

Article

Use of the Sociogram in Participatory Planning in Contexts of Social Exclusion: A Comparative Case Study in Cordoba Neighbourhoods, Spain

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Abstract: Urban regeneration and spatial planning have adopted a new participatory approach in recent decades, highlighting the importance of integrating the community in urban decision-making processes, especially in disadvantaged and socially excluded areas. In this context, the sociogram emerges as an essential tool for collaborative governance, allowing the visualization and analysis of the dynamics between the different actors involved. This study employs a comparative case study approach in three disadvantaged neighbourhoods in Córdoba, Spain, to examine how the sociogram can facilitate more effective and democratic participation in urban planning. Using heat maps, scatter plots and average analysis, relationships between actors are identified and characterized, providing a solid basis for more inclusive and equitable planning decisions. This analysis not only reveals the practical utility of the sociogram in participatory research but also underscores its theoretical relevance in building resilient and cohesive communities. Findings confirm the sociogram's effectiveness in mapping stakeholder dynamics and enhancing participatory governance, ultimately fostering more informed and inclusive urban planning processes.

Keywords: participatory planning; urban regeneration; collaborative governance; stakeholders; sociogram; comparative case studies



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1. Introduction

The study of stakeholder networks is prevalent in socio-community interventions and participatory research processes, significantly influencing what is known as collaborative governance [1]. This is especially relevant in urban contexts, where collective action is required to transform a city and impact its inhabitants [2]. However, to achieve multistakeholder partnerships, the identification of stakeholders, their relationships and their initial positions is compulsory.

To achieve these goals, recent research situates social cartography as a suitable theoretical and empiric approach [3–6]. Social cartography is able to visually capture the social, economic, cultural and political dimensions that characterize a given community by representing the perceptions, experiences and knowledge of communities about their own territory [7]. To contribute to this body of literature, our analysis relies on the sociogram technique, one tool of social cartography applied for the identification of relevant stakeholders in any given communitarian practice.

In this study, we focus our analysis on a comparative case study of three disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the city of Córdoba, in southern Spain. Our study is pertinent as it contributes to this body of literature but also sheds light on such social processes. It is thus also relevant as it contributes to the comprehension of patterns of how stakeholders behave in contexts of social exclusion, something strongly needed in socio-communitarian interventions [8–11].

1.1. Theoretical Framework: Urban Regeneration as a Response to Territorial and Social Exclusion

Spatial planning has configured places as infrastructure for social planning [12]. The urban model is mediated by historical, cultural, political and economic factors in such a way that cities reflect and reproduce social stratification [13]. Together with neoliberalizing policies and the growth of the urban population, it has multiplied the spaces of social segregation [2].

As a response, hand in hand with rights approaches [14–16], social inclusion has been incorporated into urban development agendas [17]. Urban planning determines how cities are inhabited, producing and dialectically reproducing the urban culture of social inclusion or exclusion [18]. However, in current urban models, social inequality persists in territories characterized by poverty, physical and social isolation and a lack of access to resources. Viewed as ghettos or slums, exclusion and poverty in these spaces have only increased and maximized through what has been called urbanism of exception [19,20].

The most recent literature shows how these processes of territorial and social exclusion go hand in hand. While the former imposes physical limitations and hinders access to habitability resources, the latter stigmatizes its inhabitants and keeps them in a situation of poverty. To address these issues, governments and urban planners have moved from processes of city renewal, revitalization or rehabilitation to urban regeneration, which has governance implications [21]. Urban regeneration relies on the government actions with which the common interest of a place is managed [22,23].

Urban regeneration stands thus as a comprehensive intervention process for multidimensional improvements in urban spaces. Its aim is keeping territories alive and socially balanced, promoting social cohesion through the development of public policies that regenerate urban spaces from the detrimental dynamics of deterioration, segregation, social imbalance and conflicts of interest [24].

Human beings coexist in spaces where they interact, building and rebuilding such spaces through social praxis [13,25]. Thus, neighbourhoods arise from the interactions of inhabitants in their daily lives through processes of recognition between actants [26], linked to very specific times and spaces within territories [27]. In deprived territories, such relationship networks are woven to articulate the power of the neighbours to survive with dignity in the midst of sometimes unworthy living conditions.

Studying these networks involves understanding the neighbourhood as a semantic field where actant networks interact instead of understanding the neighbourhood as infrastructure [12]. To do this, Latour [26,28] raises the need to approach the reality of places from the mapping of relationships that involve people, ideas and technologies analysed as a whole. To better understand a process, its interconnections with other phenomena must be studied [29–31]. In this sense, the cartography of a territory becomes social cartography.

Social mapping integrates dimensions and processes [32] as a research process in the social context [5]. However, because cartography serves a political function, i.e., spatial and societal planning [33], the need arises for critical cartography to reveal the complexity of what is not part of the official representation of reality [34]. In this regard, the sociogram has stood out as an adequate means to reveal the intricate network of processes and phenomena that occur in a territory [35,36].

1.2. Conceptual Framework: The Sociogram as Tool to Promote Collaborative Governance

Rhodes [37] defines governance as the process of governing with and through networks, which implies interactions among strategic actors [38]. Given the difficulty of quantifying the nature of networks [12], sociopraxis or participatory methodologies, as termed by Villasante [39], arise. This participatory approach proposes that urban regeneration processes require a collaborative governance process [40]. This activates a complex network of stakeholders with different participation roles, representing a paradigm shift [6,41].

In this sense, collaborative governance is deemed a democratic and pluralistic mode of governance [40] that requires the collaboration of the different stakeholders in the management of power at the local level. Thus, authors such as Ran and Qi [42] have valued

the sharing of power in collaborative governance, always subject to contingency factors, as a network of stakeholders is a group with different coexistent interests. Hence, the identification of all stakeholders is necessary to consider their perspectives and needs [40].

Once identified, stakeholders can form collaborative associations that guarantee the viability of urban regeneration processes, communicating structures of participation, management and decision-making as practices of full citizenship [43]. For these reasons, the sociogram is postulated as a social mapping tool for the identification and analysis of stakeholder networks, with the capacity to favour the creation of partnerships that allow the collaborative governance of urban regeneration processes.

The sociogram is a sociometric technique derived from the confluence of different authors and approaches, from social psychology to field theory, in conjunction with graph analysis. It is aimed to analyse networks as theoretical and methodological perspectives for social studies [44–46]. The sociogram is, therefore, descriptive in terms of relationships or links between pairs that establish a social network [44,47,48]. They are a graphic representation of groups and individuals and their relationships, projecting the complex social structure of a community while tracing and analysing their interconnections [13]. Participatory and dialogic analysis [49] is used to study these relationships between social actors in a given context [13] incorporating the discursive interpretations of the participants, projecting them to the functional needs of the context.

The sociogram has proved to be a very useful tool for establishing participatory diagnoses, proposing actions and identifying related groups with whom to expand networks by accessing other less related groups [50]. Likewise, the sociogram identifies sets of actions around specific issues or themes that connect them [36]. However, the literature on the ability of the sociogram to mobilize collaborative governance processes at the neighbourhood level is scarce. This study aims to fill this gap by demonstrating how sociograms can be used effectively to enhance democratic participation and collaborative governance, providing useful insights for the development of more inclusive and equitable urban policies. The need for this research is underpinned by the limited amount of comparative studies in this specific area, making the findings particularly valuable for both academics and practitioners. This work deepens the potential of the sociogram for community collective action through the identification of stakeholders in three disadvantaged neighbourhoods with incipient urban regeneration processes.

This article is structured as follows. The presentation of the theoretical framework is followed by a description of the methods, the materials and the selection of cases. Then, we present the results obtained using density, dispersion and average analysis. Finally, the results are discussed in the context of the conceptual framework to draw the appropriate conclusions.

2. Materials and Methods

The objective of this research is to examine, through a comparative case study, the understanding that residents of three socially excluded neighbourhoods have about the stakeholder networks existing in their territories [51]. This research was carried out at the beginning of a grassroots initiative urban regeneration process. The ultimate goal is to promote networks that facilitate collaborative governance processes in sustainable and endogenous urban regeneration processes.

Thus, this is an instrumental case study [52,53] of a comparative nature, in which each sociogram created by the participants in each neighbourhood is taken as the object of study. The sociogram is adequate for interpretation but has too few data for a statistical analysis [54]. Consequently, we use a comparative method and a logical and systematic procedure to identify similarities, dissimilarities, contrasts and patterns [55,56].

The selection criteria for the case studies were contextual similarities in time and space [55]. The cases are three neighbourhoods in the city of Córdoba (Spain) with similar indicators of poverty and social exclusion. They also have similar historical trajectories as they are immersed in the same community intervention process for urban regeneration.

To gather the data, we rely on participant observation and document analysis [57]. Participant observation was documented in a diary, registering all 19 specific sessions with both reflexive and participative components [58,59]. Document analysis examined all documents generated from the application of the sociogram in the three contexts: minutes, graphs in process and final graphs. Written data were transcribed for later content analysis, and visual data were translated to Microsoft Excel to generate graphs for visual data analysis.

The generated graphs were projected as a Cartesian axis with “X” being the degree of affinity and “Y” being the degree of influence, assigning a value to each actor. To preserve the confidentiality of both the participants and the actors they identify, we assign a letter to each neighbourhood (A, B and C) and we standardize actors to generic definitions (i.e., Civil Society Organisation (CSO), local entity, etc.). Once systematized and standardized, all information was analysed to assess the density of stakeholders by using the aforementioned three techniques: heatmaps, scatter charts and average analysis. Heatmaps express numerical data that are represented graphically in a grid by means of colour grading [60,61]. They are recognized as the main method to determine distribution patterns, identifying concentrations and determining areas of action [62]. For heatmaps, we categorize actors in power groups, formal groups and informal groups. Scatter plots allow the measurement of trends between two correlated variables in datasets. The sociogram matrix behaves like a scatter graph, allowing comparisons of trends [63]. Finally, for the study of averages, balloon graphs are used, making it possible to correlate influence with affinity in relation to density. For average analysis, we sub-categorize the former groups: power groups include public administration, public service units; formal groups include private service providers, religious entities, local associations and platforms; and informal groups include informal leaders, self-organized citizenry and unorganized citizenry [35,36,64].

However, we recognize certain methodological limitations associated with our comparative case study approach. The unique nature of the contexts examined calls for caution in generalizing findings to other urban realities. In addition, while data collection was comprehensive, the qualitative and subjective nature of the participants may mediate the interpretation of the data. These limitations should be considered when applying our findings to other settings.

2.1. Presentation of the Cases

2.1.1. Córdoba, a Heritage City of Delight and Exclusion

Córdoba, located in Andalusia in the south of the Iberian Peninsula, is a city with a long historical and patrimonial heritage. It holds four UNESCO World Heritage designations due to a thousand-year-old cultural confluence, and, like other European cities, urban development has occurred in each era. However, this development has maintained deep socio-spatial segregation in such a way that four of the fifteen poorest neighbourhoods in Spain are in Córdoba according to the National Institute of Statistics (INE) [65]. They all share similar indicators of urban vulnerability, and the three neighbourhoods selected for the study are among the four poorest neighbourhoods in the city. Their socioeconomic characteristics (Table 1) show high social vulnerability and a poor urban configuration, which qualifies them as disadvantaged urban areas [2,66].

Table 1. Socioeconomic characteristics of each neighbourhood.

	Neighbourhood A	Neighbourhood B	Neighbourhood C
Population	10,457	5689	2195
Housing stock	2930	2215	719
Per capita income by year (in Euro)	€6920	€6682	€4565
Unemployment rate	36.8%	45.2%	55.5%
Illiterate population rate	13.5%	17.9%	29.9%

Source: own elaboration based on [67,68].

All these neighbourhoods also share their history. They were built between the 1960s and the 1980s, a time characterized by the suburban growth of the city under urban renewal and urban redevelopment policies. They are therefore peripheral neighbourhoods, with working class characteristics, absorbed by the metropolis and affected by the growing gentrification and touristification of the historic centre [69,70]. They have been the object, since the 1990s and to the present, of various urban regeneration programmes [21], which have consistently proven ineffective.

In this context, the research team, together with citizen representatives, developed a shared methodology for a grassroots urban regeneration initiative in each neighbourhood. The aforementioned socioeconomic conditions explain the existence of a broad and heterogeneous group of local partnerships already existent, who led the process.

To constitute this neighbourhood-based group, a series of steps was designed that entailed the application of the sociogram as a participatory technique for the analysis of networks [35,36]. This allowed mapping the local reality and analysing the complex network of stakeholders with neighbours in order to identify possible transformative partnerships.

2.1.2. Implementation of the Sociogram

The implementation of the sociogram conveys a group of participants that, through discussion, collectively agree on a visual representation of the actors in the territory and their mutual relations. It is graphically represented as a Cartesian axis that visually depicts two indicators or factors that are deemed relevant for participants. In our case, the X axis represent the different degrees of influence each actor has in the territory. It is how they can exert power or influence others to exert power. The Y axis was used to represent the degree of affinity with the principles of the collective action proposed to transform the territory: horizontality, the neighbour's protagonism, etc. Once all the relevant actors of the territory have been identified and consequently categorized as power, formal and informal actors, they are placed across the Cartesian axis by consensus. Finally, relevant actors are connected according to their relations, distinguishing if relevant whether these relations are strong or conflictive [36] (Figure 1).

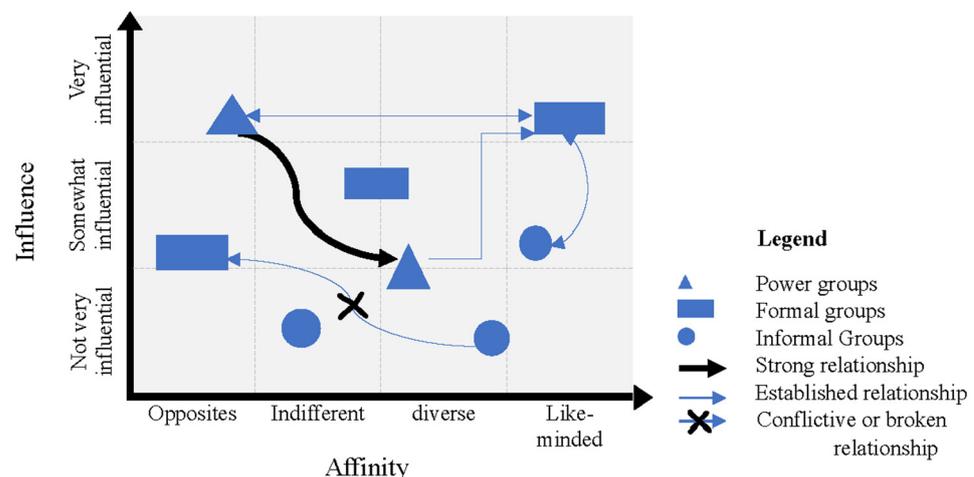


Figure 1. Areas and axes of the sociogram.

The three cases studied followed the expected sequence: identification of stakeholders; organization in categories; location in the matrix; relationship tracing; group analysis of the diagram; and planning for action [36]. Subsequently, each sociogram was analysed using different criteria: density, proximity, isolation, verticality and conflict [35].

The sociogram has a projective dimension that allows reflection on appropriate actions so that social networks are rearticulated into action sets, enabling conflict resolution and the creation of new networks [71–73]. Hence, a participatory approach was chosen in which

the community is involved as a subject of knowledge, action and transformation because as the community reveals the network, it rebuilds it [9,71].

The technique was implemented in each neighbourhood between October 2020 and January 2022. Given the dates, the implementation was disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which limited the techniques and instruments used but did not invalidate the results obtained. The study complied with ethical standards and was approved by the ethics committee of Universidad Loyola Andalucía on 28 April 2021, ensuring the confidentiality and anonymity of the data.

In neighbourhood A, face-to-face and virtual sessions were held. For this, a free videoconferencing application was used, and the *GenoPro* 2007 (version 2.0.1.6) program, software for generating genograms, was adapted as a participatory tool. In a total of 5 sessions, 44 people participated and 48 social actors were identified. In neighbourhood B, face-to-face and online sessions were also implemented using the same computer programs. Six sessions were held with a fluctuating participation of 61 people, and 50 social actors were identified. Neighbourhood C already had an approved community development plan. The sociogram was applied in the process of the reactivation of the plan. Eight face-to-face sessions were held in which the network map was configured, the strategic analysis was carried out and the partnerships were projected. There were a total of 37 people participating, and 42 social actors were identified. All this information is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Characteristics of the implementation of the sociogram in each neighbourhood.

	A	B	C
No. of Sessions	5	6	8
Duration:	3 months	3 months	5 months
Participants	44	61	37
Modality	Face to face/Online	Face to face/Online	Face to face
No. of Agents	48	50	42

Source: own elaboration.

3. Results

3.1. Stakeholder Concentration Analysis

The analysis of the concentration of the different types of actors is especially relevant when identifying stakeholders. It provides a first look at the positions of each group without actually entering into relationships. The comparative analysis of these positions allows the identification of patterns, which in turn will guide decision-making on issues such as the prospect of success or the exploration of structural conflicts [62]. Although the analysis of network density can also be measured by the proportion of the links established [47,69,74], in this case, the network was not measured, but rather the semantic location of each stakeholder was considered from a structural perspective [36] to determine the correlation between influence and affinity. Heatmaps were used for this analysis.

Figure 2a presents the heatmap of the sociogram of neighbourhood A, observing an apparent balance between 52% of the opposites and indifferent balance and the 48% of the different and like-minded. However, the graph's tendency towards extremes outlines a sociogram where a situation of opposing forces prevails. In the absence of an analysis of the relationships, these results suggest a confrontational scenario that offers limited prospects for successful outcomes.

Figure 2b highlights the imbalance in the heatmap for neighbourhood B. On the left side (opposites and indifferent) is 65%. The graph is also unbalanced horizontally, with substantial weight in the lower zone of less influence (83%). The participants consider that legitimacy in the neighbourhood is in the possession of very few. This, together with the excessive weight of the lower left quadrant, which conveys little affinity with the process, points to a vision of inaction in the neighbourhood.

Figure 2c shows a substantially different situation in neighbourhood C. Although the densest column is that of indifferent (38%), the weight of the graph is biased towards

the right side (the diverse and like-minded represent 58%). The column for opposites appears depopulated (5%) and with little influence, and 45% of the groups identified are in the upper right quadrant (diverse/like-minded and somewhat or even very influential), presenting a homogeneous distribution. The density and homogeneity of this area suggest a model with viable prospects.

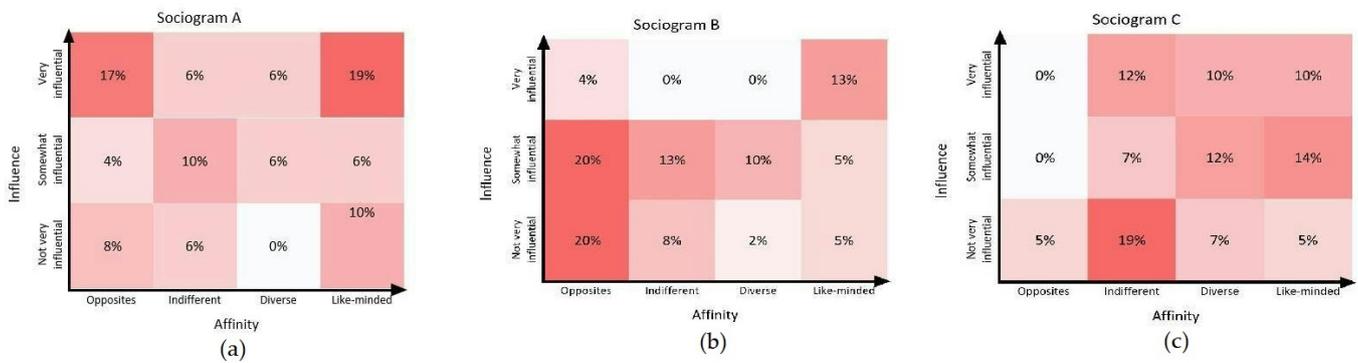


Figure 2. Heatmap of (a) neighbourhood A; (b) neighbourhood B; (c) neighbourhood C. The degree of colour intensity corresponds to the concentration of stakeholders, darker meaning a higher concentration.

3.2. Analysis of the Concentration of Stakeholders Based on Organizational Structure

After individual analysis, the stakeholders were organized based on their initial organizational structure into three categories: (1) power groups, which are organizational structures that have the competence and capacity to make direct decisions about public policy or the transformation of a neighbourhood; (2) formal groups, which are formally constituted organizations, whether public or private; and (3) informal groups, which are groups of people concerned about everyday issues, as well as neighbourhood leaders. Each group was assigned a graphic representation: triangles (power groups), squares (formal groups) and circles (informal groups) [36].

The density and location of stakeholders based on their organizational structure allow analysing the perceptions that participants have about them [36] and expand the search for patterns that indicate the organizational structure of neighbourhoods in social exclusion [47,74].

For the analysis, the neighbourhoods were grouped by each type of stakeholder to obtain a graph for each type of actor.

3.2.1. Power Groups

Figure 3 represents the positioning of the power groups, where 42% are located in the column for opposites and mostly in the area of little influence (30.43%). It is here that neighbourhoods A and B have the bulk of stakeholders who hold formal power in the neighbourhood. The image shows a diagonal trend, with neighbourhoods A and B in the lower left and neighbourhood C in the upper right (although one group is separated from it, representing provincial administration with little power in the neighbourhood).

The power groups identified are mainly institutions and public services, that is, organizations with decision-making capacity and power over the neighbourhood, because they legislate, standardize or apply laws and regulations. Importantly, despite this role, they are perceived by the participants from neighbourhoods A and B as having little influence, displacing effective leadership in the neighbourhood towards other stakeholder profiles. They are perceived as groups opposed to the community process, projecting an image of confrontation. In contrast, neighbourhood C places most of these groups in the very influential row, with a balanced weight in each grid. For this neighbourhood, 75% of these groups are located between the diverse and like-minded columns, indicating a certain proximity of these institutions to the neighbourhood.

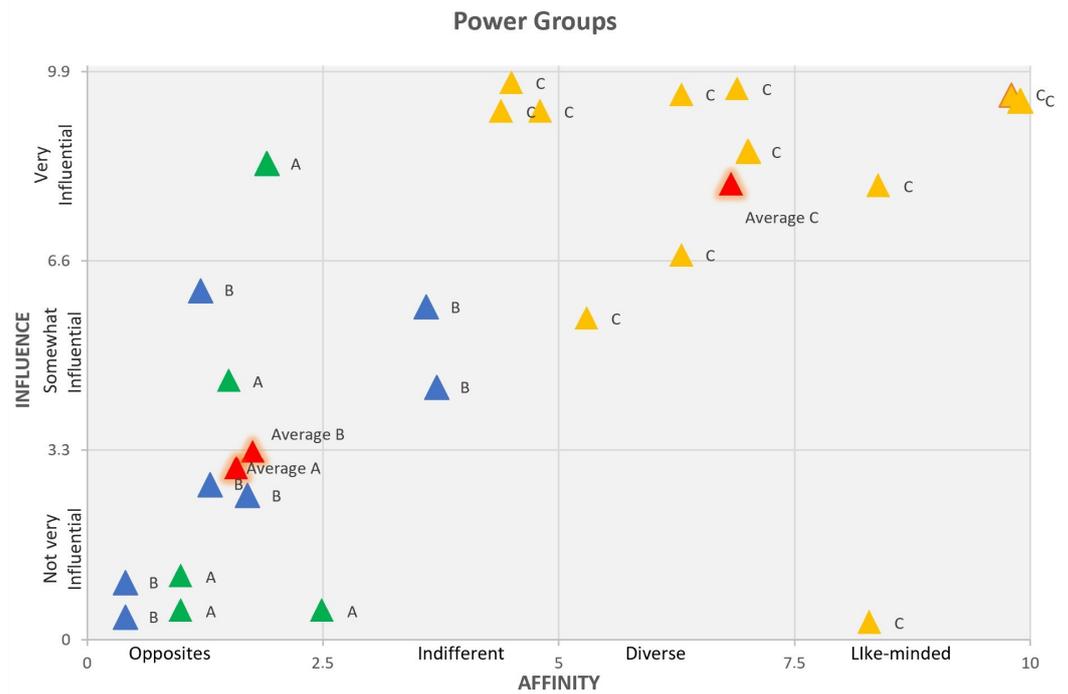


Figure 3. Positions of the power groups. In green the stakeholders in neighbourhood A, in blue those in neighbourhood B, in yellow those in neighbourhood C. Red represents the average.

3.2.2. Formal Groups

As Figure 4 shows, the formal groups present greater dispersion. The function of formal groups in the neighbourhood is broad, from constructing the social and associative fabric to conveying the public administration.

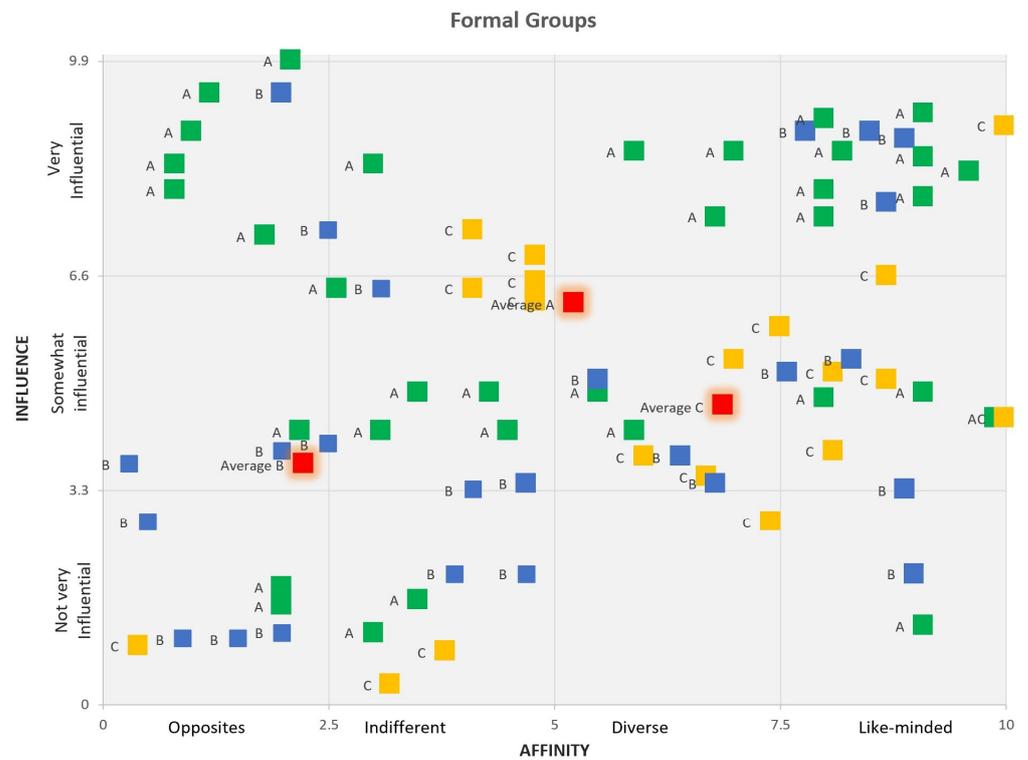


Figure 4. Positions of the formal groups. In green the stakeholders in neighbourhood A, in blue those in neighbourhood B, in yellow those in neighbourhood C. Red represents the average.

In neighbourhoods A and B, the groups are distributed throughout the map. However, certain patterns emerge. In neighbourhood A, formal groups are given high weight, with 19 organizations being identified as very influential. Of these, a considerable number are identified as either related or contrary, suggesting a slight polarization. In neighbourhood B, on the other hand, formal groups are given less weight (not very/somewhat influential), with a certain tendency to the left side (opposites and indifferent). In the extreme columns (affinity and opposites), the same high weight indicates an opposing struggle, polarizing the positions towards the extremes. This reinforces the blocking and opposing positions already detected in the general analysis. Finally, in neighbourhood C, a certain concentration is observed. In fact, in this neighbourhood, the formal groups present a high average (6.8, 4.5). Of these, up to seven groups are identified in the affinity column, and only one is found in the area of high influence. This illustrates, on the one hand, the perception that one organization drives the process and the perception of a certain lack of power and influence of the social fabric.

3.2.3. Informal Groups

Informal groups are the most diverse, ranging from individuals to semiorganized groups or groups without any organization. Despite their relative disarticulation, these groups are subject to very specific times, themes and places that weave a web across daily life in the neighbourhoods [27]. In this regard, only four groups appear in the very influential row, all from neighbourhood A (see Figure 5).

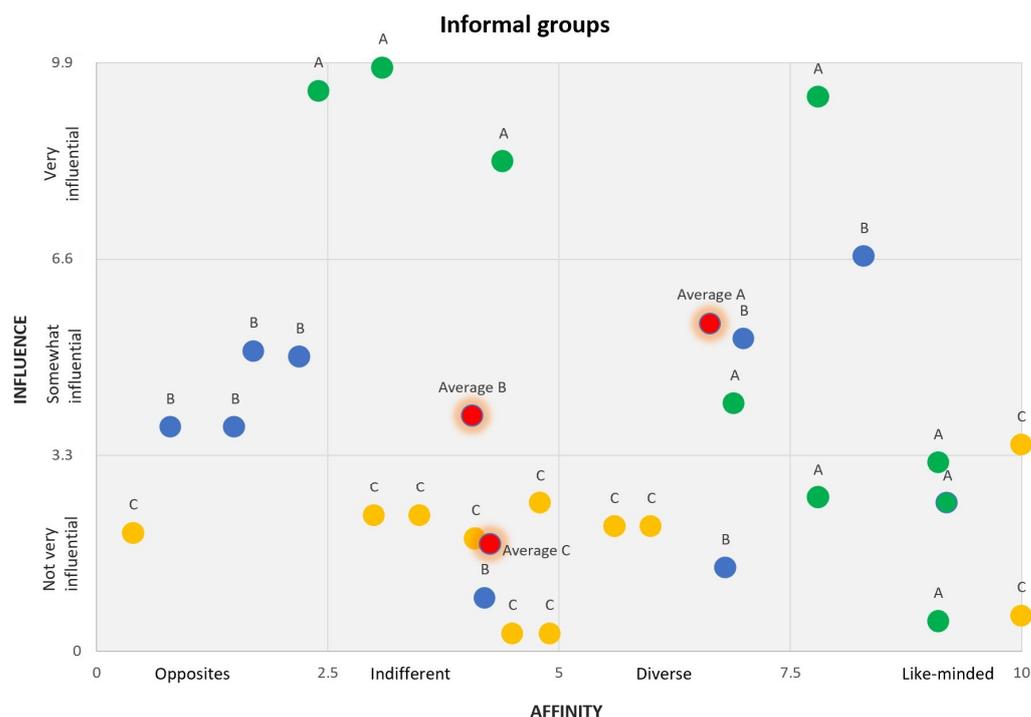


Figure 5. Positions of the informal groups. In green the stakeholders in neighbourhood A, in blue those in neighbourhood B, in yellow those in neighbourhood C. Red represents the average.

By neighbourhood, the positions of the groups in neighbourhood A indicate confrontation, but with relevant peculiarities: the groups located in the like-minded column have little influence, and the others with greater influence remain outside the process. This inverse correlation between influence and affinity indicates difficulties in achieving collective action in the neighbourhood. Contrast this with neighbourhood C, where numerous informal groups are identified, but all of them lack influence. This view of informal movements as having little influence and relatively little affinity in neighbourhood C is

noteworthy despite the affinity shown by powerful and formal groups with the endogenous development process launched in the neighbourhood.

3.3. Analysis of the Concentration of Stakeholders Based on the Nature of Their Activity

For a better characterization of the stakeholders and given the different roles they play in the neighbourhoods depending on their nature, referencing Alberich [71], each typology has been subcategorized (Table 3).

Table 3. Description of the stakeholders in the territory according to their nature.

Groups	Type of Organization	Description
Power	Public administration	Public institutions at different levels: city councils, district councils, etc.
	Public service units	Public personnel and organizations that offer educational, health or other services to citizens and the community to meet the rights of citizens managed by the public administration
Formal	Private service providers	Private personnel and organizations that offer services to citizens and the community in a delegated manner to meet the rights of citizens managed by the public administration
	Religious entities	Groups with a formal link to a religious institution
	Local associations	Neighbourhood associations to meet particular or community objectives (educational, cultural, sports, etc.).
	Platforms	Conglomerate of entities that associate with each other to have a greater impact on the achievement of common objectives
Informal	Informal leaders	Groups formed by a formal link to a religious institution
	Self-organized citizenry	Non-formalized groups of citizens who organize themselves to meet some common and temporary goal
	Unorganized citizenry	Groups of citizens who are grouped together from time to time with a common, particular or community objective

Source: own elaboration.

Once categorized, Table 4 shows the prevalence of each group of actors by territory.

Table 4. Prevalence of stakeholders in neighbourhoods based on the nature of stakeholder activity.

	Organization Type	Neighbourhood A	Neighbourhood B	Neighbourhood C	Total
Power	Public administration	4.17%	10%	9.5%	7.69%
	Public service units	25.00%	20%	23.8%	23.08%
Formal	Private service providers	29.17%	20%	16.7%	22.31%
	Religious entities	6.25%	5%	4.8%	5.38%
	Local associations	12.50%	20%	19.0%	16.92%
	Platforms	4.17%	5%	4.8%	4.62%
Informal	Informal leaders	14.58%	17.5%	14.3%	15.38%
	Self-organized citizenry	4.17%	0%	7.1%	3.85%
	Unorganized citizenry	0%	2.5%	0%	0.77%

Source: own elaboration. The highest values in each column are marked in ochre and the lowest values in each column are marked in blue.

In general, the group most present in the neighbourhoods is public service units, although in neighbourhood B the perceived presence of public service units is equal to that of local associations and service provider entities. In neighbourhood A, these entities, which normally provide public services in a delegated manner, are the second largest group. Neighbourhood B is the only neighbourhood that identified a group of unorganized citizens, and neighbourhoods A and C are the only neighbourhoods that identified self-organized citizenry groups; both categories, which play roles in the daily life of the neighbourhoods, are significantly the least represented.

To provide information on the capacity to promote collaborative governance processes, the average position of each subcategory and its density are calculated for comparative

purposes. They are graphically depicted on three maps (Figure 6) representing the situation in each neighbourhood.

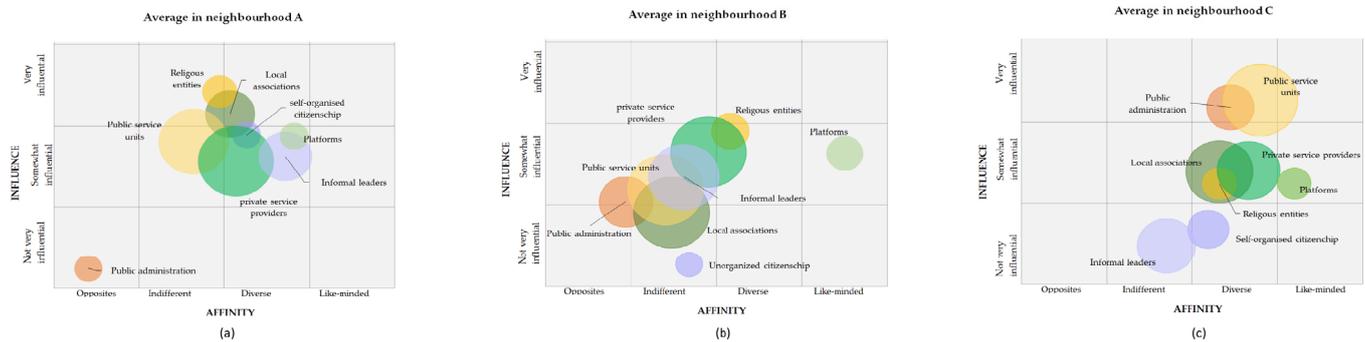


Figure 6. (a) Average in neighbourhood A; (b) average in neighbourhood B; (c) average in neighbourhood C.

The graphs show the average trend of each cluster in each neighbourhood. This calculation of averages implies that the more dispersed the sample, the more centrality the cluster will have. This allows identifying certain tendencies when a conglomerate moves away from centrality.

Although visually similar, Figure 6a–c present key differences in the disposition and relevance of stakeholders in each neighbourhood. In Figure 6a, most of the groups are in the central areas, where service-providing entities and distanced public administration dominate. Figure 6b, corresponding to neighbourhood B, shows a more dispersed distribution, with a tendency towards less affinity and influence, distributing the weight between public services, associations and local service provider entities. Finally, Figure 6c shows that neighbourhood C extends the influence from top to bottom, highlighting the administration and public services in the areas of greatest influence and affinity.

This comparative analysis reveals that, in general, (1) the actors in neighbourhood A are concentrated in the central and superior areas, with the notable exception of public administration; (2) the actors in neighbourhood B are concentrated in areas of little influence and opposed to or indifferent to the process, with the notable exception of neighbourhood platforms; and (3) the actors in neighbourhood C are dispersed in a diagonal that clearly tends towards the areas of greater influence and affinity, stratifying into informal, formal and power groups.

The analysis by type of actor yields very interesting results regarding the positioning of actors in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Groups related to public administration are generally seen as opposing and with little influence (neighbourhoods A and B), although they are perceived as having much power and greater affinity in neighbourhood C. In neighbourhood A, it is noteworthy that their position is at the lower extreme (opposite/not very influential). Public service units, which are local tools of the public administrations to territorialize activity, are normally associated with public administration, except in neighbourhood A, where criticism of the administration is notable.

Service providers remain mostly indifferent to the process, with positions somewhat closer to public institutions but with a medium capacity for influence. Comparatively, neighbourhood-based local associations are perceived significantly differently in each neighbourhood with regard to the axis of influence, showing little influence in neighbourhood B but substantial influence in neighbourhood A.

A couple of entities require a detailed analysis because of their specificity in the Spanish reality but whose analysis is extendable to other contexts. Platforms, which are groups of civic organizations with a common interest, usually arise in neighbourhoods where collective action processes are initiated, thus explaining their related positions even with medium or low influence in the graphs. Religious entities, whose presence in these neighbourhoods has historical weight in movements and their welfare, maintain substantial

influence, although they are located in the indifferent column because of the ageing of their members.

Finally, the social bases, represented by groups of informal leaders and self-organized and unorganized citizenry, move from indifferent positions in neighbourhoods C and B to relatively opposite positions in neighbourhood A. All show relatively little influence and are not present in some neighbourhoods.

4. Discussion

As a dialogic methodology, the sociogram has a descriptive component of reality but also a prospective purpose, allowing the incorporation of a strategic function [36]. In this line, the analysis provides a visualization of the starting positions of groups of stakeholders in each neighbourhood and indicates the feasibility and sustainability of collective action.

Starting with the heatmaps, a common inter-neighbourhood pattern is not observed. However, the graphs could indicate emerging problems in programme implementation in each neighbourhood. The starting positions indicate a playing field that, depending on the territory, points to confrontation (neighbourhood A), opposition and blockade (neighbourhood B) or collaboration (neighbourhood C). These starting positions coincide, in prospective terms, with what Villasante proposes [36,75] in his chart of positions and with Gardner and his colleagues [76]. In the most extreme cases, a prospective interpretation of the sociogram allows predicting the feasibility of development processes, as in neighbourhood B, in which the urban regeneration process that has actually started has not been implemented continuously.

Comparing the organizational structure of the stakeholders, regarding the power groups, the analysis shows that neighbourhoods A and B perceive them with suspicion and that neighbourhood C perceives them with affinity. These results demonstrate how the perceptions of the participants towards the decision-makers transition from discouragement and confrontation to collaboration and advocacy. As Rawlins poses [77] through the Grunig and Hunt bonding model [78], power groups are stakeholders associated with enabling and normative links. These types of links allow an organization to have the resources and autonomy to act. Therefore, initial positions opposed to the process could limit the possibilities of endogenous development, while projecting an aligned stance would convey a more feasible visualization of the process.

Regarding the power groups, even though there is no causal evidence, the comparative analysis points to a possible correlation between the perception in the neighbourhoods that the groups are related and an urban regeneration plan with collaborative governance exists. This is the case for neighbourhood C, a finding that supports results previously reported in the literature: for example, an increase in the importance of the interaction between public actors and nonstate actors [79] and the increased benefits when institutional context (power) encourages collaboration [42]. This result also supports the idea that when public policies are participatory, a greater proximity to public institutions is established, ameliorating general disaffection, especially in these neighbourhoods [80].

Regarding perceptions of formal groups, they integrate into the associative network of neighbourhoods and serve as functional links between public administration and the neighbourhood [77]. As seen in the graphs, the positions of these groups vary based on the situation in each neighbourhood, not finding generalized patterns that allow establishing links between positions and territorial exclusion. However, following Ran and Qi's approach [42] regarding the relationship between sharing power and the effectiveness of collaborative processes, a certain connection is observed between the expectations of success and the location of these formal groups. The farther away the groups are from the process, the more resistance to implementation there will be, perhaps affecting motivation for action. Thus, the distribution of the formal groups suggests possible positions in neighbourhood C but confrontation and blocking in neighbourhoods A and B.

The importance of informal groups lies in the fact that they weave into the network of relationships in daily life, in many cases activating endogenous resources in dialectical

processes of resistance and adaptation [81]. In these spaces of connection with informal groups, neighbourhood power is activated and on appropriate occasions can give rise to the “unprecedented viable” [49], that is, processes that, being innovative, facilitate transformative action by overcoming extreme situations [82]. However, in the cases analysed, in general, informal groups are observed with caution, as they are perceived with little influence and relatively low affinity. Despite the use of participatory methodologies by the most established groups in the neighbourhoods, the existing gap with the social bases of the disadvantaged neighbourhoods is evident.

Finally, according to the nature of the social actors, the comparative analysis yields significant information about their initial positioning in the neighbourhoods. The first important element is the predominance of public service units (a power group), service providers and local associations (both formal groups) in the neighbourhoods. The reticular structure of the neighbourhoods shows a network of connections between power groups and highly organized and structured civic organizations. These connections are dominated by functional and normative links [77], projecting a managerial or even clientelist image [6,36] of the dynamics of the neighbourhoods.

Additionally, there is low perception of informal groups, i.e., those that make up the social bases. The complete absence of so-called urban social movements stands out [83,84]. The low presence of these groups is relevant because, on the one hand, they constitute diffuse links in daily life [77], and, on the other hand, they have a strong political capacity and thus play key roles in forging alliances with an impact mediated by the conflict and structural characteristics of the context [85].

Furthermore, as the administration is perceived with less influence and affinity, religious centres are perceived with greater affinity and influence. This is associated with the origin of the peripheral neighbourhoods, where the absence of the administration allowed the development of ecclesiastical services whose influence is still present.

Consistent with the principles set out by [86] in his critical analysis of case studies, our work in the three neighbourhoods shows how specific methodological approaches can reveal generalizable patterns. Although each neighbourhood has a unique stakeholder positioning scheme, the application of the sociogram has discovered distinctive models that are applicable in other urban contexts. For example, in neighbourhood A, administrative disconnection and struggles between formal and informal groups hinder progress. In neighbourhood B, the prevalence of actors with opposing positions and little influence leads to inactivity and blockade of the regeneration process. Meanwhile, in neighbourhood C, an effective collaboration between formal and power actors contrasts with the distancing of the citizen bases, highlighting the need to reconnect with the community. These findings underline the usefulness of the sociogram for identifying intervention strategies in similar settings, aligning with Flyvbjerg’s perspective on the valuable contribution of case studies in qualitative research. These characterizations suggest a trend towards different models of governance in the territory, a finding that is consistent with proposals by authors such as Villasante [36] and Bradley [6]. The verification of similar models in other territories can, on the one hand, predict the drift of the governance of urban regeneration processes and, on the other hand, help establish strategies and decision-making that consider all stakeholders, creating sustainable governance coalitions [24].

5. Conclusions

The comparative study of the sociogram for three disadvantaged neighbourhoods has allowed us to draw some general conclusions about the configuration of collaborative governance networks in sustainable and endogenous urban regeneration processes, as well as the capacity of the sociogram not only to promote such processes but also to predict their viability. The sociogram is a useful tool to identify stakeholders and their starting positions and to provide inputs for strategic planning.

In general, the results are consistent with the literature; i.e., there is a relationship between the effectiveness of processes and an express will to share power. The assessment

of actors' positions has allowed the classification of their roles as enabling, confrontational or blocking. This suggests that some settings, such as neighbourhood B, face significant challenges to collaborative governance, while others, such as neighbourhood C, present greater opportunities for the success of these processes

Another general conclusion regarding the stakeholders in disadvantaged neighbourhoods pertains to the nature of their positions, even in the absence of establishing relationships between them. Thus, the shared difficulty in identifying informal groups, which constitute the social bases and weave into the daily fabric of the neighbourhood, has been verified. Notably absent are the groups closest to urban social movements. This absence of community fabric demonstrates how managerial and even clientelist actors prevail in neighbourhoods, especially when organizations linked to public administration predominate.

In parallel to the conclusions, it is necessary to highlight some limitations. This study was carried out during a specific phase of process implementation; therefore, the location of the stakeholders in the sociogram matrix could have been affected. The analysis of the networks established between the actors could shed light on the interconnection processes between actants, complicating the understanding of the social processes in the territory. Furthermore, as Gutiérrez states [35,87], a sociogram is static and descriptive. Knowing that networks are by definition contingent [26], stakeholder positions and projections may vary over time, which is important to consider.

Despite these limitations, the similarities and contrasts found in the different neighbourhoods support the importance of identifying the profiles and positions of the stakeholders so as to develop sustainable and endogenous processes of urban regeneration. Therefore, addressing these limitations in future lines of research can reinforce the potential of using the sociogram as a tool to legitimize urban regeneration processes through the participation and commitment of all stakeholders, their alliances and coalitions. The analysis of neighbourhoods with successful urban regeneration processes could offer valuable reference points. Future research could explore the application of the sociogram in various urban contexts, including comparative studies between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged neighbourhoods, or between different regions or cities. Furthermore, exploring the effect of the combined use of quantitative and qualitative data could enrich our understanding and provide practical guidelines. Given the dynamic nature of the sociogram, it seems relevant to implement longitudinal studies that monitor changes over time.

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