

RECENT APPROACHES OF URBAN POVERTY

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ABSTRACT

This article brings together, according to different approaches, the studies that contribute to the recent debate on urban poverty, without intending to exhaust them. It begins with an overview of the conceptions of poverty developed throughout the twentieth century, focusing on the development of a liberal perspective on the subject, as well as on social approaches, based on Marxist foundations and Christian principles. It continues by addressing the “new urban poverty” approach in the recent debate, from the Marxist perspective regarding the impacts from productive restructuring resulting from globalization, at the turn of the twenty-first century. Finally, it addresses the recent discussion on poverty through the category of social vulnerability, developed on the basis of a neoliberal perspective of social disadvantages, as well as from the neo-Marxist perspective on the curtailment of rights.

Keywords: Poverty concepts, Urban poverty, Exclusion, Globalization, Social vulnerability.

RESUMO / RESUMEN

ABORDAGENS RECENTES DA POBREZA URBANA

Este artigo reúne, segundo distintas abordagens, os estudos que contribuem para o debate recente sobre a pobreza urbana, sem pretender esgotá-los. Inicia com a construção do conceito de pobreza, ao longo do século XX, focalizando os estudos de bases economicistas, que associam a pobreza à carência de necessidades, bem como aqueles de cunho social, pautados nos fundamentos marxistas, ou nos princípios do comunitarismo cristão. Segue com a abordagem da “nova pobreza urbana” no debate recente, sob a perspectiva marxista dos impactos da reestruturação produtiva decorrentes da globalização, que surge na virada do século XX ao XXI. É, por fim, aborda a discussão, também recente, da pobreza a partir da categoria da vulnerabilidade social, com estudos desenvolvidos com base na perspectiva neoliberal das desvantagens sociais, bem como a partir da perspectiva neomarxista do cerceamento de direitos.

Palavras chaves: Conceitos de pobreza; Pobreza urbana; Exclusão; Globalização; Vulnerabilidade social.

ENFOQUES RECIENTES DE LA POBREZA URBANA

Este artículo reúne, según distintos enfoques, los estudios que contribuyen al debate reciente de la pobreza urbana, sin pretender agotarlos. Se inicia con la construcción del concepto de pobreza a lo largo del siglo XX, enfocando los estudios de bases economicistas, que asocian la pobreza a la carencia de necesidades, así como aquellos de cunho social, pautados en los fundamentos marxistas, o en los principios del comunitarismo cristiano. Se sigue con el enfoque de la “nueva pobreza urbana” en el debate reciente, desde la perspectiva marxista de los impactos de la reestructuración productiva derivados de la globalización, que surge a la vuelta del siglo XX al XXI. Y, finalmente, aborda la discusión, también reciente, de la pobreza a partir de la categoría de la vulnerabilidad social, con estudios desarrollados con base en la perspectiva neoliberal de las desventajas sociales, así como desde la perspectiva neo marxista del cercenamiento de derechos.

Palabras clave: Conceptos de pobreza; Pobreza urbana; Exclusión; Globalización; Vulnerabilidad social

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INTRODUCTION

In 1978, the Seminário Nacional sobre Pobreza Urbana e Desenvolvimento (National Seminar on Urban Poverty and Development), held in the Brazilian north-eastern city of Recife, bringing together intellectuals from both Brazil and abroad to discuss the problem of urban marginality, represented one of the milestones in the discussion on urban poverty in Brazil. On this occasion, the Brazilian geographer Milton Santos published *Pobreza Urbana*¹ (Urban Poverty), which consolidated the discussions from this seminar, the presentation of which begins thus:

The problem of poverty has now become incontestable for two reasons: partly because of the generality of the phenomenon, which affects all countries, although it particularly afflicts underdeveloped countries, but also because of rampant urbanization, of which this latter group is well aware, which is accompanied by the expansion, at an equal rate, of poverty, even when it is presented in a certain, specific manner in each country and in the different cities of the same country. (SANTOS, 1978, p. 1)²

Almost forty years later, the Human Development Report 2014, drawn up by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), reported that, despite recent progress in reducing poverty, “more than 2.2 billion people are either near or living in multidimensional poverty” (UNDP, 2014, p. 3), with coexisting deprivations in the areas of health, education and quality of life, which corresponds to more than 15% of the world population. And “nearly 80 percent of the global population lack comprehensive social protection. About 12 percent (842 million) suffer from chronic hunger, and nearly half of all workers—more than 1.5 billion—are in informal or precarious employment” (UNDP, 2014, p. 3). The 2016 report also reaffirms the issue of poverty, stating that “One person in nine in the world is hungry, and one in three is malnourished.” (UNDP, 2016, p. 5)

The persistence of poverty and of not meeting essential needs; the increase of inequalities and the persistence of practices that violate basic political freedoms and basic formal freedoms; the precariousness of work and the increasing vulnerability of workers; in addition to spatial re-configurations, with an increasing tendency towards the exclusivity of residential and commercial spaces, the privatization of public spaces and the stigmatization of popular spaces, all highlight the importance of reviewing the different approaches that the issue of poverty has taken on in western academic debate.

The popular, urban social movements that fight for housing and collective goods, services and equipment, generally linked to the level of a neighbourhood or of a particular locality, which emerged in France in the second half of the 1960s, and later in other countries, prompted a series of debates on the theme of urban poverty. In Brazil, urban social movements, mostly with regard to land ownership and housing, have expanded since the mid-1970s, thereby also broadening discussion on the insertion of the very poorest into the cities.

Studies on the urban issue, with interpretations based on a Marxist perspective, proliferated, initially in Western Europe,³ and supported later studies developed in Latin America, including in Brazil, during the redemocratization process.⁴ Amongst the “new actors” that emerged on the Brazilian political scene throughout this decade, the Catholic Church is outstanding, with its joint action of the Base Ecclesiastical Communities, and its support and assistance for the protest movements between the 1970s and 1980s, based on the principles of Christian personalism, developed

(1) *Pobreza Urbana* (Urban Poverty) makes part of the *Coleção Estudos Urbanos* (A Collection of Urban Studies), and was published in collaboration with the Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, for the Seminário Nacional sobre Pobreza Urbana e Desenvolvimento, held in Recife (4-7th December 1978), and promoted by the Master Degree Course in Urban Development (MDU).

(2) Unless otherwise stated, this and all other non-English citations hereafter, have been translated into English by the author.

(3) Amongst several authors, we would mention Henry Lefebvre, Jean Lojkine, Manuel Castels, Mark Gottdiener, David Harvey, Edmundo Preteceille, Christian Topalov, in the international sphere.

(4) In the national sphere, we would mention, amongst many, authors such as Milton Santos, Francisco de Oliveira, Maria da Conceição Tavares, Lúcio Kowarick, Pedro Demo, Ermínia Maricato and Suzana Pasternak

in Europe after the Second World War. At the same time, studies that related poverty and income, which had become systematic throughout the twentieth century, based on liberal approaches, also extended their focus on poverty, starting in the 1970s, by supporting the actions of international organisms and the studies to which they were related.

The exacerbation of urban poverty, which marked the turn of the twenty-first century, became the subject of recent debates, which became part of the economic restructuring that resulted from globalization, and its social and spatial impacts. Moreover, it was also responsible for focussing discussion on social vulnerability, a category that developed based on the neoliberal perspective of social disadvantages, as well as from the neo-Marxist perspective of the curtailment of rights.

The aim of this article, by following the different approaches, is to draw together the studies that have contributed to the recent debate on urban poverty, without intending to exhaust the subject. These collected works have been the author's object of study, in her search to obtain a greater comprehension, understanding and precision in relation to the concept of urban poverty, the object of the line of research that has been developed. This condition has thereby attributed an exploratory nature to the article. The volume of contemplated works, as well as their systematization, through their theoretical approaches and ideological bases, has contributed to the understanding of poverty as a social construction, and has provided space for the various branches of applied human and social sciences.

The urban qualification of poverty is recent, although the institution of poverty as a social issue goes back to the conflicts in cities in the early days of capitalism. This article therefore focuses on poverty as being an eminently urban fact,

(...) not only because today, the majority of the poor live in cities and metropolitan areas, but because the reproduction of poverty is mediated by the reproduction of the urban mode of living conditions through the dynamics of the labour market, the nature of the social protection system and of the social cohesion pact which is, in fact, what structures the set of relations and interactions between civil society, the state and the market (LAVINAS, 2003, p.30).

In order to broaden recent debate, the article initially presents an overview of the different approaches related to the phenomenon of poverty, established in studies and research that became systematic at the turn of the twentieth century, inasmuch as they contextualised the discussion on urban poverty within a current perspective. The deepening of this recent perspective refers to the ongoing transformations in the economy, with significant impacts on the social context, under the new international relations.

THE BASES OF SYSTEMATIC APPROACHES TO POVERTY

Systematic studies on poverty date back to the nineteenth century. In describing *The Condition of the Working Class in England* in 1845, Friedrich Engels (2008) addressed poverty as a question derived from capitalism, at the root of which is unemployment, underemployment, and the exploitation of the working class. Even when not necessarily the central object, poverty, as a perverse consequence of the capitalist mode of production, pervaded the studies developed by Marx and Engels in the nineteenth century, and that have been reformulated since the second half of the twentieth century, in studies developed in the west on the urban issue.

Other approaches have focused on the relationship between poverty and income, which predominated until the mid-twentieth century. As highlighted by Crespo & Gurovitz (2002, p. 4), the work of British nutritionists, at the end of the nineteenth century, indicated that “the income of the very poorest was not enough to maintain the physical performance of an individual.” This approach to

poverty-related survival was adopted in Britain and exerted a major influence throughout Europe and was later used by the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD). According to Costa (1984), the first research studies on the theme of poverty were conducted in Britain, and used the concept of subsistence in order to characterize it. In studies on London, *Life and Labour of the People in London*,⁵ Charles Booth sought to define the concept of a “poverty line”, established from a weekly income, below which individuals would be considered poor, because they could not survive with the resources. In examining poverty in the city of York, *Poverty, A Study of Town Life*,⁶ Seebohm Rowntree sought to define differentiated levels of necessary income (poverty lines) according to the size and structure of the family unit, and is therefore recognized as the first author to measure basic needs, which for Rock (2003, p.13) constituted a pioneering approach to establishing a value parameter to be used as a poverty line, based on prices and quantities of a set of items.

The systematic studies on poverty therefore date from the turn of the twentieth century, developing distinct approaches between those formulated from the economic perspective, which associated poverty with some type of deprivation, and others that analysed poverty in the broader context of inequality and exploitation, established by the capitalist system.

PERSPECTIVES OF POVERTY ON AN ECONOMIC BASIS

In an article that synthesized different conceptions of poverty, Crespo and Gurovitz (2002) highlighted three approaches to poverty, all related to the lack of basic needs, which, according to the authors, prevailed during the twentieth century:

1. The notion of poverty as a question of survival exerted a major influence throughout Europe and North America, prevailing until the mid-twentieth century. It was used by the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) to support models of social protection for the welfare state, as well as national policies and assistance programs. However, one major criticism they presented was the fact that it justified “low rates of assistance: it was sufficient to keep individuals at a survival level” (CRESPO; GUROVITZ, 2002, p. 4).
2. From the 1970s onwards, the approach to poverty as basic needs broadened the notion of the “pure and simple physical survival” by adding other requirements related to the “basic consumption of a family ... such as services of drinking water, basic sanitation, health, education and culture” (CRESPO; GUROVITZ, 2002, p. 4). This concept, according to the authors, was then adopted by international organizations, especially those who were members of the United Nations (UN).
3. A new approach to poverty as relative deprivation, which emerged at the end of the twentieth century, incorporated the social aspect and included a notion of poverty with a more comprehensive dimension, with the understanding that “escaping from the poverty line signified obtaining: an adequate diet, a certain level of comfort, the development of socially appropriate roles and behaviours” (CRESPO; GUROVITZ, 2002, p. 5). One of the main formulators of this approach was Amartya Sen,⁷ who argued that “being poor does not imply material deprivation,” since “people may suffer deprivation in various spheres of life,” and it is such privations that “determine the citizens in other spheres” (CRESPO; GUROVITZ, 2002, p. 5).

(5) A research study published in various editions: *Life and Labour of the People*, 1st ed., Vol. I. (1889); Vol II. (1891); *Life and Labour of the People in London*, 2nd ed., (1892–97). 9 vols; 3rd ed., (1902–03). 17 vols.

(6) Research originally published in 1901.

(7) Na Indian economist and philosopher, awarded the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences in 1999, for his ideas in *Development as Freedom* (Sen, 2000)

Sen (2000) conceived poverty as being directly related to development, which in his perspective referred to an integrated process (social, economic and political) of expanding the interconnected real (substantive) freedoms that people enjoy. Therefore, for Sen, freedom becomes the main aim in order to achieve development and the expansion of real (substantive) freedoms, in turn, implies the expansion of economic opportunities, social inclusion and the responsible provision of public services, i.e., the reduction of poverty and the expansion of sustainable livelihoods, where the individual freedom to choose and enjoy opportunities is considered a social commitment.

Counteracting this concept,

... the thesis flourished, much appreciated by the multilateral credit institutions based in US capital, that with the proper functioning of the markets, economies would become prosperous, and the generated wealth would eventually benefit the poor. This thesis became known as the ‘Washington Consensus’ (CRESPO; GUROVITZ, 2002, p. 5).

In the analysis by Crespo and Gurovitz (2002), these conceptions of poverty take into account a certain “value judgment”, in relative or absolute terms, expressing “a subjective, abstract view of the individual with regard to the degree that would be considered sufficient to meet basic needs, or to the level of deprivation that would normally be considered tolerable” (CRESPO; GUROVITZ, 2002, p. 3). In relative terms, poverty is described “as a situation in which an individual, when compared to others, has less of a certain desired attribute, be it income, or favourable conditions of employment or power” (CRESPO; GUROVITZ, 2002, p. 4). In absolute terms, poverty is conceptualized from “setting standards for the minimum or sufficient level of basic needs, known as the poverty line, determining the percentage of the population below that level” (CRESPO; GUROVITZ, 2002, p. 4).

The approach to poverty in relative or absolute terms, however, contains weaknesses. The relative approach does not establish a line above which poverty would cease to exist, for this reason, an absolute approach is sought, which establishes a minimum standard of living, from which the poverty line is defined. Such a threshold may be established from different approaches - the biological (defined by the minimum nutritional requirements of the diet), the basic needs (understood as food, housing, clothing and essential services: drinking water, sanitation, public transport, medical services and schools) or minimum wage (defined by an official minimum wage necessary for a minimum standard of living) - from which the necessary resources are defined in order to demarcate the poverty line.

In turn, these minimum limits vary according to the different conceptions of poverty, justifying low levels of assistance, when it would suffice to keep individuals at a survival level; or by extending these levels of assistance, beyond pure and simple survival, through an understanding poverty as basic needs; or by considering that “escaping the poverty line signifies obtaining: an adequate diet, a certain level of comfort, developing socially appropriate roles and behaviour,” provided that poverty is conceived as relative deprivation. (CRESPO; GUROVITZ, 2002, p. 5) Such a conception, although more comprehensive, presents difficulties of use, since, as the authors point out, it is necessary “to define the extent and severity of the non-participation of persons suffering from the deprivation of resources” (CRESPO; GUROVITZ, 2002, p. 5).

One important contribution to this discussion was provided by Sônia Rocha (2003),⁸ who emphasises the problem of conceptualizing poverty in absolute terms due to the empirical difficulties.

The **basic food basket** involves defining the composition of the basket and selecting the appropriate prices per product. However, there is no single, possible solution, despite the universal parameters of essential nutritional needs.

(8) Researcher at the Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada (IPEA), where she began her systematic studies on poverty in Brazil.

In relation to **other basic needs** (housing, clothing, etc.), for which essential consumption parameters are not available, establishing a minimum value is necessarily problematic. Therefore, it is understandable that the definition of a value associated with meeting all the basic needs - food and non-food, the so-called poverty line - is very often surrounded by controversies. (ROCHA, 2003, pp. 13-14, emphasis added)

Rocha stresses the acceptance, in the international literature, of Engel's law⁹ - the definition of the "food expenditure/total expenditure ratio" (ROCHA, 2006, p. 60), as a central element in determining the poverty line, despite its evident conceptual and empirical fragility. Attention is also drawn to the Brazilian specificity of Engel's law far below that encountered in the international literature (0.5), indicating that the percentage of food expenditure, even amongst the poorest families, should be reduced. For this reason, it is also common at this point to adopt procedures that reduce the poverty line. Since 1970, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) has used a coefficient of 0.5. For the Inter-Union Department of Statistics and Socioeconomic Studies (known as DIEESE) however, the proportion considered is 0.3571.

The idea that the criterion for poverty, defined by family income, is arbitrary and possibly does not include thousands of people who are also vulnerable and deprived of citizenship, has taken shape since the last quarter of the twentieth century, especially through the work of Amartya Sen, thereby broadening the notion of poverty. However, as Kageyama and Hoffmann (2006) observed, all these studies refer to some kind of deprivation, considering that poverty "may be of an absolute, relative or subjective nature ... it may only be material or include elements of cultural and social order, in the face of the resources available to a person or family" (KAGEYAMA; HOFFMANN, 2006, p. 80).

Alongside these approaches of an economic nature, others of a more social character began to develop from the second half of the twentieth century. As Pedro Demo (2000) indicated, such approaches began to counter the notion of poverty as being a mere lack of income, or even a lack of other political and social needs, thereby beginning to analyse it in the broader context of labour exploitation and highlighting social inequality as being a major problem, albeit difficult to measure.

PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIAL POVERTY

The 1970s were a milestone in the discussion on urban issues, which also included the issue of poverty. Driven by the social movements that emerged in 1968 in France, western theorists debated the issues that emerged in the urban space, rooted in the fundamentals of Marxist theory. Rather than focussing on poverty, the studies centred on seeking to understand how the capitalist class society functioned, from the perspective of social transformation. The theme of poverty arose as a result of a speculative and exploitative mode of production.

Several trends were in evidence and the different concepts used

... functioned as *idée-force* in treating the inequalities derived from the perverse model of the capitalist system and society. Marginality, dependence, exclusion, exclusion/inclusion, segregation and apartheid were some of the concepts widely discussed and used by these researchers, almost always aiming to explain the complex reality that involves contemporary poverty. (HOGAN, MARANDOLA JR., 2006, p. 26, emphasis added by the authors).

Many authors, both national and international, have become references, contributing to the formation of scholars, including those who, from the 1970s, sought to understand the issue of poverty. Urban space, the privileged locus of capitalist production, became the central focus of

(9) Engel's Law is determined, however, by the proportion of per capita current expenditure that corresponds to the food consumption of the tenth chosen from the distribution of current per capita expenditure.

analysis, where it sought to explain the production of the elements of the built-up environment and its agents, including the State.

In the context of urban research with a Marxist matrix, developed mainly in Western Europe and the US, as Christian Topalov (1988) emphasized, there were seminal studies on the right to the city (LEFEBVRE, 1968), popular movements and the problem of housing (CASTELLS, 1972), social justice in the city (HARVEY, 1973), the production of capitalist space (LEFEBVRE, 1974), the role of property developers (TOPALOV, 1974), the debate on the rent theory (LIPIETZ, 1974; TOPALOV, 1984), the role of the state in the urban issue (LOJKINE, 1981), collective equipment and social consumption (PRETECEILLE, 1977); housing policies and the reproduction of the labour force (MAGRI, 1977), amongst others.

This multiplicity of approaches, over a short period of time, brought repercussions to Brazilian academic production after the 1970s. Amid a context of social movements for urban land tenure and for housing, which multiplied in large Brazilian cities, the debate on the urban issue in Brazil advanced with studies that focussed more directly on urban poverty (SANTOS, 1978) and the exploitation of the labour force, which led to urban sprawl (KOWARICK, 1979) and to peripheralization (DURHAM, 1986). There were studies that dealt with the perverse processes of the capitalist system, from the viewpoint of economic aspects (OLIVEIRA, 1972), the urbanization process (SINGER, 1973), housing conditions (MARICATO, 1979, JACOBI, 1981, 1982a, 1982b; TASCHNER, 1982), social movements (MACHADO DA SILVA; RIBEIRO, 1985; JACOBI, 1983; JACOBI; NUNES, 1983), and the role of the state in the urban (OLIVEIRA, 1982), amongst many others.

As Jan Bitoun (2015) commented,

Schematically, in Europe, a clear distinction was made between the proletariat, especially in industry, being mobilized and organized, through the class struggle, to put an end to capitalist exploitation, and the Lumpenproletariat, which was easily manipulated by the dominating classes to put a stop to this mobilization. The transference of this manner of thinking in Latin America, under very different historical conditions in Europe, required the adaptation of terminologies, even in academic texts, especially those of “working class” or “popular class”, the imprecise nature of which refers to the very difficulties of conveying the class struggle. (BITOUN, 2015, p. 106)

In a debate at the XIII ISA World Congress in 1994 in Bielefeld, Germany, Alain Touraine,¹⁰ argued that instead of the bourgeoisie versus the proletariat, the world was divided by the cleavage between the socially included and excluded, i.e., between those who had formal jobs, social security protection, political rights and the informal masses. For the author, those who were excluded from formality could represent something new in a Europe invaded by populations from their former colonies, but which in Brazil and Latin America have been well known ever since the 1970s, under the key words of marginality, informal economy etc. (HERCULANO, 2002)

The city, in the Marxist perspective, assumed as a space for collective consumption and reproduction of the labour force, is understood as a social product. Poverty, which in the urban context assumes its greatest importance, then becomes politicized, as a result of the relations from exploiting the labour force.

The politicization of this debate was amplified by the approaches associated with the principles of Christian communitarianism, which also became influential in Europe in the 1960s and 1970s, affecting the actions of the Catholic Church, including in Brazil. Bosi (2012) highlights that

(10) With regard to the debate on the paradigm of social classes, Herculanó (2002) makes an important contribution, highlighting the position of some authors, amongst them Alain Touraine, who defended his theory of social exclusion at the XIII ISA World Congress in 1994, in Bielefeld, Germany.

France, from the 1930s to the 1950s, was a breeding ground for Christian intellectuals, who stood against the right-wing tendencies that surrounded the European and Latin American clergy. In the face of Nazi occupation, these intellectuals formulated political thinking that was not only antifascist (as is the case of the group of the magazine *Esprit* founded by Emmanuel Mounier, and of the democratic militancy of Jacques Maritain), but also openly anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist, of which *Economy and Humanism*, created by Father Lebreton in the early 1940s, is an example. (BOSI, 2012, p. 250).

According to Bosi, Fr. Lebreton “was a bridge that he himself constructed between traditionally distant positions, such as Marxism and the social doctrine of the Church” (BOSI, 2012, p. 250). It is within this context that the founder of the Economics and Humanism movement is considered “one of the matrices of the transition between the 1950s and 1960s from a timid centralized Catholicism (that of western Christian democracy) to the vigorous left-wing Christianity in Brazil” (BOSI, 2012, p. 250).

Communitarian thought, the foundations of which may be found in Mounier’s communal personalism, in the human economy of Fr. Lebreton, amongst others, gave rise to Liberation Theology and to the basic ecclesial communities (CEBs). This represented

... a reaction to neoliberalism, by prioritizing ‘the ineluctable value of human dignity and transcendence, and an unsurpassed resistance to allowing human destiny to become engulfed in a mercantile logic of possessive individualism. This tradition, largely identified with the positions now embodied by the Conferência Nacional dos Bispos Brasileiros (CNBB),¹¹ is responsible for massive experiences of solidarity amongst the poor and oppressed Brazilians (SOUZA, 2008, p. 41).

The critical approaches, associated with the principles of Christian communitarianism, thus gained expression within the Brazilian debate, especially linked to the academy and to certain political parties, as from the 1970s, when,

... in an environment marked by the dictatorship, the Church presented itself as the protector of the very poorest, often proposing, through solidarity, paths of struggle that were being established, as growing segments of clergy and Catholics adhered to the Theology of Liberation. This affirmed the intrinsic dignity of poverty, as an elected people in search of liberation from captivity, and a more radical rejection of capitalism (BITOUN, 2015, p.106).

The role of the left-wing branch of the church in Brazil, based on these foundations, played a significant role in social reforms, institutionalized in the 1988 Brazilian Constitution, as well as in the institutionalization of instruments in favour of poor communities, such as municipal laws that instituted the Zona Especial de Interesse Social (ZEIS) and its planning and management instrument - PREZEIS, in the 1980s, in the city of Recife, Brazil, based on the rights of the poorest - the right to housing and the right to the city, amongst others. As Souza emphasizes (2007), the social outreach of these instruments motivated their adoption, by means of the Statute of Cities, approved in 2001, for the other Brazilian municipalities.

THE RECENT DEBATE ON URBAN POVERTY

At the turn of the twenty-first century, the issue of urban poverty was embedded in the debate on the social and spatial impacts of globalization. This process, as Ribeiro (2000, p.11) analysed, referred to “the extension of international trade in goods and services to all countries as an engine for economic growth and for the hegemony of financial circuits in the organization of international

(11) The Conferência Nacional dos Bispos do Brasil (CNBB) is a permanent organism that unites Catholic bishops from all over Brazil, in accordance with the Code of Canon Law.

flows of capital.” There was a change in the role of cities, which became integrated into the economic networks of the world, redefining their social and spatial division of labour, in the face of declining industrial activity and the expansion of financial activities and productive and personal services.

One of the most significant impacts of these transformations occurred in the labour market, which was segmented into highly qualified and well-paid jobs and low-skilled and poorly paid jobs. The result of these changes was “a ‘new spatial order’, the central feature of which was the dualization of urban structures” (RIBEIRO, 2000, p. 66).

This debate will be presented below, addressing the discussion that advanced in the analytical approach to economic restructuring, arising from this new phase of capitalism, as well as that, which focussed on analysing the condition of social vulnerability, given the growing risk situation, to which society was being subjected together with the ensuing social insecurity.

THE MARXIST PERSPECTIVE OF URBAN POVERTY IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBALIZATION

Studies by Lago (2000) identified two analytical approaches that were developed in the debate on the social and spatial impacts of the crisis and the economic restructuring that resulted from the internationalization of capital: one emphasized the role of real estate capital in addressing the relationship between economic restructuring and spatial changes by the financial sector; and the other was based on the debate regarding productive restructuring/social dualization/spatial fragmentation, within which, studies were developed on the “new poverty”, related to urban spatiality and to the emergence of a new pattern of urban segregation.

In the debate on productive restructuring that resulted from technological advances and the process of globalization, the assumption was that the social transformations in progress since the 1980s resulted from changes in the labour market generated by the crisis of the Fordist regime. The post-industrialization paradigm was therefore hegemonic, to analyse the changes in progress within the social structure and the impact of these changes on urban spatiality.

The tendency to intensify the dualization of the social and spatial structure was central to this debate, where the spatial impacts, according to Lago (2000), were expressed on one extreme, in the increasingly exclusive appropriation of the spaces most valued by functions linked to consumption and luxury housing, and on the other, in the conformation of exclusive spaces of poverty, thereby giving rise to expressions that aimed to characterize the new pattern of spatial segregation: dual city, divided city and fragmented space

It is important to emphasize in these debates that most studies on social inequality in Brazil focused on the dichotomy between rich and poor. Preteceille and Valladares (1999), however, drew attention to the plural reality of poverty spaces, indicating the internal differences amongst the favelas in Rio de Janeiro, and their diversity regarding their location within the city, the terrain, age, degree of consolidation of buildings, level of equipment and services, legal status of occupation, etc. In a study of the favelas in São Paulo, Pasternak (2004) also highlighted this heterogeneity amongst the living spaces of the poor population, based on sociodemographic indicators. In addition to the differences in the built-up urban environment, in the location and in the level of services, the author also demonstrated differences in the social profile, linked to the socio-occupational categories involved.

To broaden the debate on the “new urban poverty”, Lago (2000) introduced several theorists into the discussion. Sassen (1991), discussed the intensification of social dualization within the context of a process that indicated a shrinking of the middle classes, in view of the changes in the productive structure and in organizational and technological patterns. This hypothesis foresaw the decline of some typical occupations of the middle classes, as opposed to the emergence of new professions linked to the expansion of management functions, expanding, on the one hand, the contingent of highly qualified and well-paid professionals and, on the other hand, the number of less-skilled, low-paid workers. This hypothesis, however, did not constitute a consensus amongst

researchers of the same strand, especially those who considered the participation of the middle and popular strata in the social structure to be significant, and saw how the presence of the upper and lower strata in this structure had become reduced.

In the international debate, some authors criticized the dual model, without, however, questioning the assumption of the dual thesis - the current tendency towards the polarization of social structure. Castells (1992), Fainstein, Gordon and Harloe (1992), Preteceille (1994), Marcuse (1989) and Kempen (1994) challenged socio-spatial dualization due to, amongst other factors, its simplifying nature and, therefore, to the impossibility of it taking into account the enormous complexity of contemporary societies and cities. In another approach, other authors, such as Preteceille (1994), questioned the duality in the labour market, arguing that the more globalized activities represented a smaller part of the total employment and that certain average occupations increased during the 1980s. According to the author, it was very schematic to reduce the issue of segregation to a rich-poor binary opposition, even if the physical signs of contractors were becoming increasingly evident.

Castells (1992) introduced the political dimension into the analysis of the socio-spatial structure, and thus relativized the role of productive restructuring as a determining factor for the ongoing social changes, restoring the changes in the functions of the State to the debate and, fundamentally, the reduction of power in the organization of the working classes, thereby creating conditions for the new regime of accumulation to be imposed. For the author, spatial segregation expressed a socio-political dualism that resulted, in part, from the sociocultural fragmentation of the vast majority of the population. The idea of fragmentation, in turn, expressed the blocking of the expectation of a more homogeneous society, culturally and more politically cohesive.

In the US, the black ghetto is the most compelling spatial expression of “new urban poverty.” In addition to unemployment (and underemployment) and social isolation, geographic confinement is, for Wilson (1987), a dominant feature in the definition of the urban underclass. This pattern differs from the European, in that, in Europe, the degree of confinement of ethnic minorities - the excluded - is smaller. This author considered that concentrating the poor in a given geographic space is one of the factors that impedes escaping from the condition of poverty and exclusion, since spatial confinement reproduces social isolation, perpetuating the vicious circle of poverty. Kempen (1994) shared the same point of view, understanding that the spatial concentration of poverty prevents: the formation of local social networks, which allow the circulation of information regarding job opportunities, since everyone is outside the formal circuit; and other sources of informal income, such as mutual services.

The idea of social exclusion associated with poverty intensified in analyses of the spatial concentration of poverty in the late twentieth century, which thereby motivated the concept of the right to the city, as conceived by Henri Lefebvre (1968) to be taken up. By analysing the socioeconomic segregation and its phenomenon of estrangement, in the context of the “tragedy of the banlieusards” in France in the 1960s, which involved people being forced to live in residential ghettos, far from the city centre, the author conceived the right to the city as the right of not excluding urban society from the qualities and benefits of urban life; a right of the collective recovery of urban space by marginalized groups living in the peripheral districts of the city (LEFEBVRE, 2001). David Harvey (2012) also used the concept of the right to the city, originally defined by Lefebvre, to examine the role played by urban space as a channel for absorbing surplus capital, incorporating new contents of a political nature to the concept. He associated the right to the city with a global struggle, predominantly against financial capital, since this is the scale at which the process of urbanization currently operates.

Understanding the process of social exclusion, within the context of the globalized economy, is related to the spheres of work and of sociability. The productive restructuring and a reduction of job opportunities resulting therefrom, instituted a new social division of labour, which was no longer characterized by the differentiated insertion of workers, but by the condition of the workers

as to whether or not they were inserted into the hegemonic productive system. On the side of the workers, the weakening of their organizational power and their increasing spatial mobility, without the support of public institutions, which in turn entered into crisis, created conditions that would rupture the networks of sociability, maintained not only by the stability of work, but also by mechanisms of social reproduction and social security, education and housing systems. As a result of this process, the poor were excluded from networks maintained by situations of job stability and social reproduction mechanisms (welfare, education, housing), which Castel (1993) referred to as a situation of *désaffiliation*.

Along similar lines, Lago considered that the new poverty

... retained a close relationship with social duality, insofar as this new segment constituted one of the points of increasingly polarized societies, marked not only by inequality, but also by the exclusion of part of its members from the world of work and networks of sociability (LAGO, 2000, p. 25).

Lago also drew attention to the temporal dimension present in the conceptualization of the new urban poverty, emphasizing that the idea, in the academic debate, that “the state of poverty, of vulnerability at work or of social isolation are not enough to qualify this new segment” (LAGO, 2000, p 26). He also highlighted that “the specificity of the new urban poverty in the post-Fordist society is its irreversible, chronic character; it is the absence of expectations of social insertion or upward mobility that marked the social and urban dynamics in the previous economic model” (LAGO, 2000, p 26).

It is important to emphasize that this hopelessness, with little prospect of reversing this situation of poverty, identified in the early 2000s, may have been somewhat relativized in Brazil in the second half of the decade, given the social measures adopted by the government of President Lula, which expanded the possibilities of upward social mobility of the popular classes, with repercussions in the reduction of poverty. As André Singer (2012, p. 8; 10) analysed

As from 2003, taking into account the change in the international economic situation, there was an orientation that allowed the adoption of policies to reduce poverty - especially in combatting abject poverty - and to activate the domestic market, without confronting capital. This produced, in association with the “*mensalão*”¹² crisis, an electoral realignment that crystallized in 2006, and the rise of Lulism. In short, it was in 2006 that the double class displacement occurred, which characterized the Brazilian realignment and established the political separation between rich and poor, which was strong enough to last for a long period of time. Lulism, which emerged alongside the realignment, is, from my point of view, the meeting of a leadership, that of Lula, with a fraction of the class, the subproletariat, through a program, the main points of which were outlined between 2003 and 2005: to combat poverty, especially where it is most socially and regionally excruciating, through activating the domestic market, improving the consumption pattern of the poorest half of society, which is concentrated in the North and Northeast, without confronting the interests of capital.

From around 2015 onwards, unemployment and poverty deepened, thereby creating conditions that would bring a renewal of hopelessness and lack of perspective, which characterized the new urban poverty at the threshold of the millennium.

THE APPROACH TO URBAN POVERTY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF SOCIAL VULNERABILITY

In Vignolli’s (2006) view, the persistence of poverty, despite the implementation of policies to address it, and the signs of economic recovery observed during certain periods, has been one of

(12) The “*Mensalão*” scandal refers to a vote-buying scandal that involved members of the Brazilian National Congress and members of Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva’s government in 2005, to guarantee the government support in congressional votes. “*Mensalão*” is a neologism that represents a “monthly payment of high value”.

the most forceful stimuli to highlight the category of social vulnerability, understood as exposure to social risk, i.e., the probability of falling into poverty or marginality.

Associated with the notion of risk, the concept of vulnerability, as mentioned by Hogan & Marandola Jr. (2006), has acquired a prominent position in recent academic thinking, since society has been experiencing a growing risk situation. Markets have become vulnerable, institutions, cities, populations, places, nations, all may be vulnerable. Trafficking, violence and social inequality are elements that bring risk and vulnerability issues to the urban debate. Thus, the category of “risk”, combined with that of “danger”, has been used in different theoretical and methodological frameworks and in different problematics, while the concept of vulnerability is more recent and has thereby gained a certain degree of importance. According to the authors, studies have been approached through two main themes: (1) Poverty, exclusion and marginalization; and (2) Environmental issues.

Focusing on the issues of poverty, exclusion and marginalization, there are two outstanding aspects in their approach from the central category of social vulnerability: one comprises a set of studies involving demographers from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) together with other academics from the Latin American continent, who, despite their different approaches, converged on the concern regarding assets and the structure of opportunities, posed in terms of social, human and physical capital, and on the understanding of social disadvantages, of which Kaztman (1999) was one of its main representatives; and another line, which included Hopenhayn (2002) and Kowarick (2002), amongst others, which emphasized social vulnerability as being a curtailment of rights, whether economic, political or cultural, which connects the concept of vulnerability to the discussion on poverty and exclusion.

a) Social vulnerability associated with social disadvantages

The conceptual framework developed by Kaztman et al. (1999), known in Brazil as AVEO - assets, vulnerability and opportunity structures, constitutes a fundamental reference for addressing social vulnerability associated with social disadvantages. In it, vulnerability is understood as the mismatch between assets and liabilities and the opportunity structures, stemming from the ability of social actors to seize opportunities in other socioeconomic environments and improve their situation. This understanding of social advantages and disadvantages - in the form of assets and opportunities - underpins a new way of addressing the issue promoted by ECLAC, socio-economic vulnerability and socio-demographic vulnerability.

Disadvantages are presented as social conditions that negatively affect people, communities or places, producing and at the same time, reflecting poverty. As Kaztmam and Filgueira (2006) argued, they correspond to having less access, either through knowledge or availability - and a low capacity to manage the resources and opportunities available to society in order to encourage the development its members. Thus, vulnerability related to poverty, exclusion and marginalization is an expression of the mismatch between assets and opportunity structures in three main domains: personal resources, resources from rights and resources in social relations.

Social capital is one of the components of the analytical framework, considering not only its importance as an asset for reducing the vulnerability of households, but also as an attribute of opportunity structures. These differ from the notion of assets because they are not modified by the isolated action of individuals. It is important to highlight that the multidisciplinary ECLAC group, of which Kaztman is a leader, broadened the concept of assets developed by Caroline Moser (1998), which suggested that assets should be used in developing social mobility strategies, not only for escaping poverty or facing economic crises.

Vulnerability is defined not only through available assets, but according to a relationship with the economic context, represented by opportunity structures, understood as the probability of accessing

goods, services or activities that affect the well-being of the home because they facilitate the use of existing resources or provide new, useful resources for social mobility and integration through the existing channels. The “efficiency of norms” that regulate behaviour in the immediate social environment of households was also considered by Kaztman and Filgueira (2006) as opportunity structures, since such efficiency is directly linked to the level of trust in relations between neighbours, which is an indicator of well-being in itself, in addition to being positively associated to performing collective undertakings. Thus, the authors emphasized the importance of questioning, within the process of producing and distributing “effective norms” and their consequences and meanings, be it the conditions that make these milestones stronger or weaker, or those that make the residents of a certain area closer or more distant from the dominant normative frameworks.

The impact of a neighbourhood’s social structure on the risk behaviour, especially of children and young people, specifically those linked to the reproduction of inequalities, poverty and exclusion, led Kaztman et. al. (1999) to explore a set of hypotheses concerning the negative effects of residential segregation, which lead to the impoverishment of the quality of low-level grassroots community links, as well as to the risks of centralizing marginal cultures that are implicit to both spontaneous and intentional actions (public policies). Thus, the importance of the structure and composition of the neighbourhood is highlighted as being a relevant aspect in understanding social exclusion.

It is important to emphasize Elisabete Bilac’s observation that none of the concepts of risk, vulnerability, assets and opportunity structures are of have univocal, perfectly established significance, since

... they have been developed within a diversity of theories, supported by different perceptions of the social world and therefore with different analytical objectives and very often, irreducible to one another, thereby making it necessary to clarify which conception is being discussed (BILAC, 2006, p.51)

For Vignolli (2006, p.95-96), there is no univocal definition of vulnerability either, although there is a relatively general consensus that it results from the convergence of an exposure to risks, of the inability to respond and the inability to adapt. Hence, the author distinguishes several “analytical lines of social vulnerability”, summarized below:

- 1) the classic focus of vulnerable groups, originating from social circumstances (poor areas), or from shared basic characteristics related to age, gender, colour and race, etc.;
- 2) the perspective that focuses on the impact on the living standards of households, of external shocks (economic crises, environmental disasters and others);
- 3) the emerging approach in developed countries that associates vulnerability to uncertainty, insecurity and ruptures originating from the inherent changes in advanced modernity;
- 4) the view that links vulnerability to being unprotected, especially for the so-called middle classes, who internalize the erosion of the state and the family as an instance of social support;
- 5) the definition of social vulnerability as a lack, a devaluation or immobility of assets – forms of physical, social and human capital; employment; patrimony; the ability to exert influence over those who make decisions and distribute resources, etc;
- 6) the operationalization of social vulnerability as an exposition of the main social risk: that of falling into poverty.

As this author states, formulating the AVEO conceptual framework, developed by Kaztman et al. (1999), corresponds to the two final abovementioned analytical lines.

Other approaches to socio-spatial and socio-demographic vulnerability are brought together by Cunha (2006), thus providing a framework for different contributions to the understanding of poverty from the category of vulnerability. Besides the authors cited in this article, it is important

to highlight the relevance of contributions by other authors on the theme: Francisco Sabatini and Carlos Sierralta (2006); Haroldo Torres, Eduardo Marques and Renata Bichir (2006); and Carolina Flores (2006), amongst others. Mention should also be made of the efforts by Hogan and Marandola Jr. (2006) to systematize the bibliography on the theme, in order to present an interdisciplinary conceptualization of vulnerability, based on an analysis of the relationship between vulnerability and poverty, social exclusion, marginalization and the environmental issue.

b) Social vulnerability from the perspective of a curtailment of rights

Social vulnerability, understood, through another theoretical line, as an expression of the restriction of rights, is based on a critical approach to the capitalist system in force. Hopenhayn (2002) linked urban poverty to a restriction of the right to dignity, health, decent housing, being respected, political participation, being represented, being heard and being able to speak. From a similar perspective, Kowarick (2002) associated vulnerability to a restriction of access to the assets of citizenship, mainly those related to employment and to protection services. Both conceived vulnerability as the result of social and economic uprooting, associated mainly with irregular, informal, intermittent or occasional forms of employment. Such uprooting weakens the bonds of primary sociability (family, kinship, neighbourhoods, associative life, and the world of work itself), which evidently brings direct consequences to citizenship, access to rights and exposure to all kinds of risks.

According to Kowarick (2002), the increase in vulnerability in Brazil may be observed in phenomena such as the expanding favelas and the impoverishment of the population, which reflected a perverse economic framework related to pay, unemployment, low salaries and irregular work, causing more people to exist below the poverty line, thereby widening social inequality. Even in the second half of the first decade of the 2000s, when there was a reduction in poverty, the phenomenon of expanding favelas was increasing significantly.

This is a set of situations that may be termed urban sprawl: it is the sum of extortion, which is operated by the inexistence or precariousness of collective consumption services, which together with access to land and housing are socially necessary for the reproduction of workers, and further exacerbate the wasteful exploitation of labour or, worse still, the lack of it. (KOWARICK, 2000, p. 22).

This critical approach emphasized social inequalities, social exclusion and urban sprawl. For Hogan and Marandola Jr. (2006), these concepts were based on the understanding of class society, in which the different social segments have different life opportunities. As Herculano (2002) indicated, the very expressions “social inequalities” and “social exclusion” are already widely used as a substitute for the concept of social classes.

David Harvey (2012) recently took up this question of social classes, when he referred to the absorption of capital surplus through urban transformation. According to Harvey, the advancement of urbanization has played a crucial role in absorbing capital surplus, always on a growing geographic scale, but at the price of a process of “creative destruction” - it destroys to create. It is within this context that, for Harvey, this process almost always has a **class dimension**,¹³ since “the poor, the unprivileged and those marginalized from political power are those who suffer first and foremost from this process. Violence is required to build the new urban world on the wreckage of the old” (Idib. p. 35). It is this process of “creative destruction” that, for Harvey, characterizes the postmodern mode of urbanization, which has dispossessed the masses of all rights to the city, whatever they may be.

The concept of the right to the city was developed by the French sociologist Henri Lefebvre in the late 1960s. Such a right is conceived as the right of non-exclusion from urban society, and from the qualities and benefits of urban life (LEFEBVRE, 2001). In his writings on socioeconomic

(13) Emphasis added.

segregation and its phenomenon of estrangement, Lefebvre referred to the “tragedy of the banlieues”, people forced to live in residential ghettos far from the city centres. Given this scenario, he conceived the right to the city as a collective recuperation of urban space by marginalized groups living in the peripheral districts of the city.

In the last decades of the twentieth century, Lefebvre’s ideas regarding the right to the city were taken up, not only in the academic environment, but also in the social movements, especially those linked to the right to housing, as opposed to the right of property. (FALCÃO; SOUZA, 1985) This is a recurrent issue, considering that Harvey (2012) estimated that half the financial crises over the last 30 years originated from urban property, and understood that crisis appeared as a surplus of money without destination. In this perspective, Harvey considered that the right to the city is increasingly falling into the hands of private or quasi-private interests and that social movements are not strong enough to converge on the goal of gaining greater control over the uses of surplus, and much less on the constraints of its production.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Although approaches to urban poverty, which have developed systematically since the nineteenth and early twentieth century, have made advances in addressing the issue, they have faced theoretical and structural impasses. Identifying the poor and the aggregate measure of the extent of poverty within a society, has since become, as Kageyama and Hoffmann (2006, p. 80) stated, “a field of research as broad as it is old.”

The problematization of poverty, as a social issue, has been progressively constructed around the definition of what may be considered as “needs”. From an economic perspective, poverty is then, related to a lack of basic needs and to deprivation - material, social or of political insertion. Initially conceived as a question of survival, or as a lack of basic needs, the notion of poverty has broadened since the 1970s by adding other demands to the basic consumption of a family, such as drinking water services, basic sanitation, health, education and culture, and again, at the end of the twentieth century, it extended from focussing on poverty as relative deprivation, by referring to poverty as being related to an integrated (social, economic and political) process that expands the real interconnected freedoms (substantive), which people enjoy.

Despite conceptual advances, these conceptions of poverty face theoretical impasses and empirical equations. They take into account a certain “value judgment,” in relative or absolute terms, expressing a subjective, abstract view of the individual, in terms of identifying what a sufficient degree of meeting basic needs should be, or what a normally bearable level of deprivation should be, thereby characterizing the difficulty of establishing a minimum standard of living, from which the poverty line is defined.

The emergence of social approaches, which, as from the 1970s, developed alongside the conceptions of poverty as a lack, have represented a milestone in the discussions on urban issues, in which the question of poverty has been inserted. A debate that, motivated by the conflicts and urban social movements that took place in France in the late 1960s, also has flourished in Brazilian cities since the mid-1970s, in addition to cities in other countries.

Predominating in academia, initially in the countries of Europe, the US and later in Latin America and Brazil, studies based on Marxist theory and those based on Christian personalism, respectively, have focussed on the search for an understanding of how the capitalist class society functions, in the perspective of a social transformation. The question of poverty has become inserted into this context and understood as the result of the exploratory process of this society.

These approaches have politicized urban poverty and have developed arguments that support the struggle of the poorest for access to the city. They have been the foundations of the work of academic sectors, certain political parties and the left-wing section of the Catholic Church, which

helped to consolidate the social reforms of the 1980s, both at national and local levels, thereby creating an important space in conquering the right of the poorest to the city.

It is within the profusion of studies and approaches that characterize this phase that the urban condition qualifies poverty. It is also within this context that the concept of poverty broadens and is associated with the notion of exclusion. Speaking of social exclusion goes on to become a broader discourse than speaking of lacking needs or of income deficit to characterize poverty. Furthermore, the idea of social exclusion implies a political aspect that counteracts exclusion with inclusion, emancipation and belonging. Exclusion appears less as a state of lack of income, of resources, than as a trajectory along which subjective aspects, such as loss of identity, feelings of rejection, a breakdown of solidarity and reciprocity mechanisms, amongst others, are added to the deficiencies.

The notion of social exclusion was more closely linked to the concept of poverty, in the vicinity of the new millennium, when the exacerbation of urban poverty, despite the achieved advances, characterized a new phase of this phenomenon, then understood as having originated from the impacts brought by globalization on labour relations, social structure and urban spatial order.

Three new approaches have been developed, in parallel, and starting from a common trait: all presuppose the idea of social exclusion, related to the spheres of work and of sociability. However, they are characterised by different conceptual contributions: one focuses on the approach of productive restructuring, and the loss of jobs from which it was derived, instituting a new social division of work, no longer characterized by the differentiated insertion of workers, but rather by whether or not these workers are inserted into the hegemonic productive system. Another is based within the category of social vulnerability related to poverty, exclusion and marginalization as an expression of the mismatch between assets and opportunity structures in the area of personal resources, resources from rights and resources in social relations. The other, also based on the perspective of social vulnerability, associates this condition of social risk to a restricted access to the assets of citizenship, mainly related to employment and protection services, as well as to those associated with a restriction on the right to having dignity, health, decent housing, being respected, obtaining political participation, being represented, being heard and being able to speak.

Mapping the approaches that have been the keynotes for the debate on urban poverty for more than a century indicates the need for new analytical perspectives, which will contribute to the discussion: to identify the various forms in which poverty is represented; to map out the numerous policies and strategies aimed at overcoming them or with a view to regulating them; to deepen the use of the categories - poverty and exclusion, assuming that poverty, in its insufficiency of income and resources, is strongly associated with the macroeconomic dynamics and the existing regime of social protection, while exclusion, by signifying the rupture of basic social ties, the impoverishment not specifically of individuals, but rather of the relations that define their place and social identity, may be more likely to be addressed through local strategies of inclusion.

As Lavinás (2003) highlights, currently, there has been a shift in the institutional space of the social issue of poverty, which has left the axis of the state and has migrated to the local spheres of government. The urban character of poverty has therefore become even more visible, as it has come to challenge urban governability, demanding quick and effective solutions from local governments. It also inscribes indelible marks of social contradictions onto the territory of the city, which reconfigure and recontextualize poverty at every moment. It is also within the urban quotidian that the field of possibilities is defined to establish conventions capable of overcoming poverty. Possibilities that are based on history, culture, dominant economic relations and the form with which to become inserted into the global world, as well as into the patterns of sociability that exist in each locality.

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