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**SOCIOECONOMIC FRAGMENTATION AND POVERTY:
CHALLENGES FOR URBAN GOVERNANCE.
THE CASE OF MONTEVIDEO**

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ABSTRACT

In this Paper, we attempt to analyze the interrelation between the process of socioeconomic fragmentation and urban poverty, and its consequences in terms of the challenges, which they represent for social policies and urban governance.

The analysis will be focussed in Montevideo, an atypical city in the Latin-American context, that despite its origins of “welfare society”, and being insert within the frame of economic restructuring and privatization policies, has developed social policies promoted by the Municipality, confronting increasing urban poverty during the last years. On this regard, it constitutes an interesting “case study”, in the comparative analysis.

In the first part, as an Introduction, we present some relevant hypotheses for the analysis of socioeconomic fragmentation and urban poverty. Secondly, we illustrate the main consequences of socioeconomic fragmentation in the city, as complex and multidimensional phenomena, closely related to the expansion of poverty. It will be examined the growing trends of social and spatial polarization, that have implied during this period, a substantial growth of social exclusion and urban poverty.

On third place, we examine the consequences and characteristics of social inequalities and the “impoverishment” of middle class, and the growing tendency of “informal settlements”, that have increased during the last ten years, at an impressive annual growth of 10%, in a context of demographic stagnation.

Finally, we present the role that during this process, have played social policies that City government and social organizations, have implemented; concerning its achievements, constraints and challenges, for urban governance.

INTRODUCTION AND HYPOTHESES¹

As Introduction, we present some relevant concepts and hypotheses that constitute a frame of reference to the analysis of socioeconomic fragmentation and urban poverty. On this regard, it may be assumed that **"different dimensions and forms of globalization", have consequences on diverse sectors and areas, within contexts of growing transnational economic and political decisions. Another hypothesis states, that "globalization involves socioeconomic heterogeneity", as far as local commentates are insert in stages of unequal development and fragmentation.** Likewise, it exists in many cases, a "globalization of national problems", and at the same time, "specific realities for cities and regions", as geographic boundaries looses and space, time and human values are fragmented (Giddens 1990, Ianni 1995).

On the other hand, in the present stage there are global networks that articulate Individuals, population segments, regions and cities; and at the same time, they exclude other individuals, socioeconomic sectors and areas. Consequently, countries suffer the impacts of this dualization, by which transnational links and dynamic components of globalization are created, segregating and excluding social groups, within cities and regions. **It may be assumed that the New World in the beginning of the millenium implies structural changes in socioeconomic relations; with significative effects on society, such as the growth of inequality, social exclusion and labor market fragmentation.** (Castells 1998).

¹ In this Paper, we present some hypotheses and research findings, from the Project: "Transformations and social consequences of restructuring and globalization", that is being developed with the support of the Scientific Research Committee (CSIC), of the Universidad de la República.

In Latin America, we face during the last years, changing conditions of the objects, (settlements, cities and processes), and subjects (communities, social groups, etc), of Urban research. To that extent, the analysis of urban society, implies the evaluation of complex factors, that influence these changes, such as: economic restructuring and labor transformations, impact of new technologies, State Reforms and decentralization, cultural changes and new patterns of consumption, residential mobility, etc.

Within this context and considering, its implications in concern with social policies, There are several impacts upon quality of life of urban population, according to the influence of the mentioned processes in labour markets, levels of income, family strategies, etc.. On this regard, when we analyze social changes and emerging issues in the cities, it may be assumed that these transformations are closely associated to the globalization and exclusion forces. Summing up these changes, we emphasize the following elements that compose the urban scenario in our time (Veiga 2000):

☀ Transformations within the urban society and system; at the productive and labour markets and in quality of life.
☀ New family strategies and forms of appropriation of “urban space”.
☀ Growing trends of socioeconomic fragmentation and segregation.
☀ Impacts of new technologies on economic and residential localization.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- New patterns of consumption and "urban culture".- Diversity of actors with conflicts and demands for City Management.

The confluence of these elements and the changes in the patterns of growth and localization within the cities, stimulate deep socioeconomic differentiation between the urban population and the diverse type of settlements. This implies that sustainable development of the urban environment, has important constraints, according to the “social vulnerability”, that growing sectors of the population present.

On this regard, in order to get a better understanding of social urban processes, it is necessary to **“identify the new inequalities and patterns of social differentiation within the cities”**. So it is useful to remember that towards the end of the 80’s, comparative research in several Latin-American countries, have demonstrated **the influence of strategic processes in the social structure of cities, such as decay of industrialization, and expansion of informalization and fragmentation**, for their impact the quality of life of population. (cf. Portes 1989, Lombardi y Veiga 1989). During the 90’s, **these processes - together with other mechanisms of socioeconomic polarization - stimulate “new forms of poverty” within different urban sectors**. (For example, the new socioeconomic trends and profile of the informal settlements population).

It has been verified that **socioeconomic fragmentation, aggravates diverse forms of urban segregation, inducing significative changes in the culture and strategies of urban population, and mostly in the emergency of “social risk and vulnerability”**, that particularly affect women, young people and poor. (CEPAL-UNDP 1999). Within this context, it may be assumed that social fragmentation is a complex and multidimensional phenomena, that requires to analyze in specific contexts, certain key variables, such as: patterns of stratification, labour market heterogeneity, changes in the agents of socialization and power relationships. (Mingione 1994).

It is also useful to acknowledge as a relevant dimension of modern society, the “growing fragmentation of individual experiences, that belong to different places and times”. (Touraine 1997). This implies a rejection of predominant economicist approaches; emphasizing the cultural complexity of our cities – even in relative homogenous societies like Argentina and Uruguay -. On this regard, the interrelationship between the “global

culture” versus “local culture”, constitutes an important line of research, in order to understand the effects of globalization. (Featherstone 1996).

In this perspective, it has been criticized the “paradigm of political economy”, predominant in Urban Studies, demanding more attention to the cultural dimensions and the processes of social disintegration in the cities. (cf. Walton 1993).

Within this context, even in societies with relative high standards of equity and social integration in the Latinamerican region, emerge during the 90’s several components of sociocultural fragmentation. On this concern, we stress the **“new poverty profiles”, (precarious employment, low income, descendent social mobility and urban violence), that associated to patterns of residential and education segregation, accentuate “middle class impoverishment”, disintegration and social exclusion for important sectors of urban society.** (Katzman 1996, Minujin y Kessler 1995).

In this complex scenario, it has been postulated that the perspectives of local societies for the next years, will evolve within the frame of “globalization and the consequences of collective anomie”. (Candido Mendes 1997). It may be also considered, that in everyday life fragmentation, emerge cultural factors, such as the multiplicity of information and data, that people are exposed, through global mass communication. In this regard, M.Castells (1998), eloquent prediction about a growing trend towards a society with “informed perplexity”, seems to be well oriented; when we consider the amount of information, without the necessary education and analysis skills, that increasingly large numbers of people experience.

Taking into consideration, these elements; the following processes converge through different degrees and influence in the urban social structure:

☀ The weakness of the Welfare State and policies, through growing privatization, tertiarization and loss of the public domain in the urban space.
☀ The loss of “traditional frame of reference and socialization agents”, due to changes in the family and residential segregation.
☀ Labour market restructuring and technological changes, with selective impacts on social classes and urban areas.
☀ Weakness of sociopolitical representation and emergency of urban conflicts.
☀ “Macdonaldization of cultural patterns”, through collective consumption and its differential impact on social classes.

SOCIOECONOMIC INEQUALITIES AND URBAN FRAGMENTATION

Sociospatial differentiation in the Montevideo Metropolitan Area

In the context of the mentioned processes, and previously to the analysis of fragmentation and urban segregation in Montevideo, it is necessary to describe the changes occurred in the Metropolitan Area.

On this regard, it is useful to refer the conclusions from a Study that enables us to identify some basic hypotheses about the evolution and characteristics of Metropolitan Montevideo. During the 90's, this Area goes through a new stage, under the influence of combined factors, associated with the globalization process; technological changes, services expansion, new patterns of consumption and investment and urban management. Within this context, some dynamic forces emerge, such as: new centrality's in the peripheral suburbs, recreation areas, private urbanization and shopping malls. (Bervejillo and Lombardi 1999).

According to its relative homogeneity in urban, and socioeconomic standards, it has been identified the main areas: (Central, Intermediate, Coast, periphery, and Ciudad de la Costa). On this concern, significative tendencies originated during the 90's, among the following:

✦ *A strong spatial relocalization of services and commerce, associated to the multiplication of shopping centers and supermarkets, that contribute to a "concentrated decentralization" of collective consumption spaces. (For example, shoppings located in the Coast). On the other hand, there is a growing trend towards, education and health services relocalization. In these cases, the metropolization of services benefits those neighborhoods of middle and high classes, such as the Coast.*

✨ *In the periphery of the City (North, West and East), there is a substantial demographic growth, with predominance of low classes. This growth originates in migrations from the “established areas” (Central), and combines different types: self-construction in regular areas, public housing units and informal settlements.*

In the Coastal City (Ciudad de la Costa), converge a high population growth with predominance of nuclear families and strong real state operations. There is also an important diversification and consolidation of services. (Bervejillo y Lombardi op.cit.).

Throughout this process, there was a displacement of middle and high classes, towards new areas through traditional and new urban forms, such as private urbanization (countries) and “urban farms”. This implies a strong contrast between the growth of the Coast and the stability or population decline of the Central Areas and old neighborhoods.

Considering these processes, we analyze in the next section, some conceptual and empirical elements, in concern with spatial fragmentation and urban poverty in Montevideo.

SPATIAL FRAGMENTATION AND URBAN POVERTY IN MONTEVIDEO

In the Latinamerican region, Uruguay is characterized by its relative high degree of Social development, as a result of its socioeconomic standards, social security policies and democratic tradition. On this regard, the “Welfare State” established during the first decades of XX century, stimulated a society with social integration and low inequalities, in comparative terms with other countries. (UNDP 1999). Considering these elements, it is necessary to examine the recent trends of urban inequalities; in this sense we introduce the main data concerning the evolution of poverty in Montevideo.

It is known that socioeconomic inequalities, are closely related to different standards of living for the population. On this regard, and – considering its methodological constraints -, we may identify, some dimensions of these problems, through the Unsatisfied Basic Needs Index and the proportion of households under poverty line.

In this perspective, we must observe that **in the period 1989-1994, there was at the “national level”, an improvement in living conditions comparable to a reduction of 40% in poverty levels; as a result of specific policies in urban services, (housing, health and water), and social security benefits.** However, to obtain an adequate comprehension of the emerging social inequalities, it is necessary to analyze these processes at disaggregated levels.

On this regard, recent research based on microdata from Census and the CEPAL-DGEC Study, have demonstrated that socioeconomic fragmentation occurs mostly at “intraregional” and “intraurban” levels, and therefore it is necessary to analyze these problems at microlevels, such as neighborhoods, small areas, etc., if we wish to get a better understanding of these processes, in relation with urban social changes. (cf. Veiga op.cit).

When we analyze the case of Montevideo, in general terms, some important tendencies emerge according to a recent research. It has been argued that **the concentration and decrease of income, verified since 1995, stops the improvement of poverty levels, that had occurred since 1992.** (Arim y Furtado 2000).

Likewise, in 1993, the 20% of poorest population, had 6.3% of total income, while this proportion diminished to 5.4% in 1997. On the contrary, the wealthiest 20% of Montevideans, absorbed in 1993, 44.7% of income, which increased to 47.5% in 1997. This redistribution of income against the poor, together with income and real wages reduction, stimulated during the last years, an increase in deprivation levels for a large part of the city households.

Moreover, the changes produced during the 90's in the labour market, such as rises in unemployment, underemployment, informality and precarious jobs, constitute central factors for acceleration of "new forms of poverty and middle class impoverishment". For instances, according to recent data from INE and BPS (National Institutions for Statistics and Social Security), there is about 40% of the economic active population, with labour problems, in its different forms, and without social security coverage. Unemployment rates of youngsters rise to 28% for men and 37% for women. It has been argued that when these conditions prevail for long periods of time, they originate diverse types of social disintegration and urban segregation. (Mingione 1998).

In order to examine the evolution of households and population under poverty lines, during the 90's in Montevideo, we introduce Table1, which data enable to confirm some trends. It is very important to notice the high proportion of poor children, where 50% of those less than 5 years of age, and 40% between 6 and 14, live in households under poverty line. This has recently, led to consider **that the poverty situation of children, breaks through "the so called model of social integration and welfare", that Uruguayan society, had during many decades.** (Informe Quinquenal. Comite Derechos del Niño en Uruguay 2000).

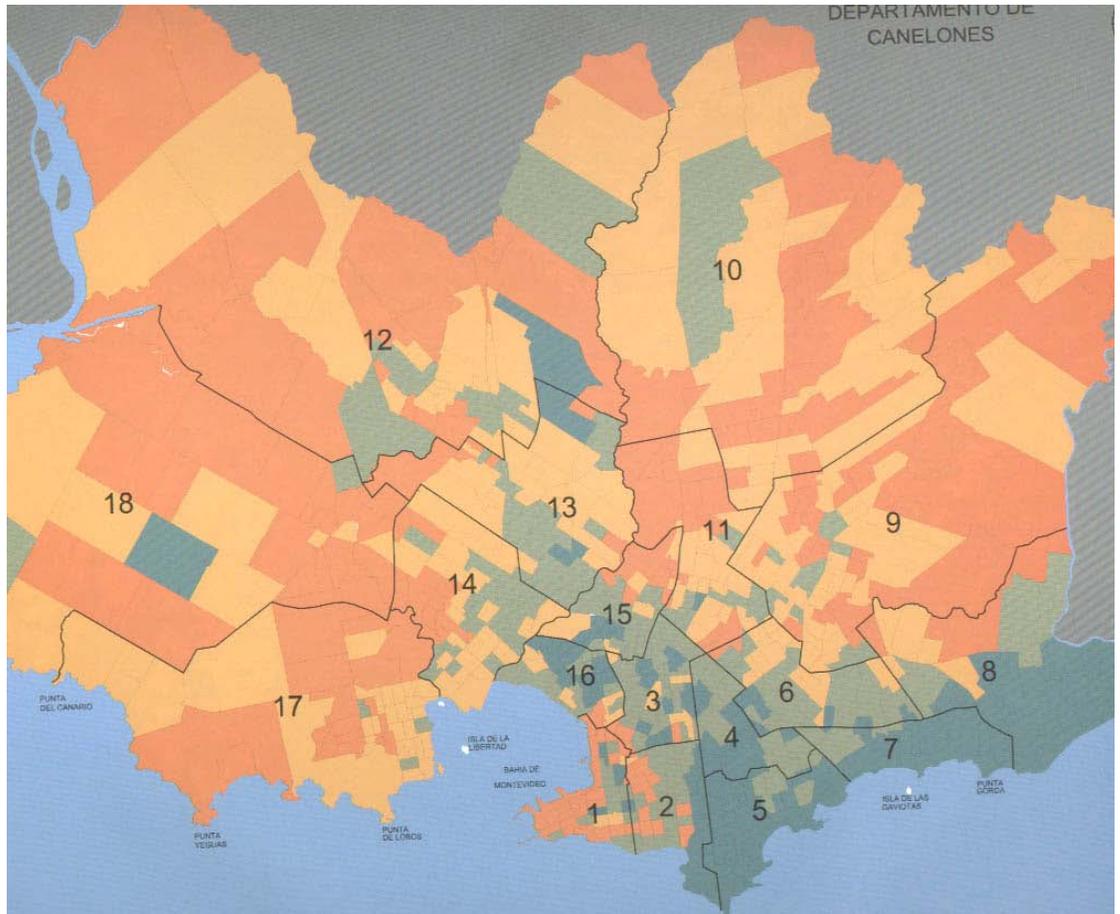
Table 1

**% Households, Total population and children, under Poverty Line
Montevideo 1991 - 1999****(% / total of each group, by years)**

Year	House holds	Populat.	< 5 years	< 15 years
1991	27,4	33,9	51,2	51,2
1992	16,2	23,0	40,3	41,2
1993	13,9	19,7	35,0	35,3
1994	13,4	19,8	38,8	36,8
1995	15,3	22,2	41,0	40,3
1996	16,0	22,8	43,0	40,2
1997	16,2	23,7	45,3	41,7
1998	15,4	22,9	47,5	42,7
1999	15,9	23,5	50,2	44,1

Source: Unidad Estadística IMM 2000

Furthermore, to spatially illustrate the socioeconomic differentiation in Montevideo, at the micro level, we introduce a Map designed by the Statistical Unit of the Municipality, based on social indicators. This gives empirical support to appreciate social inequalities in the city, and the spatial fragmentation patterns, for the different neighborhoods at a lower aggregation level (based on census units). It reveals, the contexts of social diversity, in which Montevidean families evolve.



SOCIOECONOMIC DIFFERENTIATION IN MONTEVIDEO

Source: Socioeconomic levels by neighbourhoods in Montevideo based on census indicators of Housing,

Comfort and standards of living. The blue coloured, indicates the higher strata and the red the lowest.

These elements enable to analyze the variety of situations in the urban space, and even though many colleagues, have referred to this phenomena in terms of “dual city”; we argue that it is more adequate to formulate the problem, in terms of “fragmented city”, according to the socioeconomic diversity (spatially and socially represented in the urban space).²

On this regard, it should be pointed out that, the highest levels of “social risk”, concentrate in some neighborhoods of West, North and Eastern areas, while residents in Central and Coast Areas, have better living standards. Moreover, we present another Indicator to illustrate urban fragmentation, such as the comfort level of households, by large areas of the city. In this perspective, data from Table 2, show clearly the privileged position of the population living in Central and Coast Areas, while the lowest levels of comfort, belong to the East and particularly Western Areas of the city.

Table 2

Households Levels of Comfort by Regions - Montevideo (%) *

Level of Comfort	% Central - Coast	% East	% West
High	52	38	30
Medium	39	40	45
Low	9	22	25
	100	100	100

² In an interesting article, C.Q.Ribeiro (2000), discusses the process of “dualization and fragmentation” in the social structure of Rio de Janeiro. Some of its conclusions, seem to be valid in the case of Montevideo, in terms of differentiation and localization of social classes, beyond the dichotomy between rich and poor.

Source: On data from Unidad Estadística IMM. 2000

✳ Level of Comfort according to an Index based on Households electrical appliance.

SOCIAL STRATIFICATION AND SEGREGATION IN MONTEVIDEO

As it has been previously observed, Uruguay is recognized in the Latinamerican continent, as a society with high levels of equity and social integration. However, recent tendencies, - some of which were annotated before - , enable to identify “new social cleavages”, that reinforce the growing socioeconomic and cultural fragmentation, that evolves in our country.

In this perspective, the referred Study of UNDP-CEPAL, introduces several concepts and indicators, about “social vulnerability” and Human Development, using **the approach of assets, vulnerability and social exclusion, to analyze the mechanisms which stimulate urban poverty and fragmentation.** This work as those related to “social capital”, contribute to know better the mechanisms of social inequality. (Moser1998, Portes 1998).

Within this context, and considering the reduction in poverty levels at the beginning of the 90's, and its subsequent growing tendency since 1995, it may be argued that **fragmentation and vulnerability, imply the constitution of social frontiers and decrease of interrelations, among people from different socioeconomic origins**”. One of the main consequences of these processes, is social disintegration, through mechanisms of residential and educational segregation. (CEPAL op.cit.).

With the objective to contribute to the measurement of these complex processes, we introduce in Table 3, some indicators that reveal some dimensions of the mentioned phenomena. (children with school delay, young population who don't work or study, and teenager unmarried mothers).

Table 3
**Indicators of Social Vulnerability and Urban Segregation
by Neighborhoods in Montevideo**

Indicators	Socioeconomic Level of Neighborhood		
	Low	Medium	High
% Children 8-15 with School delay	38	26	19
% Youngsters don't study or work	16	11	7
% Teenagers Unmarried Mothers	12	7	5

Source: On data from PNUD – CEPAL (1999).

The significant differences in the values of these indicators, according to the socioeconomic level of neighborhoods, confirm observed trends and situations of social risk, in contexts with residents of the lower classes. Although the level of data aggregation, does not enable more detailed inferences; the former tendencies, may be assimilated to impoverished middle class sectors, as a result of precarious jobs and income decrease. Within this context, it may be pointed out, in accordance with Maps from the GIS Unit of the Municipality; that low medium and low socioeconomic sectors, concentrate spatially in the Northern, and peripheries of West and Eastern areas, and they also are located in some neighborhoods of the Central Area.³

³ Mapa Nivel Socioeconómico. No. I 20. Memoria Informativa Plan Montevideo. IMM

The former conceptual and empirical elements, refer to the discussion of social inequality. On this regard, it may be argued that - in the globalization scenario -, some crucial dimensions such as access to education and knowledge, become mechanisms of inequality, by reproducing social exclusion.⁴

In this context, we acknowledge that even in societies with relative high standards of equity – like Uruguay -, **deficits of social integration, feedback the circle of poverty and urban segregation, placing the problem of inequality as a central issue.** Moreover, according to recent research, **it exists a growing perception among public opinion and elites in our countries, about the problem of social inequality and poverty, as a threat to personal security and public order.** (cf. Factum Survey 2000 and Reis 2000).

Likewise, the problem of residential segregation, becomes relevant, as several phenomena, such as the localization strategies of different social classes, the decay of urban spaces and the expansion of marginality, discriminate against the “social integration in the city”. It is interesting to confirm, in relation to the urban social of neighborhoods, that its population interrelate each time more with those of similar contexts; and segregate from those different. **“This segregation implies a stratification of social capital, to the extent that social networks are limited by social distance, when established in differentiated residential areas, which constraints the interaction between social classes”** (Katzman 1999).

Within this analysis, we introduce some additional empirical elements, which give another perspective in relation with inequalities and social stratification. Therefore, in Table 4, several Indicators illustrate the differential access of population to Services and goods, commonly typified as “modern or globalized”, according to socioeconomic status.

⁴ A recent article, stress in this perspective, the strategic role of knowledge in the origin and reproduction of social inequalities, and its implications in terms of capacities for action. (Stehr 2000).

Table 4**Socioeconomic Inequalities and access to Services and Goods****(% Households in Montevideo by Socioeconomic Status)**

% Access to	Socioeconomic Status			
	% High Med. High	% Medium	% Med. Low	% Low
Credit Cards	73	49	25	20
Automat.Cash	48	21	13	6
Internet	47	10	6	4
Car	74	49	25	22
Computer	65	20	7	6

Source: Survey CIFRA, May 2000. Montevideo.

In sum, the Indicators confirm different forms of “life styles” and significant socioeconomic inequalities in Montevideo. In the first place, the households of high and medium high status, have an important access to these services, such as computers, Internet and credit cards. In second place, those of medium status, present a much lower level of access to these services. In the third place, medium-low and low groups, have very reduced access to information, and technology goods and services.

On the other hand, is useful to refer some findings of recent research, that give additional support about the process of social fragmentation. In this case, a Study for the Municipality, confirmed opposite life strategies that emerge among the Montevidean young population (IDES 200):

There is pattern which characterizes most young population of low and middle low class, residents in the North, West and Eastern neighborhoods, by elements such as school delay, early access to non qualified jobs, having children early, high proportion who don't work or study, and closed social networks; all these factors contribute to social exclusion.

On the other hand, middle and high class youngsters, develop life strategies signed by social assets and cultural capital, that imply patterns such as high commitment to study, later insertion in the labour market, social mobility, and participation in different social networks.

Moreover, there are other empirical findings about “socioeconomic and cultural distance”, that divides families and particularly children, living in different areas of the city,⁵ which confirm trends related to educational deficits and residential segregation. It has also been demonstrated, that the lowest index of school repetition (less than 10%), concentrate in a reduced group of neighborhoods in Central and Coastal Areas; while in the rest of city, emerge levels over 30% of repetition.⁶

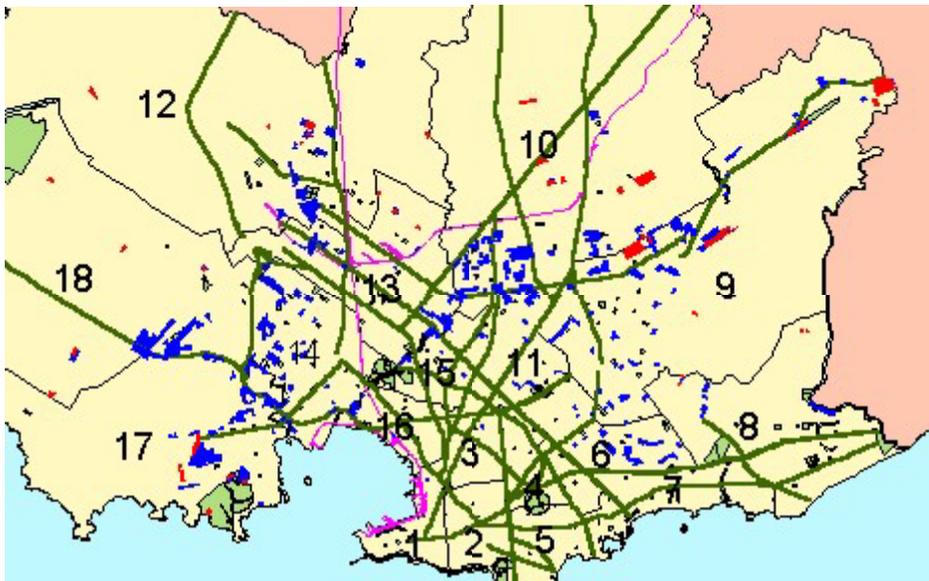
⁵ Report of the Administración Nacional de Educación Pública, ANEP 2000, based on the analysis of school repetition in the 90' decade in 261 primary schools of Montevideo.

⁶ Report of Dept. of Economics, Facultad de Ciencias Sociales (2000), based on a representative survey of school pupils.

Finally, given its consequences and growing impact in the processes of social inequality and urban segregation, it is necessary to refer the problem of “informal settlements”, which had a rate of annual growth of 10% in the last intercensus period, within a national context of population stagnation.

On this regard, we know according to data of INTEC, that 94% of households in these settlements, are located in the peripheral areas of the city, and represent 34% of its population. Likewise, there is a high concentration of these marginalized urban forms in Montevideo, to the extent that 81% of national population, living in these conditions, locate in the capital. (INTEC-UNICEF 1999).

INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS IN MONTEVIDEO



Source: Sector Información Geográfica .Intendencia Municipal de Montevideo POT 2000.

On the other hand, according to a recent research in these areas, there is an important proportion of children and young population, high number of women head of households, and diverse socioeconomic constraints. In sum, considering its effects in the processes of urban fragmentation, the following elements predominate in these excluded areas of the city (INTEC 2000):⁷

- ✨ **High growth dynamics**
- ✨ **Socioeconomic segregation patterns**
- ✨ **Confrontation Formal vs. Informal society**
- ✨ **Young population conflicts**
- ✨ **Weakness of Social Energy**

In this perspective, it must be emphasized the growing relevance, that cultural dimensions have in urban fragmentation and social inequalities. On this regard, it may be argued that, “mechanisms of social exclusion, reveal images and representations, by which social groups or classes, tend to ignore others from institutional and social coexistence. Sometimes, emerge feelings that lead to the reproduction of exclusion, through several types of frontiers, related to the access to urban services.” (Cohen 2000).⁸

After having analyzed the main characteristics of socioeconomic fragmentation and urban inequalities, we illustrate in the following section, some crucial elements of social policies implemented in the Municipality of Montevideo, concerning these problems.

⁷ On this regard, attempting to reverse the dramatic situation of these settlements, INTEC has proposed the territorial and integrated focalization of social urban programs.

⁸ It is interesting to refer a recent article, where social exclusion is seen as a product of self-segregation patterns, of elites and middle class, to the extent that they look for neighbourhoods with better services. (Ribeiro L.C.Q. op.cit).

SOCIAL POLICIES AND URBAN POVERTY IN MONTEVIDEO".⁹

Decentralization and Social Policies of the Municipality

In concern with the processes formerly analyzed, it may be pointed out, the significance of Decentralization and social policies for deprived sectors, as one of the outstanding characteristics of Montevideo Municipality, during the 90's.¹⁰

This reflects not only in declarations, budget and institutional functioning, but also in the innovation, content and management during this process. This implied a new form of social organization, from a type of "political management" toward a "participatory approach". (Midaglia 1992). In the case of Montevideo, there was an absence of citizens participation in urban management. There were very few experiences about these themes, in as much as former welfare policies, did not stimulate participation, but on the contrary clientilistic relationships.

However, during this period, the Municipality attempted to facilitate the population participation, through decentralization policies. "The urban space and territorial decentralized areas of the city, become crucial elements within this process, increasing knowledge, mutual needs and solidarity among neighbors, as well as efficiency in the management of urban services " (Balea et al.).

⁹ Research findings from the Project by Ana L.Rivoir CLACSO/ASDI 1999-2000, are referred in this section.

¹⁰ Decentralization process began in 1990, after the assumption of the Left Coalition Frente Amplio to the Municipality.

On this regard, this process introduced changes that modified relationships between Municipality and Civil Society. There was a restructuring of functions and mechanisms of innovation in participatory urban policies; within this context, urban policies have assumed the challenge, and that has produced a substantial transformations in the design and implementation of social policies, that obviously involved difficulties and obstacles. For instances, to incorporate population participation to social policies, required a large amount of innovation, given the former paternalistic tradition and also to the prevalence of focalized and “social compensation types” of neoliberal approaches. (Vilas 1998).

In general terms, it is assumed that social policies are strongly influenced by a tendency, in which Municipalities assume competences that were before implemented by the central government. This is due to the transference of responsibilities in the context of decentralization policies, which does not always has the necessary transference of resources. In many case, this situation has consolidated given the central government’s abandonment of social problems, and thus getting closer the local authorities, to population demands. (Bodemer et al 1999).

Within this context, the Montevideo Municipality, has assumed responsabilites for urban services, belonging in some cases to other State institutions; giving coverage to social deprived population sectors, and thus surpassing its competences and specific resources. This process, has implied strong commitment in concern with priorities and criteria for policy making.

The participatory component of social policies in Montevideo, is a component of the democratization role given to municipal programs. There has been different lines of policies implemented, for a variety of social problems and deprived groups, such as deprived children and teenagers assistance, women’s programs, handicaped and elderly groups, etc.

At the specific level, these policies have been implemented at the central spheres of the Municipality. There is a large variety of sectorial Programs in the different divisions, but there is also a sectorial logic resistance from the central authorities, that makes rather difficult the involvement in the decentralization process, of the main actors who participate in it. It should be considered that the decentralized dimension in the implementation of social policies, implies coordination among this plurality of social agents involved in the urban management. (Technical staff, bureaucrats, authorities, and local leaders).

These difficulties between the central and local spheres, constitute a permanent source of conflicts for daily municipal action. However, there are many experiences in which there has been a coordination at decentralized levels, in different social programs and city neighborhoods. In this case, they represent instances of participation for local agents, public and private, together with NGO's and the municipal divisions.

Another type of obstacles concerning social policies implementation, is related to different approaches in terms of "time periods and rythms of work". On the one hand, there are daily urgencies for urban services; on the other, "social decision times" concerning social organizations and neighbors processes of information, involvement and participation, that require longer periods of dedication and negotiation.

Another relevant component of the social policies action at the municipal level, is related to the NGO's, which has been in permanent increase since the beginning of the process. There are many Agreements with these Institutions, in diverse forms and contents, with different roles, methodologies, criteria and characteristics; but they form part of social policies and are intended to attend deprived social groups, sucs as children and teenagers, women, etc..

Within this diversity, there are different approaches with regard to the relationships between the Municipality and NGO's. For example, there is a conception of NGO's as private enterprises, by subcontracting services; other municipal managers consider them as strategic allies to carry on social transformations, independently of efficiency or costs criteria and there are some, who consider its action only in the social dimension. These approaches are exemplified by a professional from the Municipality, who argues: *"Agreements with NGO's have a double function; they give opportunities to people and they also are an alternative to privatization policies"*. This approach has a social goal, in giving opportunities to these organizations, facing the market forces.

In sum, NGO's have played an important role in promoting social policies at the Municipality of Montevideo. They have implied more participation for population, in the provision of urban services and urban management. This means an important change in terms of relationships between the State, Local Governments and forms of civil society.

In concern with social policies implementation, it is necessary to emphasize some issues that constitute focus of problems and also relevant areas to improve:

☀ **Relationship Technical – Political Components.**

It constitutes a key problem in terms of the capacity to interrelate the technical and political dimensions, in decision making and management. The improvement of this relationship, represents a priority for the municipality.

☀ **Follow up and evaluation.**

Lack of follow up and management evaluation is one constraint of decentralization and social policies. The improvement of this issue, would enable the maximization of resources and services provision.

☀ **Coordination.**

To improve the coordination among the different actors involved in the social policies programs, would avoid the loosen of responsibilities, and would increase the flux of information in concern with the instances of management, and duplication problems.

☀ **Existing Resources.**

It is necessary to take advantage of the existing resources in the community and do not replace other institutions actions, like clubs, churches, cooperatives, etc..

☀ **Integral Policies.**

The approach of social policies as integral, implies a conception of social problems as multidimensional and complex. On this regard, the integral approach is postulated from the Municipality as a challenge, attempting to become development policies. The prevailing constraints, do not correspond to theoretical opposite schemes or lack of technical capacity, but rather they are focussed in the institutional obstacles to implement these policies.

In brief, social policies have played an important role in the municipal action in Montevideo. Although socioeconomic inequalities in our cities, are not often attacked from local governments, Montevideo's case, illustrates a different approach, with social programs for the poor; looking for efficiency and maximation of public resources. Social policies in this case, have considerable prestige in the region, due to the learning process, achievements and significance for local government; but as it was mentioned before, there are obstacles and challenges to face ahead.

Finally, as a result of the elements presented and analyzed in this Paper, we emphasize the need to implement integral social policies, to reach different social groups, in terms of their characteristics, problems and specific demands. To that extent, particularly in countries like Argentina and Uruguay, we should **define policies not only for poor and low class sectors, but also for other sectors; given the importance of middle class and the processes of impoverishment and socioeconomic fragmentation in the cities.**

In synthesis, we have observed several strategic issues to consider when defining social policies; these should integrate our Agenda of Research and Intervention, in order to contribute to urban governance. Among these, the following elements may be mentioned:

- ✨ **Factors that reinforce social inequalities**
- ✨ **Mechanisms of urban segregation and social disintegration**
- ✨ **Social vulnerability of children, young population and women**
- ✨ **Perception of elites and population about inequality and poverty**
- ✨ **Policies of Decentralization**
- ✨ **Social Participation**

The implications of these areas for research and analysis are relevant, for Social Sciences development, and particularly to contribute to the definition and implementation of social policies for vulnerable sectors of our society. On this regard, we emphasize the need to promote multidisciplinary activities and strategies of research and cooperation, among Universities, Municipalities, NGO's, etc., in order to break the disciplinary ghettos and "separate worlds", prevailing among academic researchers, professionals, politicians and community leaders. (Stren 1996, Veiga 2000b).

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