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« The geography of educational opportunities in the city of Rio de Janeiro »

The question that guides this article is referring to the determination of the relations between the structure of educational opportunities in the city of Rio de Janeiro and the family strategies of school choice. The idea is to highlight the structure of opportunities as much as the capacity of the individuals to control and actively mobilize in order to adapt to the available opportunities. In Rio de Janeiro as well as in other Brazilian and Latin-American cities the educational system is strongly stratified. Out of strictly educational mechanisms of stratification, two can be highlighted: (a) allocation of students in public or private schools; (b) allocation of students in schools of the same sector, but that have different conditions. About the first aspect research has indicated a strong relation between the school sector and the socio-economic characteristics of the school's students. On the other hand, the second mechanism of stratification is related to the differentiated access to educational resources, even between schools of the same sector and provided for the underprivileged population. Out of the poor pupils the poorest attend the worst schools, a fact that is determined by the localization of the student's residence and the school. This involuntary tracking is strengthening the already existing inequalities by concentrating those students with underprivileged characteristics of their origin in the same deficient schools. It is very important as well to consider how educational opportunities are distributed spatially in the city of Rio de Janeiro. Studies of urban sociology point out that the model of residential segregation in Rio de Janeiro combines high social distance regarding social inequality of individuals and available urban resources and territorial proximity. The most obvious peculiarity of this model is the presence of illegal settlements (*favelas*) in areas of high concentration of the rich segments of the social structure. This perspective is approaching the concept of the *geography of opportunities* developed by Galster e Killer (1995) in which exist objective as much as subjective variations associated to the process of decision making and to the restrictions that space places. An *objective geography* refers to a structure, quality of and access to opportunities and varies between urban regions. At the same time the *subjective geography* (values, wishes, different types of mobilized capital and perceptions concerning opportunities) vary spatially as well. This type of geography limits the opportunities that are, in fact, accessible by the individuals. The potential opportunities of accessing primary schools of quality have to be considered limited not only because they are not available, but as well because they are considered to be irrelevant by families with a determined profile. The main focus of the presented paper is to show the mapping of the objective geography of educational opportunities in the city of Rio de Janeiro. The operationalization of this concept is executed by means of a Geographic Information System (GIS) and the analysis tools it offers. Two spatial layers are created representing demand and supply of schools. The demand of schools is being approached by calculating the spatial density of children between 6 and 14 years. The basis for this calculation is the 2000 census of the Brazilian Institute of Statistics and Geography (IBGE) that is available in census tracts. This data allows differentiated analysis and visualization on small scale. To model the supply of schools, all the existing public schools have been georeferenced and their catchment area has been calculated using spatial network analysis tools. These layers have been reduced to the built-up areas within the urban space and were are then combined to represent the opportunities of the public schools market in Rio de Janeiro. The paper considers as well the relations between the mapping of the geography of educational opportunities and family strategies (parental choice) that is regarded one aspect of the *subjective geography* of opportunities.