Article

Controlling the Proximity of the Poor: Patterns of Micro-Segregation in Naples' Upper-Class Areas

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Abstract: Naples has been described as a symbol of the weak segregation of Mediterranean cities, which are marked by microscale segregation rather than neighborhood segregation. This paper focuses on the upper-class areas of Naples where, besides vertical segregation, other patterns of micro-segregation can be found and remain understudied. In such areas, Disadvantaged groups still concentrate into streets, blocks and enclaves of poverty that have resisted gentrification despite their location in the heart of upper-class nieghborhoods. Though self-segregation of the urban élite has sharply increased with globalization and postfordist capitalism, such patterns of segregation in well-off areas are largely unexplored. The paper is based on a mixed method. It uses census data to map the residential location of disadvantaged groups in Naples upper-class areas at the local scale. It also draws on ethnographic fieldwork to analyze the Neapolitan élites' attitudes towards the proximity of the poor. The paper shows that the spatial proximity of the poor has long been accepted and promoted by the city élite as a way of maintaining social control over their patronage. But it is increasingly stigmatized as this control through proximity becomes more difficult for the decaying traditional Neapolitan élite. Residential proximity is now associated with increasing segregation in the use of public spaces. The paper discusses the theory of élite Urban Secession in globalization. In Naples, rather than Secession, the élite play a game of proximity and distance with the poor, using space as a means of social control.

Keywords: élite; segregation; Naples; Mediterranean

1. Introduction

Globalization has led to a sharp increase in the residential segregation of the upper classes. In North American and European cities alike, the highest rates of residential segregation are to be found among the social elites (Préteceille, 2006 [1]; Oberti and Préteceille, 2016 [2]). The advent of flexible capitalism seems to be accompanied by a significant—and voluntary—self-segregation of the upper classes, or even an urban secession of this population group, symbolized by the much-studied figure of the gated community and other forms of "citadels" for the rich (Marcuse, 1997 [3]; Marcuse and Van Kempen, 1999 [4]). However, the intensity of this elite segregation and the spatial forms that it adopts vary considerably according to the geographical context. Studies on urban segregation emerged in the United States between the two world wars, where they highlighted the importance of segregation by neighborhood, in a North American continent characterized by recent urbanization and considerable urban sprawl based on single-family housing and the increasing availability of motor cars. However, models based on North American cities do not apply well to older, denser urban contexts, such as European and Asian cities (Maloutas and Karadimitriou, 2022 [5]). In these cities, the density and age of the buildings in historic cores mean that a wide variety of populations live side by side in the heart of the urban area. The specific features of housing markets (spatial spread of social housing in Northern Europe, importance of family proximity in Southern Europe) have also limited segregation by neighborhood. Lastly, more recently in Europe, public policies have been developed

to promote social diversity by diversifying housing supply and residential status within a given neighborhood or housing block (Bridge et al., 2014 [6]; Bacqué and Charmes, 2016 [7]). Research into urban segregation has thus shifted the focus to the local scale and situations of spatial proximity between social and ethnic groups. The concept of "micro-segregation" has been proposed to designate processes of separation between social groups living in close proximity to one another, which thus concern not so much the place of residence as places of sociability, work, and education (Maloutas and Karadimitriou, 2022 [8]).

Mediterranean cities have been playing a central role in this debate over Micro-Segregation. In fact, they are characterized by a model of attenuated segregation (Leontidou, 1990 [9]; Allen et al., 2004 [10]) which takes place on a very local scale. Naples is thus one of the cities that best embodies "vertical segregation," based on cohabitation within a given building of the working classes, on the ground floor (in the city's famous *bassi*, semi-buried former warehouses that have been transformed into housing for the city's poorest populations), the upper classes, on the *piani nobili* (first and second floors above ground level), and the middle classes, on the upper floors (Luongo and Oliva, 1959 [11]; Laino, 2016 [12]; Dines and Mattiucci, 2022 [13]). Long assimilated to surviving Feudal society, destined to disappear in the capitalist city, this vertical segregation has proved resilient within post-industrial cities, whether in the Mediterranean region or elsewhere (Maloutas and Karadimitriou, 2001 [14]; Lepoutre, 2010 [15]). In Naples, it is still widespread not only in the historic center but also in the affluent neighborhoods of Chiaia and Posillipo. Indeed, a distinctive feature of Mediterranean Cities is that "attenuated segregation" also concerns the upper classes. In Naples, the élite has never totally abandoned the historic core of the city, and the upscale neighborhoods that have developed outside the city center since the end of the 19th century still include many poor streets and blocks.

However, in Naples and elsewhere, these forms of micro-segregation within affluent neighborhoods have been the subject of relatively few studies. The field of research on micro-segregation has mainly focused on gentrified neighborhoods or historic city centers, characterized by highly diverse populations. Little is known about the forms of micro-segregation in affluent neighborhoods, which are reputed to be more homogeneous or socially polarized. This is particularly true of the fashionable neighborhoods—*quartieri alti* in Italian, *beaux quartiers* in French—that emerged from the urban extensions of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, which transformed many European cities by creating a bourgeois centrality alongside the old city centers (London's West End, the Eixample in Barcelona, the western arrondissements of Paris, the *ampliamenti* of Milan, Genoa, and Naples…). These districts are deeply marked in their landscapes by the symbolic imprint of the upper classes, with their ostentatious architecture, large public gardens, select theaters and cultural venues, corporate headquarters, and private members' clubs (Pinçon and Pinçon-Charlot, 1989 and 2000 [16,17]), and so forth. In Italy, as in the rest of Europe, these types of neighborhoods are today home to record numbers of upper-class residents and have even seen a marked increase in their social homogeneity in recent years (Oberti and Préteceille, 2016 [2]). However, while the upper classes are still clearly overrepresented in relation to their proportion of the city population, they are rarely in the majority. The "spatial brand" (Pinçon and Pinçon-Charlot, 2000 [17]) of the bourgeoisie in these areas has helped to render invisible the middle and lower classes, who often represent between a third and half of the population. Wealthy neighborhoods also have their poor residents, and bringing them out of this invisibility is a major challenge at a time when social policies are increasingly territorialized and tend to focus on larger neighborhoods that have higher concentrations of poverty. They also form a particularly interesting terrain for understanding the relationship that the upper classes have with the city and its population as a whole.

This article is based on census data and two ethnographic field works conducted in Naples' *quartieri alti* (Chiaia and Posillipo districts) first in 2004–2007 and then in 2017–2018 [1]. It revisits the question of the "secession" of urban elites while demonstrating the specific forms that it takes in a context of close spatial proximity to the lower social strata. The first aim of the paper is to highlight the spatial patterns of micro-segregation and the residential

location of the poor in wealthy neighborhoods, using fine-scale cartographic processing of census data. In fact, in addition to vertical segregation—which has been extensively studied in recent years—these bourgeois areas of the city also feature other models of residential micro-segregation, which remain poorly understood. Such is the case of the opposition between aristocratic streets (*vie*), lined with *palazzi*, and working-class perpendicular lanes and alleys (*vicoli*) (Sabelberg, 1987 [19]; Pfirsch, 2011 [20]). This is also the case for the grouping of disadvantaged "enclaves" comprising several blocks and adjacent streets. The second aim of this article is to study, through ethnographic research, the social dimension of micro-segregation, and how it is seen, constructed, and managed by the city élite. The paper explores the links and representations that wealthy residents of upscale neighborhoods develop with the inhabitants of the poor enclaves within these areas. My study therefore builds upon the few works that have attempted in recent years to analyze "what the rich think of the poor" (Paugam et al., 2017 [21]) and how they control the physical proximity of disadvantaged groups. Thus, It also follows the footsteps of recent research that proposes a critical reading of social mix. Numerous studies have, for instance, shown that physical proximity between unequal social groups can be accompanied by a strong segregation of their uses of the city, and of their places of education and sociability, and does not necessarily have a positive impact on the social trajectories of the dominated groups (Bridge et al., 2014 [6]; Bacqué and Charmes, 2016 [7]). The effects of social mix are not positive per se but strongly depend on the local context.

How do Naples' elites manage the proximity of "their" poor populations? The article will show that the segregation of the city's elites cannot be characterized as a "secession," but rather as a "partial exit" strategy, based on a "game of proximity and distance" with lower social groups (Andreotti et al., 2015 [22]). In Naples, as in many European and Mediterranean cities, the elites have never totally left the urban core, and, rather than fleeing to distant outskirts, they have chosen to control the spatial proximity of the lower classes. Neapolitan elites do indeed distance themselves from lower strata of the population, but this does not need to involve complete physical segregation. They seek to distance themselves in certain social fields (schools, clubs, seaside resorts) but not in others (places of residence, workplaces, use of public spaces). It will be demonstrated that this game of proximity and distance is locally contextualized and socially variable. It is easier to play for the most legitimate and established strata of the elite: the higher, older, and more stable their position within city society and in high-status areas, the more acceptable and valued the spatial proximity of socially distant groups.

Section 2 outlines the mixed and indirect method used to shed light on the hitherto invisible case of poor populations that live in affluent neighborhoods, while the subsequent sections will present the -results of the survey. Section 3 analyzes the spatial forms of micro-segregation in upscale neighborhoods, precisely identifying the working-class streets and enclaves within them, and describing their landscapes and public spaces. Section 4 analyzes the social mechanisms of micro-segregation in the *quartieri alti*, highlighting two different ways of playing the game of proximity and distance with the disadvantaged groups that can be observed within the local elite: the "aristocratic" game, which values proximity to the lower strata, and the "bourgeois" game, which stigmatizes poor enclaves. Section 5 will take a more general approach, proposing a theoretical framework for thinking about the relationship between spatial proximity and social distance.

2. In Search of the Poor in Rich Neighborhoods: A Mixed and Indirect Method

In Naples, as elsewhere, the poor of the city's upscale districts are in many ways an invisible population, underrepresented in the media, insufficiently studied, and overlooked by urban policies. In fact, I discovered the extent of the lower classes' presence in Neapolitan inner-city neighborhoods somewhat unexpectedly during the course of my dissertation fieldwork, carried out between 2004 and 2007, which focused on family proximity among the city's elites (Pfirsch, 2008 [18]). The aim of my doctorate was not to study the poor, but rather the dynamics of self-segregation among the upper classes. What emerged from this

fieldwork, however, was the significant presence of lower-class populations in the middle of wealthy neighborhoods. I discovered that just a few dozen meters from the city's most exclusive streets were pockets of poverty with dilapidated housing, often nestled on the hard-to-reach slopes of the *quartieri alti*. In the interviews I conducted with families from the local élite, the proximity of poor populations—whether valorized or stigmatized—emerged spontaneously.

Accordingly, this article uses an indirect method, approaching the working-class enclaves of the *quartieri alti* from the standpoints of public statistics, the researcher's external observation, and the discourses espoused by the city's upper classes. I am fully aware of the limitations of such a method, which does not allow the voices of those primarily concerned to be heard, and studies them from the point of view of dominant groups. However, this indirect method also has the advantage of highlighting a rarely studied aspect: how the upper classes represent the poor and their place within the city, and more broadly how they justify their own self-segregation. This question is important because the upper classes play a structuring role in forms of residential segregation on a citywide scale: their control of land and greater freedom of choice in residential locations enables them to occupy—and at the same time create—the most prestigious positions, forcing other social groups to define themselves in relation to them (Oberti and Préteceille, 2016 [2]). Understanding the representations that the upper classes have of lower social groups is essential to understanding the mechanisms of contemporary urban segregation.

My method is also a mixed one. First, I adopt a cartographic approach on the fine scale of census tracts in order to pinpoint areas of poverty within the *quartieri alti*. This mapping is then complemented by an ethnographic survey to analyze the landscapes and public spaces of these working-class enclaves, on the one hand, and the attitudes of the upper classes with regard to the inhabitants of these enclaves, on the other. The cartographic aspect of my study is based on data from the 2001 Italian population census, processed using ArcGIS on the scale of census tracts within the municipality of Naples. This level of precision makes it possible to identify micro-concentrations of disadvantaged populations within a given street or housing block, and not just on the scale of administrative neighborhoods, as is often the case in studies of poverty in Naples and other Italian cities [2]. For example, in the latest cartographic studies of poverty in the Naples urban area, the two "affluent" districts of Posillipo and Chiaia appear as uniformly bourgeois, with maps showing no internal contrasts at the sub-neighborhood level (Morlicchio and Pratschke, 2004 [23]; Lelo et al., 2019 [24]). Pockets of poverty in affluent neighborhoods are well known and identified by Neapolitans in their daily life, but to date, they remain unmapped.

Using census data on the scale of census tracts does have its limitations, however, and does not allow for an exhaustive approach to forms of residential micro-segregation. These data do not include information on which floors are occupied by which residents, and therefore do not allow for mapping vertical segregation in the city. The few empirical studies of vertical segregation in Naples are based on door-to-door surveys on the scale of an individual street (Luongo and Oliva, 1959 [11]), neighborhood, or building (Laino, 2019 [12]), but there are no data available that enable the precise mapping of this phenomenon on a citywide scale, as is the case for Athens, for example (Maloutas and Spyrellis, 2016 [25]). The maps presented in Section 3 therefore focus on two other spatial forms of micro-segregation, which are clearly highlighted in the data for census tracts: concentrations of lanes and alleys, and concentrations of micro-neighborhoods. Another limitation is the low level of socio-professional data disaggregation at the local level. The residential location of the lower class can only be deduced indirectly, by identifying areas where the upper classes are underrepresented in the *quartieri alti* (Figure 1). They can also be determined using indirect indicators for which high-quality disaggregated data are available on a local scale, such as the unemployment rate, the percentage of large families (fertility varies considerably by social class in Naples), or the type and quality of housing (Table 1).

Because of these limitations, I chose to complement the cartographic approach with direct observation in the field. During the two fieldworks I mentioned in the introduction, I made regular observations in the streets and enclaves of poverty identified in the mapping process, and more particularly in four sectors within Naples' *quartieri alti*: Santa Maria Apparente, Santa Maria in Portico, and La Torretta in the Chiaia district, and Il Casale in the Posillipo district. I collected photographs and analyzed the use of public spaces in these sectors, as they not only contrast with the rest of the surrounding neighborhoods in terms of their social composition, but also stand out very clearly in terms of their architecture, population density, economic activities, and their residents' daily practices. The first fieldwork (2004–2007) took place soon after the 2001 census and the mapping process. The second one (2017–2018) was conducted 15 years later. It allowed me to analyze the changes in the landscapes and the uses of public spaces in the disadvantaged enclaves of Chiaia and Posillipo over the last decade, in order to identify possible gentrification [3].

Finally, during the three years I lived in Naples for my doctorate (2004–2007), I conducted 50 interviews with upper-class residents of the city's two most exclusive districts, Chiaia and Posillipo. The individuals interviewed belonged to the aristocracy, the bourgeoisie of the liberal professions, the business world, and the world of politics, and were selected on the basis of local prestige rather than income or profession [4]. The interviews focused on their residential strategies in the city and their families' geographical trajectories over several generations. The interviews also explored their representations of the city and their relationship with their neighborhoods, regularly addressing the question of the spatial proximity of the working classes. In addition to the interviews, I followed these families ethnographically over a period of three years, observing their daily practices and their uses of the city, which sometimes enabled me to see strategies of avoidance or distancing from disadvantaged enclaves that were not present in their discourse. The next two sections present the key results that emerged from the combination of these various methods.

3. Disadvantaged Streets and Enclaves: The Spatial Patterns of Micro-Segregation in Naples' Upper-Class Areas

Naples is one of the cities with the highest levels of socio-residential segregation in Italy; indeed, segregation indices are generally much higher in the cities of the Mezzogiorno than in those of Northern Italy (Barbagli and Pisati, 2012, p. 136 [26]). These high rates of segregation in southern Italian cities can be explained by the very high residential concentration of their elites. In Naples, segregation has historically been highest and occurred earliest among the upper classes. In the 2001 census, the two districts of Chiaia and Posillipo alone accounted for more than half of the municipality's upper classes [5] (Pfirsch, 2011 [20]). Within these districts, the upper classes were clearly overrepresented: in Posillipo, they accounted for 25% of the working population—three times the municipal average (Figure 1).

In 2001, Naples' two most affluent neighborhoods, Chiaia and Posillipo, were neither on the outskirts of the city nor in the historic core; rather, they formed a second city center—chic and bourgeois—adjoining the old town. In the second half of the 19th century, Naples was part of a wider European movement that saw the emergence of purpose-built upper-class neighborhoods, termed *quartieri alti* in Italian. Neapolitan elites had begun to congregate in the west of the historic center as early as the 16th century, around the Spanish viceroys' palace, but this westward flight accelerated with the deployment of the *ampliamenti*, the urban expansion plans that followed Italian Unity (1861) in the peninsula's major cities. In the 1860s, the city's elites began to urbanize the Bay of Chiaia, a former aristocratic resort area to the west of the historic core (Guidi, 1980 [28]; Macry, 1984 [29]; Pfirsch, 2008 and 2011 [18,20]). While the summer palaces of the aristocracy already occupied the waterfront—the prestigious Riviera di Chiaia—broad, upscale avenues were opened up behind the Riviera, in the lower part of the bay and the surrounding hills (such as Via dei Mille or Corso Vittorio Emmanuele). The relocation of the city's elites from the historic center to these fashionable western neighborhoods accelerated after the cholera

epidemic of 1884, and again after the Second World War, when the old town was destroyed. Today, these *quartieri alti* correspond administratively to the two districts of Chiaia and Posillipo, and stand in stark contrast to the historic center, both in terms of landscape and social composition (Figure 1).
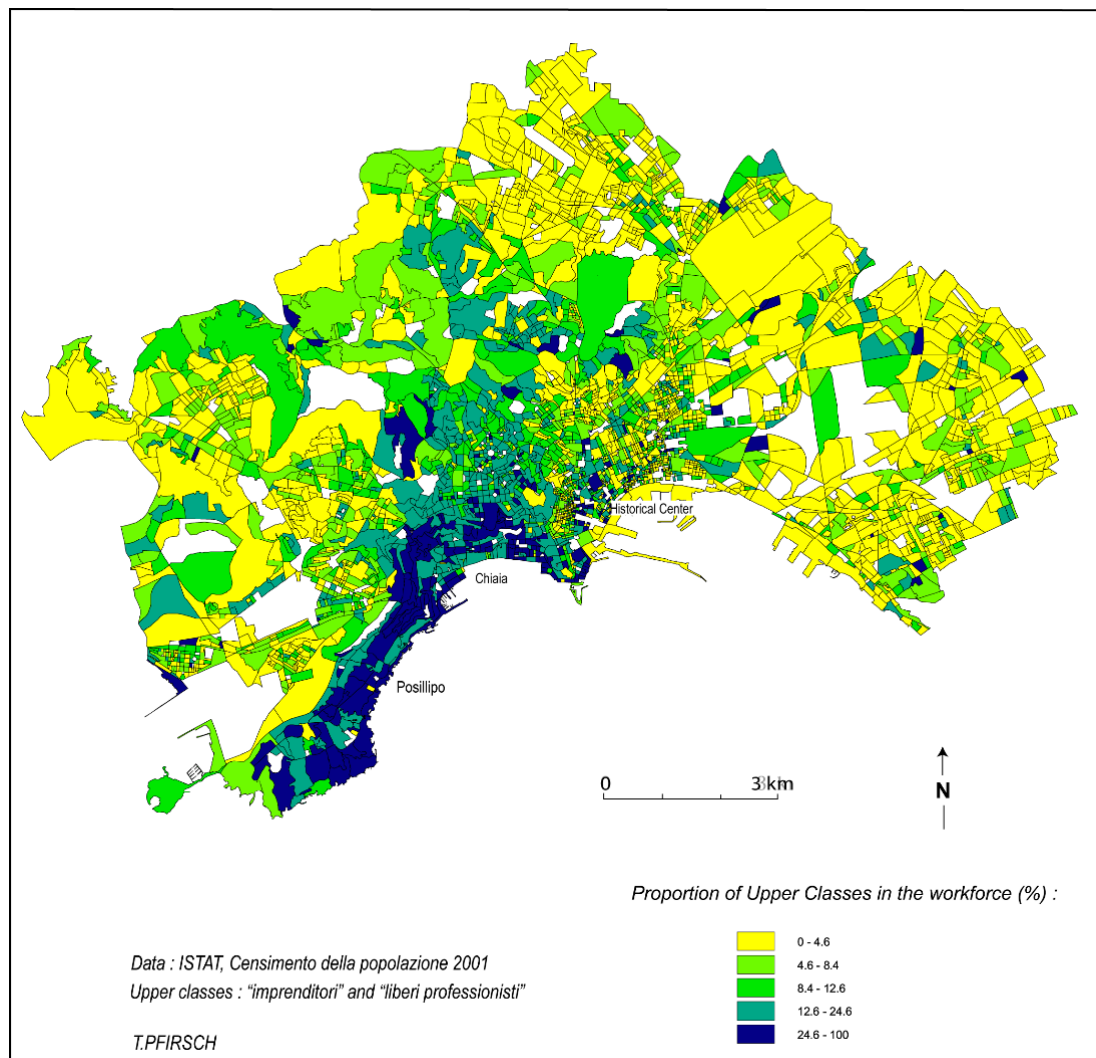

Figure 1. Naples' upper classes: a high concentration in the *Quartieri Alti* (2001).

Yet even though these neighborhoods are more affluent than others, they still have a significant proportion of lower strata residents, who accounted for over 30% of their population in 2001 (Pfirsch, 2011 [20]). Given the high population density of these neighborhoods—more than 41,000 inhabitants and a density of over 15,000 inhabitants per square kilometer in Chiaia—this represents several tens of thousands of people. Spatially speaking, these working-class populations in upper-class neighborhoods are not always dispersed throughout the city. They are typically grouped according to three models of residential micro-segregation. The first is vertical segregation between floors of the same building, as previously mentioned (see Section 1). In Naples, vertical Segregation traditionally opposes the ground-floor *bassi* occupied by disadvantaged groups and the upper floors inhabited by the wealthier classes. Such vertical segregation, while difficult to map and quantify in Naples (see Section 2 above), can still be clearly observed in the streets of the city's *quartieri alti* (Figure 2), even if it is today in decline.

Bassi converted into workshops (Chiaia, 2017)

Occupied *bassi* in the
Santa Maria in Portico enclave (2017)

Photo : T.Pfirsch, 2017

Figure 2. Declining Vertical Segregation? The Transformation of *Bassi* in the *Quartieri Alti*.

In the course of my observations in 2004–2007 and 2017–2018, I noticed that many of the *bassi* in the *quartieri alti* had been converted into shops, thus returning them to their original function. Today, cabinet-makers' workshops, antique stores, and luxury clothing boutiques are all located there, serving the needs of the affluent population of these neighborhoods. Some *bassi*, however, are still inhabited, notably in the oldest part of the Chiaia district, in the *vicoli* just behind the Riviera. Unlike the *bassi* in the old town, which are now home to an immigrant population (as in the case of Sri Lankan immigrants in the Quartieri Spagnoli), the *bassi* in the *quartieri alti* are still occupied by the local white—albeit aging—lower classes. Families have become rare, and isolated elderly people more numerous. That said, immigrants are not absent from the *quartieri alti*; on the contrary, in 2001, the districts of Chiaia and Posillipo had one of the highest concentrations of legal foreign nationals in the city (Pfirsch, 2008 [18]). However, these individuals, who are largely employed as domestic workers (Filipino and Sri Lankan babysitters, Ukrainian home helps, etc.), are generally housed with the families who employ them and are therefore widely dispersed residentially throughout the urban space.

In addition to vertical segregation, another form of micro-segregation that is common in the cities of the Mezzogiorno can be found in Naples' *quartieri alti*: the contrast between elegant villa-lined streets (*vie*) and immediately adjacent poor lanes and alleys (*vicoli* or *vicoletti*) (Sabelberg, 1987 [19]). This ancient structure, reflecting the ties of dependence between the aristocracy and its lower-class clientele under the Ancien Régime, has endured over time and still marks the urban fabric of the oldest part of Naples' *quartieri alti*. This is particularly evident in Chiaia, where the aristocratic *palazzi* of the Riviera di Chiaia stand in stark contrast to the much more disadvantaged *vicoletti* around them, running perpendicular to the waterfront (Figure 3).

Photo : T.Pfirsch, 2017

Figure 3. Upper-class Streets (*vie*) versus disadvantaged alleys (*vicoli*). Aristocratic palaces of the Riviera du Chiaia (**left**) flank the disadvantaged alley of Via palasciano (**right**).

The third spatial pattern of micro-segregation in Naples' *quartieri alti* consists of urban enclaves, i.e., clusters of contiguous streets and blocks. These disadvantaged enclaves, color-coded yellow or light green, stand out clearly on the map of census tracts in the upscale districts of Chiaia and Posillipo (Figure 4). There are four main enclaves: Santa Maria Apparente, Santa Maria in Portico, La Torretta in Chiaia, and Il Casale in Posillipo [6].
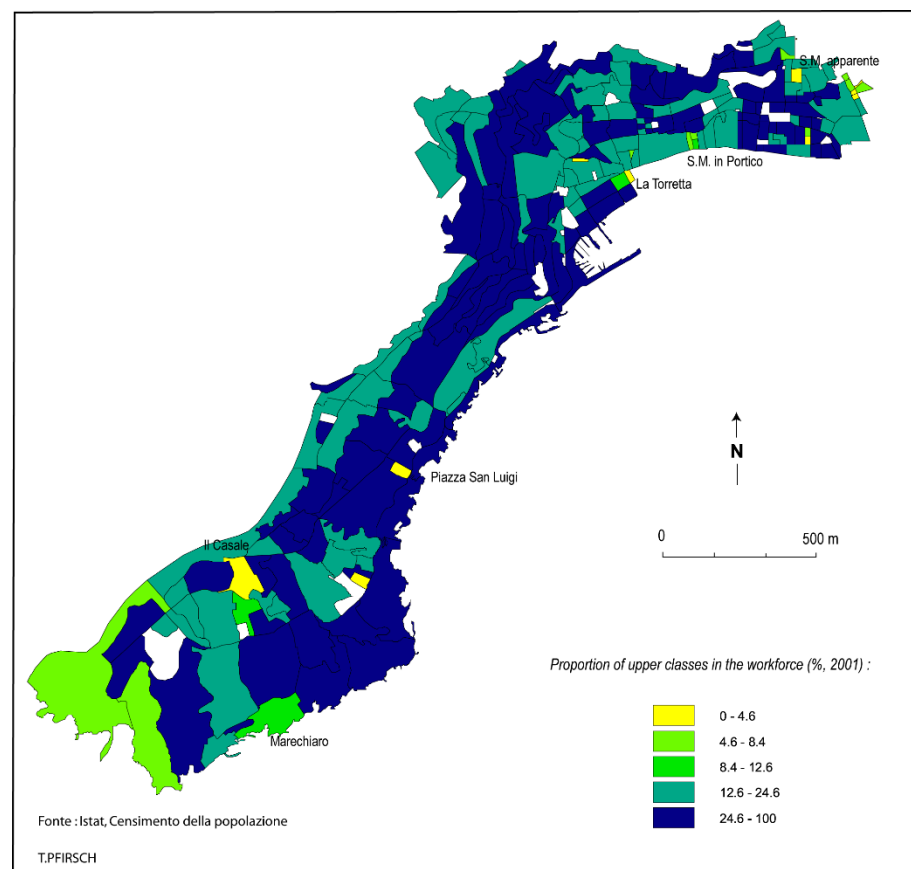

Figure 4. Disadvantaged enclaves in Naples' upper-class neighborhoods (2001).

The 2001 census data do indeed show a concentration of poverty and social difficulties in these four enclaves, which have a total population of just over 4000: the proportion of business owners and liberal professionals is far below the city average, while unemployed persons, large families, tenants, and small dwellings are all overrepresented in what are otherwise upscale areas with generally older populations, where large apartments and homeowners are the norm (Table 1).

Table 1. Disadvantaged enclaves: selected socioeconomic indicators (2001).

Places	Population	Unemployment Rate (%)	Upper Classes in the WorkForce (%)	Occupied Rental Units (%)
La Torretta	2244	21.0	16.7	63
Santa Maria in Portico	863	49.5	10.7	59
Santa Maria Apparente	404	59.3	2.9	74
Il Casale	613	24.2	9.0	62
Chiaia	41,779	15.8	24.7	29
Posillipo	23,673	12.1	26.1	27
City of Naples	1,004,500	31.4	9.9	44

Data: Istat, Censimento Generale della Popolazione e delle Abitazioni, 2001.

However, these official figures do not fully reflect the specific features of these areas, owing to numerous informal practices. In Naples, many of the officially unemployed actually work in small, undeclared service trades: street vendors in the port of Mergellina, parking attendants on the Riviera di Chiaia, and so on. In addition to the profile of their populations, these micro-neighborhoods stand out from the rest of the *quartieri alti* above all because of their specific socio-spatial systems. In particular, the architecture and morphology of these disadvantaged enclaves contrast with their surroundings. They may contain social housing blocks built in the 1950s and 1960s (as in the case of Piazza San Luigi in Posillipo, clearly visible in yellow in Figure 4). But social housing remains rare in the *quartieri alti*, and indeed throughout the rest of the city center. In Naples, such disadvantaged enclaves rarely correspond to social housing developments planned as part of social-mix policies, as is often the case in Paris or London's upper-class areas (Launay, 2011 [30]). Most of the disadvantaged areas in Chiaia and Posillipo are in fact former farming communities (Il Casale in Posillipo) or fishing villages (La Torretta and Santa Maria in Portico in Chiaia) that were overtaken by the city's growth. These are historic medieval or modern-era centers that have preserved their architectural structure despite their integration into the well-to-do *città bene*. Their narrow alleys, paved with Vesuvius lava slabs, and the density of their buildings contrast sharply with the wide streets of post-Unity extensions, and also with the speculative urbanization of the "Sack of Naples" years (1950–1960), which saw the heights of the city's *quartieri alti* covered with large modern buildings, often grouped together in gated residences. This is particularly true of Il Casale in Posillipo (Figure 5). Bypassed and surrounded by chic apartment blocks, these disadvantaged enclaves are also difficult to access, almost hidden away despite their immediate proximity to the select streets where luxury shops abound. Located close to a dangerous shoreline, they have an inward-looking architecture that turns its back on the sea, and are nestled into the sides of steep hills: they are accessed via staircase-like streets (known as *salite*, such as the Salità del Casale in Posillipo), which sometimes end at tufa walls that form physical barriers. This territorial enclosure contributes to the marginalization of these areas, which can easily be avoided by wealthy residents and ignored by tourists.

Figure 5. Il Casale, Posillipo: a formerly rural village hemmed in by upscale residences.

A final specificity of these enclaves concerns their public spaces, marked by deterioration and informal uses. Here, we find practices typical of the historic center of Naples: private colonization of the street, illegal commercial occupation by temporary stalls, widespread unauthorized parking, degradation of façades and poorly maintained communal areas of buildings, and so forth. These informal uses are sometimes complemented by illegal activities. Because of their proximity to the sea, Chiaia's former fishing villages (La Torretta and Santa Maria in Portico) have long made a living from smuggling contraband, particularly cigarettes, up until the early 1990s. Smuggling has also attracted organized crime and the Camorra, and most of these poor areas have their own clans and bosses, reinforcing their territorial identity and their stigmatization as marginal zones. All in all, these disadvantaged micro-neighborhoods within upscale Naples resemble "enclaves" (Marcuse, 1997 [3]), i.e., areas where a minority population is concentrated, seeking to maintain its cohesion within a quite different surrounding territory. The specificity of these poor enclaves in Naples is that they historically preceded the affluent urban environment in which they are embedded, and have demonstrated remarkable sociospatial inertia: they have preserved their own practices with regard to public spaces, without experiencing any major gentrification processes. This historic longevity is largely due to the fact that these enclaves are indeed also marginal areas, that is to say, places that are simultaneously set apart from and integrated into a territory. They have long functioned in a relation of complementarity with the neighboring upper-class districts, providing a clientele for the wealthy employers of Chiaia and Posillipo, and were accepted as an integral part of local life. This becomes clear when we study the discourses and attitudes of Naples' elites with regard to the disadvantaged populations living in "their" neighborhoods, and the social mechanisms that produce micro-segregation.

4. Proximity under Control? How the Neapolitan Elite Deal with "Their" Poor

This section analyzes how the discourses and everyday practices of the upper classes produce and legitimize the segregation of the lower-class groups in their neighborhoods. In the discourse of local elites, disadvantaged enclaves are always presented as places that are both foreign to and integrated into the *quartieri alti*:

> "Every neighborhood in this city has its negative counterpart. Here, for instance, we have the Quartieri Spagnoli as our kind of negativity as, as a neighborhood that has not always had a good reputation; Il Vomero has Il Petraio, it's a bad neighborhood, Il Petraio, that's what it's known for [...]; and Posillipo has Il Casale".

> (Silvana, company director, born in 1939).

Indeed, for a long time, these enclaves were accepted by the local elites as part of a traditional system based on clientelistic ties, which ensured strong social control over lower groups. However, the decline of the city's traditional property-owning elites has been accompanied by a change in the discourse regarding the disadvantaged enclaves: the traditional discourse valuing the proximity of the poor has now been replaced by one justifying their exclusion. This proximity is accepted as long as it remains under control, thanks to a "game of proximity and distance" (Andreotti et al., 2015 [22]). I draw a distinction between two ways of playing this game of proximity and distance among the local elite: the "aristocratic" game, which values the proximity of the working classes and controls it through detailed knowledge of the local context, and the "bourgeois" game, present within the more recent fraction of the Neapolitan elite, which stigmatizes the working-class enclaves and seeks to sideline them from the public spaces of *quartieri alti*.

4.1. The "Aristocratic" Game: Distinction through the Promotion of Social Mix

The interviews conducted reveal first of all a traditional discourse concerning Naples that idealizes the residential proximity between elites and commoners, accepted as normal and presented as a typical feature of the city (Allum, 1973 [31]).

> "There are still a few *bassi* here, but there used to be many more. Now they have almost all been turned into shops. Because it is precisely the *basso* economy that has disappeared, people who knew you, who said hello to you in the morning. Now, if you continue along Via Santa Maria in Portico, there are still a few, because this was where all the smugglers in the neighborhood hung out. [...] As Naples has always had this characteristic of the bourgeoisie living in close contact with the proletariat, there was an interweaving. There was this close link with the smugglers".

> (Maria, university lecturer, born in 1947).

Thus, even the illegal activities of these poor enclaves (such as smuggling) are accepted, as long as they do not fall into the category of serious crime, with respondents distinguishing between "good" and "bad" illegal activities in an astonishing transposition of the classic distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor. However, in certain discourses, proximity is not only accepted but is valued and even put forward as a distinctive element, particularly among the oldest and most "legitimate" upper classes, who find it a way of distinguishing themselves from more recent "parvenus":

> "Some neighbors complain about baby gangs riding around on scooters, but I don't mind. I'm used to it. My family has been living here for over 200 years, and it has always been like this. I would never go and lock myself away in one of those awful modern gated estates in Via Petrarca, that is not my world, that is not my, my, vision, of life, of Naples".

> (Francesco, architect, born in 1947).

"In old Naples, there was a lot of this idea of the *Signore* and the common people living side by side. The idea of detachment from the people is a typically bourgeois, 19th-century idea. There was this contact, but which has been lost, it doesn't exist anymore. Now they're strangers to one another. I don't like that. I think, on the contrary, that society needs to be more united, without arrogance".

(Bruno, lawyer, born in 1946).

This way of playing the proximity–distance game concerns 17 out of 50 respondents. It is referred to as "aristocratic" by respondents but does not involve only people of aristocratic origin. It includes all people with stable positions at the top of the local social hierarchy, often descending from landowning families. Most of them belonged to the highly select *Canottieri* club or the Rotary, but none was a member of the *Rari Nantes* Club. Within this group, the spatial proximity of socially distant groups and lower-class populations is not feared. Rather, it is valued as a status symbol—as in the discourse of Francesco, cited above, who belongs to one of the most prestigious aristocratic families of Southern Italy and values the proximity of the poor to distinguish himself from the residents of Via Petrarca, which is a symbol of the "new money" in Naples... For the upper strata of the Neapolitan elite, made up of "old families" whose fortune has been legitimized by time and social recognition, their social prestige is unquestionable and cannot be "blurred" by their residential location.

However, this is an idealizing discourse that smoothes out conflicts. It masks the asymmetrical relationships of dependence between affluent residents and those living in the working-class enclaves of the *quartieri alti*. Many of the respondents playing the "aristocratic" game exercise strong social control over the working classes living on their doorstep. They sometimes employ servants from the disadvantaged *vicoli* of Chiaia, or even domestic staff who have remained in the service of the same family for several generations. Some are also multiple property owners, with dozens of tenants in neighboring poor enclaves, whom they control through the setting and collection of rents. Last but not least, many of them exercise significant power in local institutions (neighborhood councils, boards of directors of port companies, etc.), which means they are in a position to negotiate to ensure they are spared from local petty crime, in exchange for favors and services. In addition to wealth and social position, residential seniority in the neighborhood and local rootedness also distinguish this group of respondents, who value spatial proximity to the working classes. Their intimate knowledge of the power relations in the *quartieri alti* enables them to keep their distance from the potential nuisances generated by proximity to disadvantaged enclaves.

It is also their local rootedness that gives these "legitimate" families of the Neapolitan elite access to the most exclusive social venues in the *quartieri alti*. Indeed, the residential proximity of the working classes is all the more accepted among the old families of the local elite, as they are also in a position to benefit from access to the most exclusive clubs and social venues in the area. The Bay of Chiaia is home to many elite clubs, which remain extremely select, and are located mainly on the waterfront: the *circolo tennis* on the Riviera di Chiaia is one of the most exclusive in Italy, as are the nautical clubs grouped together near the Castel dell'Ovo (in particular the *Canottieri*), and the many beach clubs in Posillipo where access to the sea is privatized and very expensive, and *de facto* out of bounds for the Neapolitan lower classes. Finally, most of these people are part of multi-residential systems and mobile modes of living, alternating between their primary residence in Naples and their holiday homes on the islands of the Gulf of Naples, on the Amalfi coast, or in the mountains of Abruzzo, which are essential places for the reproduction of their social capital (Pfirsch, 2010 [32]). In these circumstances, the "old families" of the elite can therefore afford to share residential areas and public spaces with the local poor, because they also have access to highly separated places for more strategic social activities, such as exclusive clubs and holiday homes for the reproduction of their social capital and power.

In this milieu of old families, it is the proximity of the nouveau riche, rather than proximity to the poor, that frightens them, precisely because "parvenus" have access not

only to the most prestigious residential spaces but also to the places of sociability and power of the local elite:

> "I mean, before, this used to be the neighborhood of the solid upper middle class [Via dei Mille], of the liberal professions, and it still is to some extent, but there are also a lot of nouveaux riches who want to come and live here. To give you an idea, last year a Camorra boss bought a superb apartment in Piazza dei Martiri, just imagine".
>
> (Giulia, university lecturer, born in 1952).
>
> "I haven't renewed my membership at the Rari Nantes [a select yacht club in Naples' *quartieri alti*], it's really gone downhill. Full of nouveau riche, people who are only there to show off their wealth...".
>
> (Stefania, company director, born in 1954).

Echoing Veblen's theory (Veblen, 1899 [33]), Neapolitan elites fear the spatial proximity of socially close groups of reference (such as "nouveaux riches"), who can undermine their power, rather than the proximity of socially highly distant groups (such as the local underclass). However, the extracts quoted above also evoke practices in decline. The "aristocratic" game has become a minority approach among respondents—who are fully aware that this is the case—owing to the economic decline of the old families and significant turnover among local elites. Specifically, Naples' elites are characterized by a high degree of segmentation and constant renewal, as the city's political and clientelistic system changes (Savonardo, 2003 [34]). The erosion of the fortunes of the old families has been accompanied by the rise of entrepreneurial or managerial elites linked to politics and public procurement, who have taken over the residential spaces—and also the schools and clubs—of the traditional elites, and have a different relationship to the disadvantaged enclaves of the *quartieri alti*.

4.2. The "Bourgeois" Game: Keeping the Local Poor Invisible

The second way of playing the distance–proximity game is referred to as "bourgeois" by respondents but actually involves those strata of the elite that are most socially mobile, either upwardly or downwardly, or newly arrived in Naples' high-status neighborhoods. This group constitutes a majority of respondents (26 out of 50 [7]). They are the proximity of the poor, which is not valued but rather perceived as a threat to their prestige and social position. The poor enclaves of the *quartieri alti* are stigmatized as dangerous places, as part of a rhetoric that is above all security-oriented. These spaces are described by the respondents in question as ugly and plagued by micro-criminality, and are clearly avoided in everyday practices:

> "I never go to Il Casale, absolutely never. It's a bad neighborhood, you know, and dangerous. It's really another Posillipo entirely, another town, working-class and ugly [...]. Or you only go there when your car is stolen, you know how things work here? [...] Naples is this fantastic city where, when your car is stolen, you have to go to the local boss, but not to the police".
>
> (Federico, business owner, born in 1952).
>
> "I don't stop at Il Petraio [author's note: the funicular station serving a working-class enclave of the chich neighborhood of Il Vomero] anymore. There are still some really bad areas around Il Petraio. They say it has changed, but last year Veronica had her bag stolen at 7 p.m. No, it's a very bad neighborhood, with a bad population and criminality".
>
> (Carla, company director, born in 1939).

Among this group of respondents, the interviews are peppered with accounts of micro-conflicts over the sharing of public spaces, and reflect a growing sense of insecurity in the *quartieri alti*. The local poor are branded criminals and culturally othered as "uncivic", in

line with a long tradition of essentializing the "culture of uncivicness" of the Neapolitan "plebe" (Dines, 2012 [35]):

> "We aren't the ones in charge in this neighborhood [author's note: Chiaia]. If you want to know who's in charge here, you have to go to Mergellina in the evening... And... you'll see all these awful people, all these, all these young people who aren't afraid of anyone, who'll block your path with their scooters. I don't go there alone anymore. They've taken over the city, they take it back at night".
>
> (Emanuela, company director, born in 1958).

This security-oriented vision reflects objective transformations in Chiaia's pockets of poverty: the shift of organized crime to the edges of the city has led to an upsurge in micro-criminality (De Leo, 2008 [36]). However, this security-based discourse also reflects the fears of the less-established fractions of the upper classes, who feel their social position is more fragile and worry about losing control over their spaces. For these more recent—or less rich—elites, the residential position is an essential dimension of their social standing, which is why they tend to cling to their residential spaces and are keen not to lose control of the neighborhood's public spaces, which are the guarantors of the area's positive image and high property prices.

For this group of respondents, the "bourgeois" game of proximity and distance consists first and foremost of avoiding interaction with the inhabitants of the lower-class enclaves. They do this through the selective use of public spaces, as described in the excerpts above. However, they also employ a strategy of micro-distancing and residential enclosure. Many of them moved from traditional *palazzi* in lowland sections of the *quartieri alti* to newer hilltop gated estates (called *parchi*), developed in the 1970s and 1980s. There is a strong landscape-related, social, and symbolic opposition between the older, socially polarized lower part of the *quartieri alti*, epitomized by Via Posillipo (where the oldest families live alongside disadvantaged enclaves), and the upper reaches of these districts, epitomized by Via Petrarca, where the more recent elites are homogeneously grouped together, often in gated condominiums encompassing several dozen apartment buildings and villas.

The second component of this "bourgeois" game is to try to make the poor residents of the *quartieri alti* invisible by campaigning against their use of public spaces (illegal street occupation and the "alley economy" in particular), in the name of restoring civic-mindedness. Unlike the "aristocratic" game, which often relies on informal channels, this "bourgeois" game relies on local institutions, through strong activism in residents' associations. The *cittadinanza attiva* group recently played an important part in opposing the seafront restructuring program (2012–2017), which attracted lower class and disadvantaged populations to the newly pedestrianized *lungomare* of Chiaia, which in the past used to be a more select promenade. The local poor are accepted as long as they remain invisible in the neighborhood's public spaces, which have to retain the symbolic markers and social uses of the elite.

5. Conclusions: Theorizing Elite Micro-Segregation

This case study of Naples allows us to draw more general conclusions about theories of contemporary urban segregation and to qualify the thesis of the urban secession of elites in the context of globalization. In Naples, elites have not fled to the periphery, but neither have they reconquered the city center; they have created a bourgeois centrality juxtaposed to the historic center, and encompassing numerous pockets of poverty that have resisted gentrification. Rather than secession or flight, it is more appropriate to speak of micro-segregation: the upper classes are never physically far from disadvantaged groups, but this residential proximity is accompanied by mechanisms of social control and distancing in other social fields, such as places of sociability and the uses of public spaces.

This article reveals the sociospatial mechanisms of this micro-segregation in elite neighborhoods, from the point of view of the dominant classes. Spatially, it takes the form of residential concentrations of the working classes in streets and blocks in the heart

of upscale districts. Whereas in north-western Europe, pockets of poverty in affluent neighborhoods often correspond to social housing estates planned as part of social-mix policies, or to run-down city blocks subject to intense gentrification, the specificity of Naples' situation lies in the fact that these are old working-class villages that have demonstrated a remarkable sociospatial inertia despite their integration into the city's upscale districts, and resemble veritable "enclaves" endowed with a strong territorial identity. The proximity of these disadvantaged enclaves is not a source of flight or reappropriation on the part of the upper classes in the *quartieri alti*. Their proximity is either accepted as socially controlled and deemed "distinctive", or circumvented and avoided through practices of micro-distancing and residential enclosure.

The most important thing for Naples' elites is therefore to keep the proximity of the poor under control. This control is based on a highly variable "game of proximity and distance" within the local upper classes and relies essentially on three factors. First, it relies on social distance with reference groups. According Veblen (Veblen, 1899 [33]), the greater the social distance, the more positive the value and the greater the acceptance of spatial proximity of other social groups. Neapolitan old elites fear the spatial proximity of socially close groups of reference (the "parvenus") rather than the proximity of socially highly distant groups (the disadvantaged enclaves' residents), who are not in a position to threaten their social power. Second, attitudes toward the proximity of the poor depend very much on the intensity of social mobility within the elite and the whole urban society: the more stable the social hierarchy, the more valued the proximity of "social others". Indeed, as Tocqueville noted, the spatial proximity of socially distant groups is typical of the highly unequal feudal societies, where social hierarchies are perceived as fixed and social positions are therefore neither threatened nor blurred by residential positions and spatial proximity (Tocqueville, 1848, p. 12 [37]). In capitalist societies, on the other hand, where social mobility is valued, and where social hierarchies are more uncertain, the spatial proximity of socially "inferior" groups can be perceived as threatening. Residential positions can then serve to reaffirm social positions by clustering in socially homogeneous neighborhoods, as was the case with the expansion of North American suburbs or the development of affluent peripheries in Europe. In Naples, the older families and the aristocratic fraction of upper classes have partially inherited the "feudal" and conservative vision of a static social hierarchy. Thus they value the old and long-lasting proximity of the poor, and fear the spatial closeness of the "new money" that can change the socio-spatial order. Lastly, local rootedness matters: the greater the intimate knowledge of the local urban context, the greater the power of control over proximity. Using Norbert Elias's categories (Elias and Scotson, 1965 [38]), I would say that for the "established" elites (who are able to mobilize informal local networks) the game of proximity and distance is easier to play than for "outsiders" (who have to rely on institutions and public policy). The old families of the Neapolitan élite have developed a symbiotic and mutually beneficial relationship with the residents of the enclaves over time. Their local rootedness and intimate knowledge of the power relations in the *quartieri alti* enable them to turn the proximity of the poor into a key social resource. Reversely, the more recent fractions of the city élite and those who newly arrived in Chiaia and Posillipo, have not developed such local networks yet, and therefore they are impacted more and reap fewer benefits from the proximity of disadvantaged groups. In conclusion, the higher, older, and more stable the position within the city's elite and within its high-status areas, the more acceptable and valued the spatial proximity of disadvantaged groups. In Naples, as in many other places in the world (Paugam et al., 2017 [21]), the rich fear the proximity of parvenus and nouveaux riches more than the proximity of the poor, who are too socially distant to threaten their position and privileges.

The indirect method used in this article was firmly positioned on the side of the dominant groups, revealing how the rich produce, control, and legitimize micro-segregation. I hope that other works will make the voices of those who are subjected to this micro-segregation—but who also circumvent and resist it—heard by studying the experiences

of the poor in wealthy neighborhoods, who are largely overlooked by public policies and academic research alike.

Notes

1. The first field work consisted of a three year ethnographic survey (2004–2007) in Naples during my Ph.D. (Pfirsch, 2008 [18]). The second field work was conducted during a sabbatical in 2017–2018 and was based on three one-month surveys in the same neighbourhoods of Naples' *quartieri alti* I explored for my Ph.D. (Chiaia and Posillipo).

2. In Italian censuses conducted by ISTAT till 2011, census tracts (*sezioni di censimento*) were originally designed to each comprise the same number of resident families, in order to facilitate the door-to-door work of census civil servants. Thus, the dimension of census tracts is highly variable according to population density. In central Naples, which has one of the highest population density in the world (over 20,000 hbts/km^2), census tracts are very small and often correspond to housing blocks (*isolati*).

3. Unfortunaley, the 2011 census data was not available at the census tract scale at the time of the second fieldwork, and the remapping of the micro-segregation in Chiaia and Posillipo has not been possible.

4. In line with recent sociological works about the upper-classes (Pinçon and Pinçon-Charlot, 2000 [17]) I selected the respondents according to their place of residence (Chiaia and Posillipo) and their social prestige (or "symbolic capital" in Bourdieu's perspective) rather than economic capital. Thus, 38 out of 50 respondents (25 women, 25 men) were members of clubs, schools and select institutions of the local élite, others were friends and relatives of club members of former local élite schools students (liceo Umberto). The Neapolitan « clubs » are highly select and accessible through co-optation, according to the reputation and «social prestige» of applicants (seniority of the family in the local élite etc…). Theses clubs are highly stratified, opposing the « canottieri » for older families descending from landowning aristocracy and the «rari Nantes», for example, which is the club of «new money», while the Rotary has members from diversified fractions of the upper class. This unequal and stratified access to the clubs was used as a proxy to measure the social prestige of the respondents. 13 out of 50 respondents belonged to the liberal professions (lawyers, physicians, architects…), others were academics (10), top managers (7), company directors (9) or unoccupied high-net worth (11). 15 defined themselves as «aristocrats».

5. Here, I have used the conventional typology of Italian socio-professional classes established by Antonio Schizzerotto (Schizzerotto, 1993, [27]), in which the upper classes correspond to three categories: business owners (company directors undertaking no manual work and whose companies have at least 10 employees), liberal professions, and *dirigenti* (senior public- and private-sector managers).

6. These enclaves are defined as follows: (1) Santa Maria Apparente is composed of Salità Santa Maria Apparente, Vico Vetreria, Salità Vetreria, and Vico Santa Maria Apparente (census tracts 5202671, 5202771, and 5202781); (2) Santa Maria in Portico is formed of a group of *vicoletti* that run perpendicular to the Riviera di Chiaia: Via Santa Maria in Portico, Vico Magnoni, Via Palasciano, and Via della Croce Rossa (census tracts 5201631, 5201661, 5201641, and 5201651); (3) La Torretta is similarly formed of narrow cross streets (*vicoli*) that run perpendicular to the Riviera di Chiaia: the "Y" shape formed by Via Santa Maria della Neve, Via Cupa Caiafa, and Via San Filippo (census tracts 5201551, 5201821, and 5201831); (4) Il Casale, in Posillipo, is a formerly rural village centered on Via Case Vecchie and Via della Piazzetta Solofrano (census tracts 6522911 and 6522931).

7. 7 respondents did not mention the disadvantages enclaves and their residents during the interviews.

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