



JUSTICE

Joining Urban morphology, Spatio-Temporal and socio-cognitive accessibility for an Inclusive City Environment

Deliverable 3.4.1 Context analysis synthesis for the socio-economically underprivileged. Identification of the population and associated specific context.



1. Introduction

Public transportation is a critical driver in promoting spatial justice (Harvey 1973; Soja 2010)¹. The development of transit minimizes car dependence, resulting in less negative externalities of the traffic, like air pollution or noise, and better accessibility to urban resources. Among the population targeting these resources, the JUSTICE project notably studied the people in economically precarious situations, *i.e.* the fringe of the population still integrated into society, but with the lowest incomes. The main features of the social-spatial context of these populations in Brussels, Konya, and Strasbourg are described in the following.

2. Method

In order to give insights into the social-spatial context of people in economically precarious situations, an approach combining different methods was carried out. Scientific and operational urban planning literature has been analyzed to shed light on the three cities' social-spatial structure with respect to the inhabitants' income. The selected indicator is relative poverty, measured as 60% of the median disposable income, once deducted taxes and added welfare benefits. We also considered statements from experts, notably in Konya. Through direct exchanges or website consultation, the pricing packages for populations in precarious situations have been retrieved from the three public transport companies. Also, the perception of these packages by the precarious population has been assessed by semi-structured interviews. These interviews were focused on public transport traveling and the corresponding endured barriers.

3. Results

The social-spatial structure concerning inhabitants' income is quite similar in the three cities, despite the size differences between the *Région Bruxelles Capitale* (a 161km² region), *Eurométropole de Strasbourg* (a 338km² metropolis), and *Konya Büyükşehir Belediyesi* (a 38,873km² metropolitan municipality). According to a center-periphery pattern with two intermediate belts, the three cities have precarious population pockets in the center. The biggest part of the precarious population is located on the first belt, though. In Brussels, several adjacent neighborhoods constitute the poor crescent west of the *Pentagone*, which represents the city center. In Konya, the precarious neighborhoods are split in several districts (*Muhacir Pazar, Nakipoğlu*). In Strasbourg, though the spatial rationale is similar, poverty pockets are significantly more concentrated inside neighborhoods, smaller, and characterized by social housing. In Brussels and Konya, only scarce precarious districts are located in the second belt. In Brussels, these are high-rise housing, whereas in Konya these are former informal neighborhoods. In Strasbourg, the second belt consists of individual housing, gathering mid-to-high-income populations. These social-spatial structures impact the accessibility of precarious people to public transport and urban resources. As city centers are markedly well-served by the public transport networks, the precarious population living in the city center or central neighborhoods are provided with good access by public transport to the urban resources, as illustrated in Fig. 1 for Strasbourg. However, this is not the presence of public transport stops, but the level of service that draws the accessibility map.

¹ Harvey David, 1973, *Social Justice and the City*. Geographies of Justice and Social Transformation, Johns Hopkins University Press, 336 p. ; Soja Edward, 2010, *Seeking Spatial Justice*, University of Minnesota Press, 288 p.

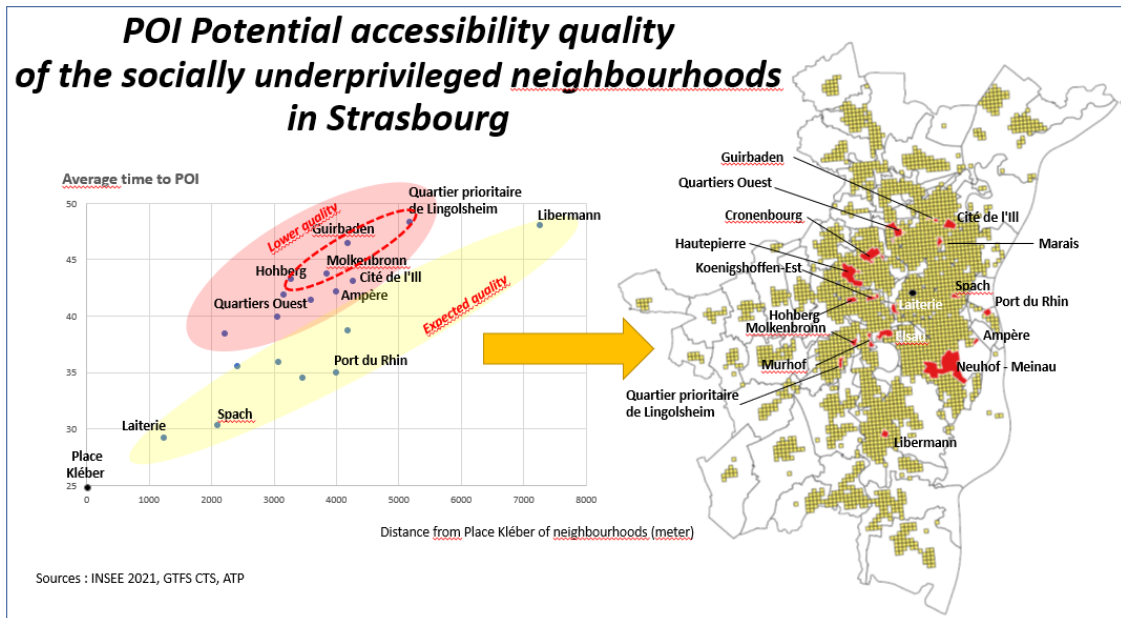


Fig. 1: The accessibility from the underprivileged districts to the city center in Strasbourg

Regarding the pricing packages, the three cities display rather similar contexts. The financial support is proportionate to the people/household income. This support is necessarily linked to a public transport pass in Brussels and Konya, whereas in Strasbourg special rates are also available through ticket booklets. The latter solution eases access to public transport through a simpler procedure and a smaller amount to be paid in advance. Indeed, subscribing to the transport pass is not always easy for people with multiple difficulties (insufficient knowledge of administration and its procedures, poor language skills, etc.). Nevertheless, support services for precarious populations - often social integration associations - exist in the three cities.

However, although the public transport operators offer special rates, the perception of public transport costs by precarious populations remains broadly negative in the three cities. The following answer, quoted from an interview, speaks for itself: *"I think it's a bit too expensive. I can't afford it. And I still think it's too expensive."* These interviews clearly showed that public transport is often perceived as a stopgap, a solution because one can't do otherwise, while most of these people still dream about accessing the prevailing social norm of car-riding.