effect has fueled debates about the overly artificial separation between individual and contextual factors in statistical models (Pickett and Pearl 2001; Frohlich et al. 2002; Bernard et al. 2007). By favoring the distinction between what belongs to the individual, on the one hand, and what belongs to their neighborhood, on the other hand, multilevel regression models have in fact contributed to impoverishing the meaning given to geographical space (see Introduction and Chapter 6).

This debate is important for neighborhood-based policies and their geography. To ignore the *interdependence between individuals and space* is to ignore the *relational dimension of space*. To consider that the space necessarily carries the same weight according to demographic strata (Vant 1986) is to deny the concentration effect highlighted by Wilson’s work, but also by more contemporary work on the variable strength of place-based effects according to the socioeconomic profile of individuals. In his work on the effects of social segregation on the academic success of adolescents, Maurin (2007, p. 627) emphasized that “adolescents from modest backgrounds [...] have far fewer means than others to escape from their immediate neighborhood and its control”, and that “the immediate

neighborhood, the building where they live, represent quite central elements of socialization, particularly for young people from the working classes and, more generally, for all those who have hardly any means of providing themselves with other areas of socialization". In the field of health, the varying strength of place effects has also been studied. A review of the studies dedicated to the variable effect of residential neighborhood on health according to the socioeconomic profile of the individuals underlines a great concordance in the results, with a stronger "neighborhood effect" on disadvantaged, low-skilled or poorly educated individuals, and for different health indicators, such as being overweight, diet quality, alcohol consumption, mortality, perceived health and mental disorders (Vallée et al. 2021). Some authors then conclude that there is a *socially differentiated vulnerability of individuals* with regard to the attributes of their neighborhood of residence (Shortt et al. 2018). In the words of sociologists Pinçon-Charlot and Rendu (1982, p. 683) about the role of distance to cultural facilities, "we are led to note that the categories that possess a certain cultural and educational capital can find in their own dispositions a sufficient incentive to overcome the obstacle of the physical distance that separates them [from cultural facilities]⁹".

The *social dimension of place effects weakens the very foundation of neighborhood-based policies*: it questions the very possibility of labeling a neighborhood as a priority since, to use Bourdieu's words in his text on the place effects (1993), the ability to appropriate goods and services in a given area depends on the capital owned and the physical distance to these goods, which also depends on capital. Does this critical reading of neighborhood-based policies mean that we should give up on implementing neighborhood-based policies? Not necessarily. These can contribute to improving the living conditions of individuals locally, but they only make sense if they complement *structural measures of economic regulation and social protection of individuals*, without replacing them.

7.3. Temporal dynamics of priority neighborhoods

If the implementation of neighborhood-based policies can lead to the glossing over of interdependencies between agents and structures, and the structural mechanisms of inequalities that unfold throughout society and geographical space, this *reductionist vision* is all the more likely to develop when *the interrelationships that develop over time between individuals and spaces* are ignored. In line with the

9. Original citation: "On est conduit à constater que les catégories qui possèdent un certain capital culturel et scolaire peuvent trouver dans les dispositions qui leur sont propres une incitation suffisante pour surmonter l'obstacle de la distance physique qui les sépare [des équipements culturels]".

authors who call for a relational approach to move away from a fixist approach to geographical space, and to think of it “in terms of interdependence and articulation and no longer in terms of distribution and location” (Berroir et al. 2017, p. 1), it is necessary to pay attention to the temporal dynamics through which the interrelationships between the life course of individuals and the spaces in which they evolve are woven (see Chapter 3). Taking the temporal dimension explicitly into account thus makes it possible to address the issue of the attractiveness (both residential and daily) of priority neighborhoods, which is one of the stated objectives of neighborhood-based policies.

7.3.1. Residential trajectories

Let us begin by considering temporal dynamics from the perspective of residential trajectories, distinguishing between the two different ways in which they feed the debate on neighborhood-based policies. The first incorporates residential trajectories, but in a negative way, since it is a matter of “controlling” the fact that individuals do not choose their place of residence by chance (selective mobility), and that the measurement of place effects on the behavior of residents using cross-sectional surveys (at a given time) violates the hypothesis of the independence of the variables that are statistically related. This bias (self-selection bias) is at the root of numerous scientific discussions (Manley et al. 2013; Cheshire et al. 2014) on the risk of overestimating neighborhood effects, and consequently on the low effectiveness of neighborhood-based policies, whose motivation is simply to act on these neighborhood effects.

However, residential trajectories are not only considered through this measurement bias. They are also positively integrated when it comes to seeing whether these priority neighborhoods function as “*pits*” in which residents are *trapped for life* or whether, on the contrary, these neighborhoods function as “*airlocks*” by being a *temporary step* in the residential trajectory (ONPV 2017). The social mixing that can be brought about by residential mobility is at the heart of the reasoning behind policies of social housing allocation, but also of “natural experiments”, the best known of which is the American *Moving to Opportunities* (MTO) program, conducted in the cities of Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles and New York in the 1990s with 4,600 low-income families with children living in extreme poverty (Briggs et al. 2010). Because residential mobility does not happen by chance, the goal here was to *facilitate moves* of randomly selected, *voluntary poor households*¹⁰, in order to mitigate the harmful consequences of

10. Families who voluntarily participated in the experiment were randomly assigned to three groups, similar to experimental designs in medical research. The first group received a voucher to move into a low-poverty neighborhood and advice on how to make the best decision. The

collective poverty. These policies thus use residential mobility as an indirect way to combat the spatial concentration of poverty and its effects. Other policies aim, on the contrary, to *encourage the settlement of privileged populations* by providing a diversified supply of housing and amenities. In line with the reflections of Kirszbaum (2008), we can, however, discuss the effects of these policies, which seek to promote the inward mobility of more privileged social groups. They then consider diversity as an “exogenous” dynamic, in the sense that they seek to introduce a group into the residential space where another group dominates. These policies can then produce a gentrification that destroys the local social balance and, moreover, leads to the eviction of poor households, to the detriment of the objective of social mixing that is put forward. One solution might be to promote an “endogenous” social mix by stabilizing the most economically well-off households in priority neighborhoods. Finally, in this brief inventory of policies linking social mix and residential mobility, it is worth noting the legislative measure (“The Act on Extraordinary Measures for Urban Problems”) introduced by the Dutch government in 2006. This measure allows local governments to refuse a residence permit in areas considered particularly vulnerable to persons who have lived in the metropolitan region for less than six years and who do not receive an income from work, pensions or student loans. Implemented in five Rotterdam neighborhoods (hence the more concise name, the Rotterdam Act, by which the measure is known), this measure that denies the right of a certain group of people to live where they want has generated widespread controversy (Uitermark et al. 2017). For all that, the general objectives are the same as those of policies that promote *inward mobility* of affluent populations into priority neighborhoods or *outward mobility* of poor populations: the aim is to counter a spiral of neighborhood decline by balancing the socio-economic profile of neighborhoods, that is, by preventing the proportion of poor and low-income households from being too high (van Gent et al. 2018). Ten years after its introduction, research has established that this exclusion measure has affected about 20,000 people (mostly young, male, single, and foreign) each year by weakening their access to the housing market. It has also been shown that this measure has led to an increase in the proportion of employed residents in the five targeted neighborhoods, but without improving local living conditions in these neighborhoods (van Gent et al. 2018) or achieving the unstated goal of reducing ethnic segregation (Ouweland and Doff 2013).

Residential mobility and immobility are a *central lever* of neighborhood-based policies. In this sense, they lead politicians and researchers alike to explicitly incorporate time into their thinking, both in terms of individuals’ life courses and the

second group received a voucher to move to a neighborhood of their choice; the third group received no special assistance. Comparing the situations of the three groups at the end of the experiment allows us to isolate the effect of public policy on initially similar individuals.

evolution of neighborhoods. But the thinking is still incomplete because, as the sociologist Sampson (2013, p. 12) notes, “what we need then is a life course of place and a more rigorous assessment of history in the form of prior neighborhood contexts and how they are revealed in the current lives of both individuals and neighborhoods”.

7.3.2. Everyday dynamics

The temporal dynamics through which the interrelationships between the life-course of individuals and the geographical space in which they evolve are not reduced to residential trajectories: they also include the daily trajectories, not only of populations but also of the spaces they frequent. *While residential trajectories constitute a classic framework for analyzing neighborhood-based policies and their effectiveness, daily trajectories remain a less explored field.* The everyday attractiveness of priority neighborhoods and their functional mix often remain the poor cousins of neighborhood-based policies that focus on housing, its renovation and the social mix of the resident population.

Functional diversity is one of the objectives stated in the legislative texts: this objective leads public actors to develop commercial spaces and collective facilities in priority neighborhoods, and to develop tax exemptions to attract activities and jobs¹¹. However, the attractiveness of priority neighborhoods on a daily basis is rarely measured in local neighborhood assessments: “The temporal dimension of space is seldom part and parcel of urban projects and planning documents. It would be appropriate for planners to take into consideration the various attributes of space in relation to the opening hours of services and to their attendance; planners should indeed question the cohesion of space’s rhythms. These elements all condition the accessibility of places as well as their hospitality, their localization and the transportation systems allowing the public to go there” (Mallet 2014, p. 16).

7.3.2.1. Daily mobility and social mix in neighborhoods

One of the first questions that arises when analyzing the daily dynamics of priority areas concerns the *variation in the social composition of priority neighborhoods over the hours of the day*. While the definition of priority neighborhoods is mainly based on the residential concentration of poor households, it would be interesting to discuss the variations in the representativeness of priority neighborhoods at different times of the day, taking into account not the resident population but the population present.

11. One of the objectives of these measures is to fight against the “spatial mismatch” faced by residents of priority neighborhoods, who find themselves far from places of employment because they find it difficult to move or relocate to geographic areas where jobs exist (see Chapter 4).

Using a formalism specific to *time-geography*, Figure 7.1 illustrates the idea that the same priority neighborhoods (in the sense of areas containing a significant proportion of priority persons) do not emerge according to the time of day and the spatiotemporal trajectories of the populations.

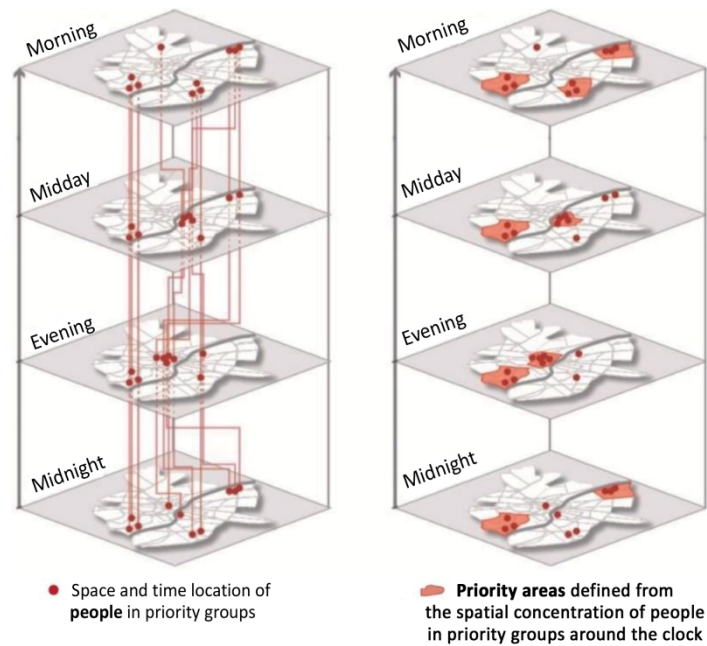


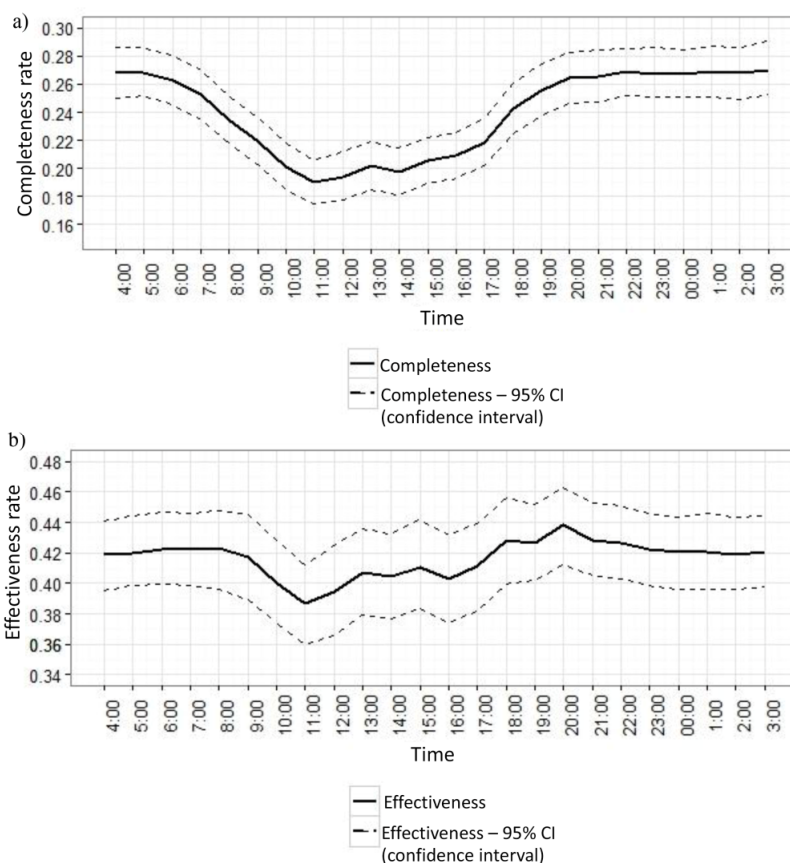
Figure 7.1. Defining priority neighborhoods from concentration of priority people in space and time (source: Vallée 2017a). For a color version of this figure, see www.iste.co.uk/cottineau/inequalities.zip

People-based interventions may not be very effective if they are implemented during the day in areas where poor people do not visit during the day, even if they live there at night. On the other hand, other areas would benefit from being the target of these actions, because a large number of poor people frequent them during the day, without actually living there. This brings us back to the question of the representativeness of priority areas, mentioned earlier in this chapter (section 7.1.2). If we look at the evolution of the *completeness rate* in the priority neighborhoods of the Paris region over the course of the 24 hours of the day (Figure 7.2(a)), we see a clear decrease in the values between day and night: while 27% of the poor population of Île-de-France is present in the priority neighborhoods between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m., this rate drops to 19% at 10 a.m. Actions that take place in priority

neighborhoods during the day may therefore miss more than two-thirds (81%) of the poor population for whom these interventions may be intended. This drop in completeness can also be seen as a positive: it means that poor populations do not remain captive to priority neighborhoods. In fact, this decrease during the day should be seen in relation to the general decrease in social segregation observed in Île-de-France during the day (Le Roux et al. 2017). Looking in parallel at the evolution of the *efficiency rate* in the priority areas in the Île-de-France over the 24 hours of the day (Figure 7.2(b)), we see that this rate is close to 42% during the night (11 p.m.–6 a.m.). This efficiency rate tends to decrease – but not significantly – during the day (with a minimum value of 39% at 10 a.m.). The proportion of poor people in the priority neighborhoods of Île-de-France thus remains stable overall during the day. However, it should be noted that the absolute number of poor people in the priority neighborhoods decreases sharply as the population in the neighborhoods decreases (a decrease of about one quarter of the population between midnight and noon). By analyzing the completeness and efficiency rates of the daily concentration of poor people in and outside the priority neighborhoods, we have an empirical basis for discussing the efficiency of person-oriented actions. The decline in completeness rates during the day suggests that other neighborhoods not classified as priority neighborhoods, but with a high concentration of poor people during the day, would also benefit from neighborhood-based policies.

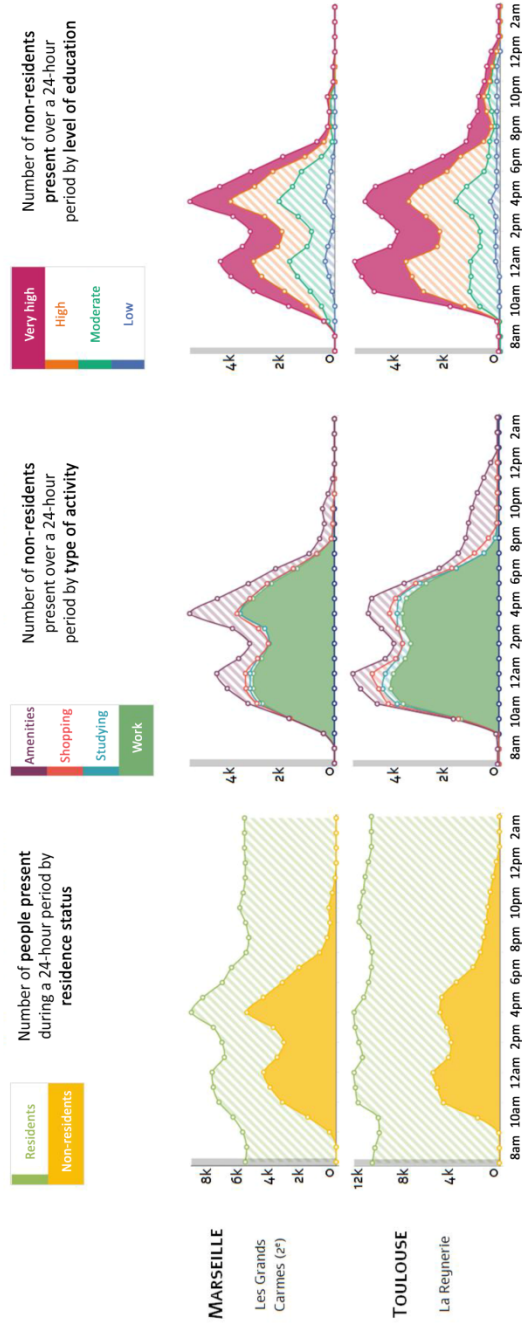
In the same vein, an analysis of the population present on a daily basis in the priority neighborhoods could make it possible to establish a *typology of these neighborhoods* according to their attractiveness (in terms of the increase or decrease in the population present during the day and the mix of activities carried out there), and also according to whether or not their social mix increases during the day. These typologies could inform planning policies (such as the viability of shops and services) and urban renewal and highlight the diversity of the areas concerned. Initial analyses are possible through Mobiliscope, an interactive geo-visualization platform of the population present in cities at different times of the day. With this tool, it is possible, for example, to compare daily variations in the number of people visiting four priority neighborhoods located in the French cities of Marseille, Toulouse, Lyon and Rouen (Figures 7.3(a) and (b)). We see that these four priority neighborhoods receive populations that do not live in these neighborhoods during the day, but that these non-resident populations are relatively more numerous in the neighborhoods of Grands Carmes (Marseille) and La Reynerie (Toulouse) than in the center of Vaulx-en-Velin (Lyon) and, above all, in the Les Hauts neighborhood (Rouen). While the majority of these non-resident populations come to these neighborhoods to work (but also to study, in the case of the Lyon neighborhood), their socioeconomic profiles differ: during the day, the share of non-residents with a high level of education is much higher in the priority neighborhoods of central

Vaulx-en-Verin (Lyon) and Reynerie (Toulouse) than in the priority neighborhoods of Grands Carmes (Marseille) and Les Hauts (Rouen). This type of analysis thus highlights the diversity of priority neighborhoods according to their attractiveness, their functional mix and the socioeconomic profile of the population that lives there.



Definitions: The completeness rate corresponds to the number of people below the poverty line in the priority areas, compared to the total number of people below the poverty line in Île-de-France. The effectiveness rate corresponds to the number of people below the poverty line present in the priority areas, compared to the total population present in the priority areas of Île-de-France.

Figure 7.2. Changes over a 24-hour period in (a) completeness rates and (b) effectiveness rates of "priority neighborhoods" in the Île-de-France region (source: (Vallée and Le Roux 2018), based on data from the "Global Transport Survey" (Enquête globale transport), 2010, DRIEA-STIF-OMNIL)



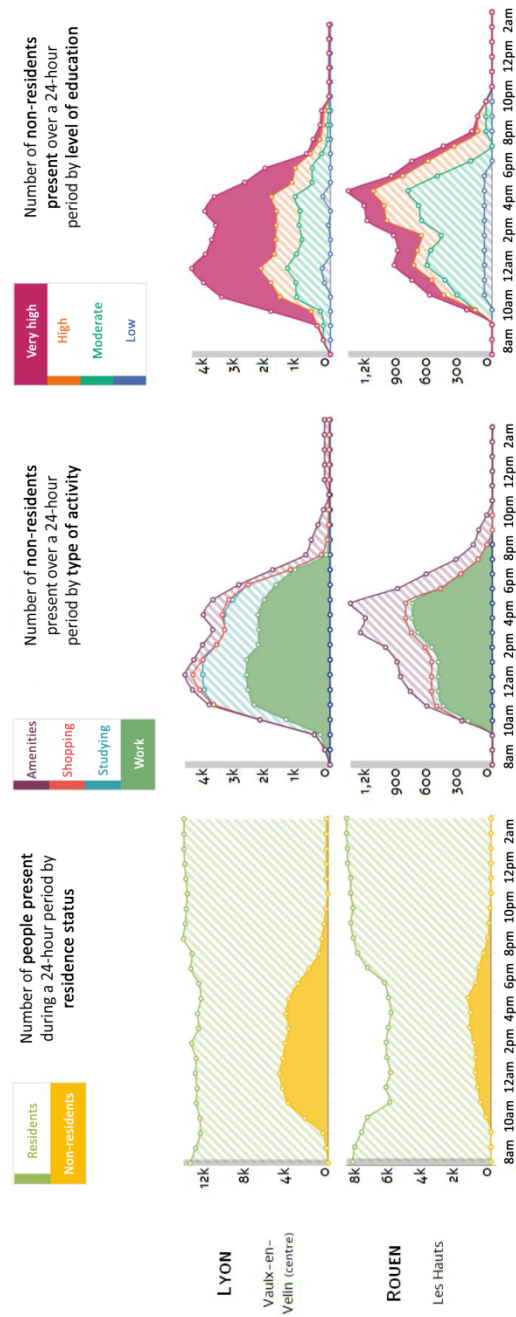


Figure 7.3. (a) Hourly changes in the population of two “priority areas” in Marseille and Toulouse (b) Hourly changes in the population of two “priority areas” in Lyon and Rouen (source: Mobiliscope (v4), an open geovisualization platform of cities around the clock; <https://mobiliscope.cnrs.fr>). For a color version of this figure, see www.iste.co.uk/cottineau/inequalities.zip

Since the definition of priority neighborhoods is traditionally based on the spatial concentration of poor or low-income households, we have focused our study on the socioeconomic profile of the individuals who live in and frequent the neighborhoods on a daily basis. However, this does not mean that other dimensions, such as gender or age, are ignored when analyzing the daily movements of individuals and the resulting variations in the composition of the population present in the neighborhoods.

A recent study (also based on French Mobiliscope data) shows that women – especially when they live in urban areas – spend significantly more time than men at home and in their neighborhood. However, a variation appears according to the time of day: the people who leave their homes while remaining in their neighborhood of residence are mostly women between 8 a.m. and 7 p.m., but mostly men from 7 p.m. onward and for the rest of the evening. This gendered occupation of space according to the time of day is observed throughout France but is more pronounced in the priority neighborhoods (Douet and Vallée 2021). It thus illustrates the fact that the spatiotemporal constraints to which certain individuals are subjected result from the combination of their socioeconomic position and their gender, and therefore refer to the intersectional mechanisms at work in the space and time of everyday life (see Introduction and Chapter 2). Taking them into account would allow neighborhood-based policies to move away from a fixed and segmented approach of the spatial distribution of priority populations.

7.3.2.2. Daily dynamics of neighborhoods and of neighborhood effects

Having discussed the temporal challenges that arise when trying to identify “priority neighborhoods” as those where populations in difficulty are concentrated on a daily basis (neighborhood-container reasoning), we now discuss the dangers of considering that neighborhood effects are fixed in time when we are applying neighborhood-agent reasoning.

The first danger is to ignore the daily mobility of populations, when this can modify the contexts to which populations are exposed during the day outside their neighborhood of residence (Shareck et al. 2014). If we take the example of access to services, it would be a mistake to think that all territories with a deficit in the healthcare provision are necessarily a priority: they become so if they concentrate on poorly mobile populations that do not have the opportunity to access care outside their neighborhood of residence. Ignoring multiple exposures can therefore distort diagnoses by wrongly giving a priority status to certain areas (“*false positives*”) and, conversely, by excluding certain areas that should be included (“*false negatives*”) from the list of priority areas.

The second danger is to assume that a neighborhood remains fixed in time, without, for example, taking into account changes in its social composition over the course of a 24-h day, or the opening and closing times of the services and facilities located there. In fact, *all of the “opportunity structures” of neighborhoods* (Macintyre et al. 2002) are *subject to daily variation* (Table 7.1).

The “opportunity structures” of neighborhoods	Daily variations
Physical environment (water, air, etc.)	For the same location, air quality is not the same at different times of the day, which is related in particular to the intensity of industrial pollution or vehicular traffic (Nyhan et al. 2016; Park and Kwan 2016).
Available facilities	Public or private facilities (schools, transport, health care, green spaces) are not open 24 h a day: they have opening and closing times. Moreover, the number of potential users (which determines their saturation) also varies during the day (Neutens et al. 2010).
Social norms	Because they are tied to the population present and their behaviors, the norms in a neighborhood may differ at different times of the day (Nuvolati 2003). Stigma toward smokers, for example, may be stronger or weaker at different times of the day depending on the population present, whether resident or transient (Glenn et al. 2017).
Reputation	The public and elected officials may view a neighborhood differently depending on the time of day. Certain spaces, qualified as safe places during the day, are perceived as dangerous at night – for example, if they do not benefit from public lighting (Mallet and Comelli 2017) – or during events that bring together a public whose profile is different from that of the resident population (soccer matches, places of prostitution, for example).

Table 7.1. *The daily rhythm of neighborhood “opportunity structures” – the daycourse of place – (source: Vallée 2017b)*

In analyses of place effects, it is, however, rare to take them into account, with the notable exception of work on air pollution (Park and Kwan 2018). If we take the example of neighborhoods lacking in services and facilities, we can see the interest in considering the cumulative amplitude of opening periods. Introducing a dose of daily temporality into accessibility measures can also be useful when relating a quantity of supply to a quantity of demand, that is, when relating the number of

facilities to the population. In this case, demand is usually estimated from the resident population, without taking into account the population actually present at the time the facilities are in use (and open). In neighborhoods where the daytime population is greater than the resident population, this type of residential indicator tends to underestimate demand, and thus overestimate the level of accessibility. Conversely, in neighborhoods where the daytime population is lower than the resident population, this type of residential indicator tends to overestimate demand, and thus underestimate the level of accessibility. Finally, it should be noted that the use of the resident population to quantify demand and to calculate local accessibility indicators is all the more problematic when the spatial grid considered is small. This is another example of the importance of not giving in to the call for ever smaller numbers: when demand is estimated on the basis of the resident population alone, the elementary (and small) spatial grid is not very suitable because outgoing and incoming mobilities between these areas are neglected, even though there are many of them during the day. It is thus “implicitly assumed that exchanges and mobilities between the area under consideration and surroundings areas are non-existent [...] This is an acceptable approximation for large zonings, but it becomes awkward for small zonings” (Vergier and Chaput 2017, p. 20). When flow data are lacking, larger zonings, such as catchment areas, then have the advantage of presenting fewer differences between the present and resident population, because daily flows essentially take place within these areas.

In the context of neighborhood-based policies, it would be beneficial to consider both the multi-exposure of populations and changes in neighborhood attributes over the course of the 24 h of the day. Such an approach, inspired by time-geography (Hägerstrand 1970), would *match the temporalities of populations and territories with those of the policies to be pursued* (Vallée 2017a).

7.4. Conclusion

The originality of neighborhood-based policies is that they define specific intervention perimeters, in which they *link together the problem and its solution* (Estèbe 2001). But is not it illusory to hope to project the roots of the problem and the means of solving it onto a small number of small neighborhoods? By clarifying the different purposes at work in identifying priority neighborhoods, by discussing the simplistic vision of geographical space that arises when we focus on the extreme spatial manifestations of inequality rather than on the structural mechanisms at play, and by emphasizing the dynamic relationships that link neighborhoods and people over time, this chapter has sought to highlight the necessarily multiscalar dimension (both spatially and temporally) of the problem of social inequalities and the

solutions to it. This multiscale perspective is difficult to implement and should at least be integrated into the *evaluation of neighborhood-based policies*. Just as measures aimed at limiting social inequalities cannot be evaluated solely with regard to the poorest populations, but require an interest in society as a whole and in the social gradient that runs through it, it would be appropriate to monitor neighborhood-based policies and their evaluation not to focus solely on indicators relating to priority neighborhoods (and the population living there at a given time *t*), but to consider the whole territory and the mobilities, both daily and residential, between priority neighborhoods and other parts of the territory.

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