

## **Family vulnerability and risk territories**

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This paper focuses on the vulnerability of families according to the conditions of the territory (opportunities, needs and risk) of the city in which they live. How do the dwelling families react to the territory's needs and peculiarities? To what extent do the risks build up from one generation to another becoming a barrier to social change?

In general, the studies concerning the subject matter of vulnerability place the risk in ecological and environmental terms. In this paper, vulnerability is understood as a process of social and spatial order. We seek to detect the structure for opportunity that the place offers to the dwelling families, and also the interaction of that structure with its demographic, social, economical and cultural characteristics. As a result from this interaction, there is a greater or smaller exposure of these families to risks not only in the social sphere but also inside the family group itself. In this way, the territory is presented to society with its structure of opportunities apprehended according to the degree of freedom of choice and to the decision-making power of the social group into which the families are inserted.

The family groups are exposed to risk situations which are common at the places in which they dwell. However, the answers to these situations are different not only in terms of the family group itself, but also in terms of the members that compose it.

The family as a social nucleus represents an intermediation between its members and the structure of opportunities in the territory.

In this way, the greater or smaller exposure of family group members to common risks – which affect family members indistinctly – and to other more individualized

risks are intermediated by the socio-demographic characteristics of these families and their members. The situation of vulnerability of the families given by the socioeconomic, cultural and demographic characteristics is an intermediating instance for the situation of vulnerability of its members.

Moreover, this situation of vulnerability of the families, which have as a strong component the situation of vulnerability experienced in the past – which is expressed by the form of social and economical insertion of the elder members in their previous and current dwelling places – is important for a greater or smaller exposure to risks by their members.

In this context, we point out the vulnerability of youths aged between 15 and 29, which is evidenced by high rates of mortality by homicide. This theme is currently one of the most unsettling in cities in Brazil and around the world.

The mortality of youths is a challenge not only for its quantitative aspects, but mainly for the complexity of the problematic and its demographic, economical and social consequences. In the context of elevated mortality by violence, it is asked what the perspectives of this younger generation of overcoming social barriers in the territory in which they live are.

In order to contribute to the understanding of this fact, this paper analyses the experience in the metropolitan region of Brasília, capital of Brazil, stemming from a territorial perspective.

The location and mapping of the dwellings of youths aged between 15 and 29 victimized by homicide in the Metropolitan Area of Brasília between 2000 and 2005 show a pattern of location in the urban space pointing to the places where risk of homicide is considerably greater. The structure of opportunities at the place does not propitiate human development, nor potentialities of the dwellers, being characterized by: 1) little diversified and reduced economical activity; 2) unemployment, lack of work opportunities and of generating of income; 3) precariousness of urban infrastructure; 4) lack and/or difficulty in access to urban leisure, culture, security and health facilities; 5) distance to jobs; 6) habitation precariousness; 7) undefined land ownership situation.

Apart from that, the characteristics of dwelling families configure a framework of social, economical and cultural conditions which limit the capability of facing hardship, as follows: 1) the family ties that bind the families to the territory are fragile; 2) the family land ownership situation is uncertain, and the possibility of removal a constant threat; 3) the families do not have a history of community life due to several removals; 4) work at the dwelling place either does not exist or is informal, especially for youths; 5) the families do not know each other and have not built neighborhood bonds nor a social organization for youths; 6) they have not created a territorial identity; 7) the members of these families have little education, low income and lack of access to citizenship. Not finding the possibility of developing their potential, the active members remain immobilized. Furthermore, this situation brings greater difficulties for insertion in the job market, and consequently to a progressive barrier to mobility which is transmitted to each generation. It is exactly at these places with a concentration of the young generation where greater and more premature fecundity is found.

The young members of these families, often outside of the job market and of the educational system, or workers with low wages and with no perspectives of improving their life conditions are the most exposed to diverse risks and become easy prey for criminal organizations. The risk of entering organized crime arises especially when job opportunities come down to illegality. This situation brings tragic consequences to their families and to the places where they live. The family is deprived from their members, complicating their social mobility and effecting future generations.

It can then be said that vulnerability is developed through a process whose first moment constitutes in the latent risk, when the conditions of the place do not propitiate or favor social mobility, nor development of the potentials of the family groups and their members. As well as violence, other backward doings act on the community in the place. Risk territories are then created, which aggravate exclusion and vulnerability.

These territories are formed in the scope of the process of excluding urbanization, founded on social and economical inequities, especially within a context of high concentration of income and power. It is in the segregation and poverty-ridden territories that violence is manifested in all of its aspects: omission from the state, break of the social contract, lack of access to health, citizenship, education, professional formation, job market, security and urban infrastructure. It is urbanization without urbanity, without social justice.