# Community wellbeing: The impacts of inequality, racism and environment on a Brazilian coastal slum

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ABSTRACT

This article applies the 3-dimensional wellbeing lens (based on material, relational and subjective dimensions of wellbeing) to examine the factors that affect wellbeing in a slum community (Vila dos Pescadores, in the city of Cubatão, Southeast Brazil). This wellbeing framework proves useful in understanding how community wellbeing is impacted by several negative factors: the perceptions of slums, the presence of systemic racism and growing inequality, and a range of environmental impacts arising from industrial and urban pollution, and environmental disasters. Within this mix of environmental and social impacts are links between poverty and exposure to environmental hazards, and effects of environmental racism. On the positive side, these threats to community wellbeing are countered to some extent through targeted measures carried out by the community association and its partnerships, and through beneficial governmental policy measures. Together, these responses help to reduce the detrimental effects of an unhealthy and dangerous environment, and of social concerns such as exclusion, poverty, urbanization and inequality. Key to the success of response measures are the contributions of the community leadership to improve the wellbeing of slum-dwellers by counterbalancing the effects of racism and social inequality, and implementing social programs and community facilities, thereby filling the gaps created by a lack of state support to slums. These actions illustrate what impoverished communities can do to improve livelihoods and wellbeing, and to combat problems such as environmental degradation and racial discrimination. This article also draws lessons for improving wellbeing analysis, particularly in slum communities, through a greater focus on (1) collective wellbeing and a community-focused view of wellbeing, (2) impacts of racism and inequality, and (3) interactions between community wellbeing and community leadership.

## 1. Introduction

Developing countries face the three major global challenges of inequality, environmental degradation and loss of livelihoods. These challenges share a common feature – the need for a policy approach broader than that based on income as a measure of societal development (McGregor & Sumner, 2010, p. 104). A 'wellbeing' approach has been widely recommended as a means to address such challenges, by considering a "wide spectrum of human needs" (Clarke, 2006, p. 1) rather than the past focus solely on peoples' wellbeing measured based on material needs (McGregor & Sumner, 2010, p. 105). Thus a broader view includes economic gains and material wealth but goes further to incorporate peoples' perceptions, e.g. about their poverty (McGregor & Sumner, 2010, p. 5).

This article embraces that broader perspective, adopting an analytical framework that applies wellbeing theory at a local community

level. Particular emphasis is placed on the links of wellbeing to themes of poverty and slums, inequality and racism, vulnerability and environmental impacts, and the role that these factors play in a wellbeing context, as they interact within systems of societal injustices that affect whether people and communities collectively are able to achieve wellbeing. The discussion here focuses on Vila dos Pescadores – a slum neighborhood of Cubatão, a city in Southeastern Brazil – to examine how social and environmental issues are affecting the wellbeing of community members.

## 2. Analytical Framework: wellbeing and community

As a starting point, we draw on two compatible definitions of wellbeing: "a state of being with others, where human needs are met, where one can act meaningfully to pursue one's goals, and where one enjoys a satisfactory quality of life" (McGregor, 2008, p.1), and "a

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positive state of affairs in which the personal, relational, and collective needs and aspirations of individuals and communities are fulfilled" (Evans & Prilleltensky, 2007, p. 681). These highlight a 3-dimensional vision of wellbeing framework, incorporating material, relational and subjective dimensions (McGregor & Sumner, 2010, p.5, p.104). The material dimension focuses on what assets people have and how people fulfill their needs, the relational dimension on people's relationships, and the subjective dimension on peoples' perception of the quality of their lives (Charles et al., 2012, p. 2).

This article emphasizes two interacting aspects within a conceptual framework of wellbeing: (1) relational wellbeing, and (2) collective or community wellbeing.

*Relational Wellbeing*. The relational dimension of wellbeing includes "the resources that a person is able to command and the extent to which they are able to engage with others in order to achieve their particular needs and goals" (McGregor & Sumner, 2010, p. 2). This fits with the idea that wellbeing is a social process relating to the relationship between the "collective and the individual; the local and the global; the people and the state" (White, 2010, p. 168). Bennett, Chepngeno-Langat, Evandrou, and Falkingham (2015) highlight the importance of researching the "protective role of social networks for subjective wellbeing" as a part of the resilience of slum dwellers (p. 166). This is particularly important during social and environmental shocks, in slums, that could lead to economic losses. Thus, relational wellbeing is a key factor in the resilience of slum communities.

*Collective & Community Wellbeing*. The place-based community is an essential part of relational wellbeing and "sense of place" (McCubbin, McCubbin, Zhang, Kehl, & Strom, 2013, p. 356), and at the same time, "promotion of collective well-being…depends largely on relational well-being" (Evans & Prilleltensky, 2007, p.685). Accordingly, it is important to focus on wellbeing at the *community level* – "wellbeing as something that inheres within the community as a collectivity" (White, 2010, p.168). Communities with strong leadership, together with spiritual and cultural traditions, can nurture a sense of meaning in life, security and identity. At the same time, this must, of course, recognize fundamental structural inequalities in communities (O'Malley, 1998, p. 2) e.g., social divisions associated with gender, religion, class, race and ethnicity (Veltmeyer, 2011, p. 115; White, 2010, p. 163).

Collective wellbeing within a community arises in many ways. Consider, for example, the links of poverty and inequality with environmental quality, which is part of material wellbeing (Britton & Coulthard, 2013, p. 29). O'Malley and Clow (2011) state that when environmental degradation "threatens the sustainability of human economic activities and human health", environmental concerns become an important matter in development (p. 2012). This is especially relevant when impoverished communities live near or in environmentally hazardous areas.

In considering collective and community wellbeing, it is important to note the distinction between individualistic and collectivist cultures. In the former, "self-affirmation and achievement are the symbols of achievement and thus wellbeing" (McCubbin et al., 2013, p. 355)' while in the latter, wellbeing is connected to the "fulfillment of social expectations of the community, rather than the individual" (p. 355). Understandings of wellbeing may vary depending on social classes, with the middle and upper classes tending to see their wellbeing in a more individualistic way while the poor see their wellbeing in a more collective way.

## 3. Vila dos Pescadores

The community of Vila dos Pescadores – a mangrove-based slum neighborhood of Cubatão, a coastal city in Southeastern Brazil – developed as a small community of fishers and crab gatherers in the 1960s (Fagundes, Souza, Tomás, Bastors, & Tutiu, 2012, p. 23). That development was driven by economic stagnation, constant droughts and lack

of economic prosperity in the Northeastern region of Brazil, and a consequent migration process to the industrialized Southeast region of Brazil, which received a large part of the Northeast migrants (Ferrari, 2005, p. 38-39). The beginnings of Vila dos Pescadores came following the import substitution policies of the Brazilian government in the 1950s, and specifically the Santos port expansion and the industrialization of Cubatão (Silva, 2006, p. 89), which led to massive migrations to Cubatão of people looking for work in the petrochemical and steel industries (Couto, 2005). The intense industrialization in Cubatão led to higher values in real estate, leaving many impoverished migrant populations to occupy mangrove areas.

As a result, since the 1970s, with the government policy of strengthening the industrial centres near the state capital, Vila dos Pescadores has undergone a rapid uncontrolled growth, attracting low-income, low-skill migrant labor, crucial to the expansion of the Cubatão petrochemical hub (Fagundes et al., 2012, p. 23). Many of these migrants use the mangroves for artisanal fishing (fish and shellfish), which provides an important source of income for people living in the area.

Social and environmental issues affecting fishers' and community wellbeing at Vila dos Pescadores were investigated through a range of research approaches, involving field research, reviews of literature, and assessment of other sources, including government websites and social media. See Appendix A: Supplementary data, for details on the methods used.

## 4. Three systemic factors affecting community wellbeing

This section examines the effects on community wellbeing in the slum community of Vila dos Pescadores of three major factors: the manner in which slum communities are perceived by the public and by policymakers, the presence of societal racism and inequality, and the occurrence of a range of negative environmental impacts.

### 4.1. Wellbeing is reduced by racism and inequality

Environmental and social problems that affect people's wellbeing in Vila dos Pescadores are often rooted in racial, economic and social inequalities that arise across Brazilian society. Indeed, as a slum community seeking to improve wellbeing, racism (social and environmental) and inequality particularly affect relational and subjective dimensions of wellbeing, although the three dimensions of wellbeing are closely interrelated.

In Cubatão, economic inequalities are rooted in historic, social, ethnic and racial disparities. The city of Cubatão has a population of 7.7% blacks and 48.8% "mixed-race", comparable to Brazil overall (7.6% black, 43.1% "mixed-race") (IBGE, 2010), with "mixed-race" – referred to as "pardos" (brown) – being descendants of indigenous, African and European people (IBGE, 2010, in 'Litoral Sustentável', p. 8). While there is no statistical data on racial groups in Vila dos Pescadores specifically, it is known that slum residents are mostly non-white and largely Afro-descendants. Like black and mixed-race migrants generally, they lack access to economic opportunities due to the failure of efficient redistributive policies, appearing as disparities in social capital, leading to physical and geographic segregation (Reygadas, 2010, p. 37). This reflects the marginalisation that Afro-Brazilians are broadly subject to in Brazil, covering such areas as work opportunities and conditions, locations of residence, and education (Vargas, 2006, p. 52), reflecting strong "racialized inequalities that characterize Brazilian social relations" (p. 52).

These inequalities lead to a racialized space in Cubatão, i.e. the slums. Indeed, due to systemic racial and economic discrimination, currently 56.7% of the population of Cubatão lives in favelas/slums (Alves, 2012, p. 12) with a large number being Afro-Brazilians. Vargas (2006) describes the "disproportionate number of blacks inhabiting Brazilian slums", characterized by the "lack of infrastructure, poverty, and imposed marginalization" (65). Space is socially constructed,

where "whites have used institutionalized privileges to maintain racial homogeneity in their workplaces and neighborhoods" (66).

Cubatão has a high economic inequality rate compared to Brazilian standards (Alves, 2012, p. 7). Inequality is clearly seen in the case of unskilled, non-white Northeastern migrants who have to survive on informal unskilled jobs, with some relying on fishing and crab gathering to supplement their income in the slums of Cubatão. As Meirelles (2015) notes, getting a job is more difficult for slum dwellers, as most are black (para 9). Meanwhile the Cubatão elites, including in the industrial hub, benefit from slums as a source of cheap labour, providing labourers such as maids, construction workers and unskilled workers for some segments of the Cubatão industrial hub (Interviewee 25, municipal employee, August 21, 2014). The resort towns in the Santos Metropolitan Region also rely on cheap labour for construction work to build and maintain resort housing and businesses. Furthermore, racial inequality creates two types of economies, one traditional, another informal (Reygadas, 2010, p. 39). The informal sector interconnects with the formal sector by providing labour power, maintaining low salaries and a consumer class, being part of a larger process of accumulation of capital.

### 4.2. Wellbeing is reduced by negative perceptions of slums

Vila dos Pescadores, like other slums in Brazil, and elsewhere, suffers from social stigma and a perception of slums as undesirable spaces A specific manifestation arises in terms of neighborhood 'development' initiatives. In Vila dos Pescadores, these impact the subjective wellbeing of community members as a result of concerns over changes to the community's housing. The Brazilian Ministry of Planning and the Federal Heritage Service (Serviço do Patrimônio da União), with the stated aim of improving housing conditions of the community, transferred the area where Vila dos Pescadores is located to the municipality of Cubatão to allow the urbanization of the neighbourhood. The legal transfer on May 6, 2014 by Ordinance 145 (Pimentel, 2015) means that homes will, in theory, receive drainage, water network installation and sewage and other urban services. The housing secretary, Silvano Lacerda, states how the municipality will improve the housing situation of Vila dos Pescadores "*to reintegrate these populations in the mainstream society in an orderly and sustainable manner*":

> *We will not remove the population, but settle this population in the places where they actually are located, but in an orderly manner. Our design does not only include housing, but it includes the repopulation of fauna and flora. We will provide parks and ecological zoning, leading to offering quality services such as, health, basic sanitation, health centers and leisure areas. We will recover the environment in the areas where the population actually lives. We will invest in citizenship, essential public services and improve their quality of life for the Vila dos Pescadores community members.* (Silvano Lacerda, video interview, 21 July 2014)

Although this is a policy that has the stated goal to improve the wellbeing of impoverished families at Vila dos Pescadores, many community members are not satisfied with the top-down urbanization approach from the municipal government, and are concerned for the future. A community member notes: *If the urbanization happens, we will be transferred to apartment buildings and I will lose my house, which I'm still building. Thus, I will have to pay rent. As a fisher, how can I store my fishing equipment in an apartment*? (Interviewee 15, fisher, April 21, 2015). Another notes: *How will I be able to put food on the table when paying rent and living away from the estuary?* (Interviewee 16, April 26, 2015). Many community members at Vila dos Pescadores hope their families will be able to stay in the community after the urbanization process (Interviewee 15, fisher, April 21, 2015), if the municipality fulfills its promises to not transfer community members to other areas of the city (Interviewee 16, April 26, 2015).

However, concerns arise based on experiences elsewhere in the world. In India, for example, Mathur (2009) emphasizes how the Indian government chose to eliminate slums as they are easy to be "identified, targeted and reached" (p. 11). It has been said that it is easier to hide the visible representations of poverty by transferring people to housing complexes than dealing with the roots of poverty (Arabindoo, 2011, p. 638).

### 4.3. Wellbeing is reduced by negative environmental impacts

Three major environmental challenges face Vila dos Pescadores. These are described in sequence below, and see Gillam (2016) for a corresponding video.[1]

First, as the community is located near the Cubatão industrial hub, it faces the effects of industrial pollution in the Santos Estuary, which is one of the most polluted areas in Brazil (Ribeiro et al., 2009, p. 206), affecting fish, shellfish and humans. The Santos Metropolitan Region, where the city of Cubatão is located, stands out as the most affected area of the São Paulo coastline, with its waters, soil, air and forests contaminated by industrial and port activities and by domestic effluents which are released untreated (Ribeiro et al., 2009, p. 206). Large quantities of environmental contaminants such as organochlorine compounds, toxic metals, dioxins and furans, among other substances, have been released in this densely populated area (Ribeiro et al., 2009, p. 206). In addition to ongoing pollution, the community is also prone to environmental disasters due to the proximity of the Santos Port and the Cubatão industrial hub.

Second, in Vila dos Pescadores, urban pollution deeply affects the community, where garbage accumulates underneath the shacks. The community leader Vadinho states:

> *Fish and crabs don't have space to spawn because there is so much garbage [in the mangroves]. We cannot walk on the mangrove soil because of the garbage. We step over garbage, old sofas, wood, tires, plastic bottles; there is plastic everywhere.* (Vadinho, video interview, 18 July 2014)

The excess of garbage in the mangrove areas leads to bad smells, visual pollution, hazards for children and adults, and proliferation of dengue fever and rats. Often people who live on the water, in shacks, do not bring the garbage to the main collection station in the urbanized area of the community due to lack of environmental education. To address this shortcoming, there is a need to include the participation of community members in environmental projects, and especially for government-funded environmental education to be elaborated in partnership with the community, to allow more engagement of community members with environmental issues.

Third, the interaction of demographic pressures and political corruption have a negative impact on coastal mangrove forests. Every day, new families arrive and build their shacks above the water (Interviewee 18, April 22, 2015), with mangrove invasions degrading the environment and living conditions of Vila dos Pescadores' community members. This reflects the situation elsewhere in Brazil with some segments of the poor working population invading areas that are rejected by the private housing market, as well as public areas, located in devalued regions, such as streams, hillsides, polluted regions, protected areas, due to lack of enforcement (Maricato, 2003, p. 159). The growth of slums in mangrove areas (as well as on hillsides) creates situations of high exposure to environmental hazards such as floods, landslides and pollution.

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[1] The documentary 'Impact of environmental degradation on fishers' livelihoods: the case of a Brazilian mangrove community located in an industrial area – Vila dos Pescadores' highlights the experiences of Vila dos Pescadores fishers and community members in facing a range of environmental issues. http://www.communityconservation.net/vila-dos-pescadores-cubatao-state-of-sao-paulo-brazil/.

Political patronage in Cubatão worsens the situation of mangrove occupations. Corrupt politicians prey on the community's lack of material wellbeing for their own benefit (Interviewee 18, April 22, 2015). For example, during election campaigns, some candidates offer construction materials to Vila dos Pescadores newcomers in exchange for their votes, allowing these new slum dwellers to occupy the mangrove areas of the community (Interviewee 18, April 22, 2015), even though mangroves are protected areas in Brazil (Portal Brasil, Feb 2, 2015). Maricato (2003) argues that the tolerance that the Brazilian government has expressed in relation to the illegal occupation of urban lands is remarkable, and that even greater tolerance for illegal urban occupation in favelas comes from municipal governments, especially during pre-election periods (p. 157).

Related to all of these environmental challenges is the reality of environmental racism. In general, this arises when there are disproportionate environmental injustices affecting vulnerable ethnic groups (Herculano & Pacheco, 2008, p. 269), which can be a result of societal institutions failing to support poor people in their efforts to achieve wellbeing. In particular, when underprivileged racial groups live in environmentally degraded areas, not only will they lack basic needs (proper housing, water, etc.), but also their dignity is affected through negative public perceptions of their neighborhoods. Often environmental racism can "result in racial side-effects" (Herculano & Pacheco, 2008, p. 269), which in Vila dos Pescadores include migrants' lack of access to housing, and consequently, invasion of the mangrove areas of Vila dos Pescadores.

## 5. Community and policy responses

### 5.1. Wellbeing is enhanced by community associations

In Vila dos Pescadores, the Community Association was founded in 1983 ('Mudando a História da Vila dos Pescadores' Facebook page, August 18, 2015) as a non-profit organization. The association plays an important role in building the community's relational wellbeing, and addressing threats to community wellbeing, notably by dealing with social issues which have an impact on slum-dwellers' livelihoods, such as advocating for community members' rights over sanitation, fishers' rights, distribution of milk to children, etc. To this end, the association takes on small projects in the community that aim to improve the wellbeing of community members, and contributes to (collective) community wellbeing by serving as a bridge between community members and the government (given weak state involvement in the community), thereby partially filling the gaps in government assistance. This is analogous to the role of community associations elsewhere – see Appendix A: Supplementary data).

Some of the various activities organized by the Community Association of Vila dos Pescadores, aiming to improve the wellbeing of the community included the following:

- Coordinated with government to have piped water installed to houses in the community, proper functioning of the health clinic through renovations, distribution of milk to children in the community, and paving of some roads;
- Built leisure areas in the community;
- Requested and received from the municipality the implementation of a 24-h ambulance service;
- Gathered groups of young people to implement projects such as renovating and cleaning recreational places, and implementing actions to fight dengue fever;
- Negotiated with the municipal bus company (CMT) to implement an increase in bus service in the community.

The Community Association also contributes to the wellbeing of the community by partnering with public and private organizations, and NGOs, such as MRS Logistica (a train company) which funded some construction materials for the school garden, community centre and other areas in the community.

Vila dos Pescadores benefits from its social capital and relational wellbeing in being able to maintain a certain level of material wellbeing, notably through its women residents who skillfully make crafts; fishers who supply tourist areas of the Santos Metropolitan Region with mangrove crabs; and many other people who work for the industries of the Cubatão industrial hub. For example, when thirteen houses caught fire on August 23, 2013, at Vila dos Pescadores, various members of the community helped families to rebuild their shacks (Interviewee 7, August 24, 2014).

Leadership is crucial to any community association, and in Vila dos Pescadores, the elected president of the association, Vadinho, serves in an unpaid position. He has been living in the community of Vila dos Pescadores since 1984, and as a fisher, reports that his typical day involves "sleeping from 8 pm to 2 am; fishing from 2am to 5am every day, and then working during the day as a community leader" (Vadinho, 2014). Koster and Vries (2012) emphasize the importance of the community leader's "insider knowledge" and connections within the community as being great assets for governmental and non-governmental agencies that work with slum community leaders (p. 89). In this regard, Vadinho often holds neighborhood meetings at the community centre. For example, an important meeting from a community livelihood perspective brought fishers and community members together with the State Fisheries Institute and the state government, to discuss temporarily reopening land crab harvesting in the Santos mangrove areas, after the environmental disaster noted above ('Mudando a História da Vila dos Pescadores' Facebook page, August 18, 2015).

As in any community, the Vila dos Pescadores community association must deal with managing expectations of residents, as well as occasional conflicts and disagreements in the community. To deal openly with the range of expectations in the community, Vadinho posts pictures and descriptions of his work on the Community Association Facebook page 'Mudando a História da Vila dos Pescadores' [Changing the History of Vila dos Pescadores], and posts donations received by the Association's public and private partners. The Facebook page serves as an important tool to bring the community together, as it serves as an informal report of his team to the broader community and partners who donate for community projects. In fact, social media is also used to associate the community with a positive image. For example, the Facebook page "Vila dos Pescadores Cubatão" posts historical facts and other positive news about the community, as well as what other 'favelas' in Brazil have been doing to improve their communities.

### 5.2. Wellbeing is enhanced by supportive policy measures

The Community Association of Vila dos Pescadores has forged successful partnerships with the various levels of government, in wellbeing-focused projects. This is seen as essential for the community's success in improving the wellbeing of its community members. It also provides an avenue to push for suitable policy changes. Such moves are important, since – despite the positive community efforts of Vila dos Pescadores – there remain concerns in the community over material wellbeing (e.g., employment, housing, sanitation and environmental conditions), relational wellbeing (improvement of relations with all levels of government) and subjective wellbeing (a sense of not belonging to the general society, and feeling ostracized, as a result of systemic discrimination). The external system around Vila dos Pescadores – comprised of government, the industries of the Cubatão hub and society in general – impacts on these aspects, and thus affects community wellbeing. Three areas are described below in which policy change in this external system, whether already underway or not, can better support the community of Vila dos Pescadores and increase its overall wellbeing.

1. There is a need for action by Cubatão – a rich, highly industrialised city in which almost sixty percent of its population live in

slums – to deal with its racial divide. This demands wellbeing-focused policies, such as empowerment of youth and women through racial awareness courses, and after-school activities for youth at risk. Indeed, there are already some positive moves. Policies have been developed such as the racially-affirmative municipal laws in Cubatão, which are a small step for social inclusion of slum areas in the municipality, avoiding targeting "the other" as different (White, 2010, p. 159) and improving treatment by program staff and planners (p. 159).

Affirmative education may help to create empathy towards people living in slums, so that increasingly, young people, no matter their race, will learn about racial equality, and perhaps see slum residents in a new light. In this regard, the Department of Racial and Ethnic Equality of Cubatão, with its director, Júlio Evangelista Santos Junior, is seeking to improve awareness about racism in Cubatão and ways to help black citizens in Cubatão achieve racial equality.

Another concern is to tackle the gap between whites and blacks in accessing public health and other available public services. Evangelista emphasized that there is a need to increase public health care, where there is a concentration of blacks, and for greater involvement of municipal councils to tackle institutionalized racism (Evangelista, in Rodrigues, 2011). Teaching the Afro-Brazilian and indigenous cultures in the school curriculum of the city of Cubatão is a priority in creating racial equality policies (Evangelista, in 'Rodrigues,' 2011). The city of Cubatão has implemented quotas for Afro-Brazilians in municipal jobs as a way to improve the standard of living of blacks in the city (Evangelista, in Rodrigues, 2011).

2. Second, the association between poverty and exposure to environmental risk generates high environmental vulnerability in the slums of Cubatão (Alves, 2013, p. 363). Hence, environmental hazards, poverty, racism and inequality are deeply interconnected in the community of Vila dos Pescadores. To address this challenge, it is crucial to recognize that while Vila dos Pescadores has a high level of relational wellbeing in terms of strong community cohesion when exposed to environmental shocks and disasters, it is important not to leave it to the community to handle environmental challenges. Notably, the enforcement of environmental policies is essential for fishers and community members to achieve wellbeing, through properly supervising the industries in the area to ensure they are not illegally releasing pollutants in the Santos Estuary.

3. Third, residents of Vila dos Pescadores are fearful of potential top-down approaches to urbanization and relocation of slum-dwellers in Cubatão city, which could be very harmful to their community. In response, a wellbeing approach to housing and urbanization policies can aim to build material, subjective and relational wellbeing for community members (e.g. considering good living conditions, employment and a sense of belonging). This should take into consideration how slum-dwellers perceive their communities and encourage the participation of slum community leaders in decision-making. In particular, a more equitable division of power could be developed involving the Community Association of Vila dos Pescadores with the government, in decisions such as those relating to urbanization. According to the community, this would focus the urbanization process in the areas where people already live and allow all the community members to stay in the community. This is especially important for fishers, who need to live in the estuary in order to support their livelihoods.

## 6. Conclusion

The 3-dimensional wellbeing approach, by focusing attention on material, relational and subjective wellbeing, is of considerable relevance in assessing development issues of a slum community. Indeed, we have seen that wellbeing provides a useful framework within which to examine the challenges facing Vila dos Pescadores, including three key aspects that reduce community wellbeing – negative perceptions of slums, the presence of racism and inequality, and a range of negative environmental impacts. We examined two specific responses to those

challenges: the community association and its partnerships, and governmental policy measures. Together, these responses help to build wellbeing and reduce the detrimental effects of an unhealthy and dangerous environment, and of social concerns such as social exclusion, poverty, rapid urbanization and growing inequality.

In this section, we focus on three particular lessons arising out of our research results that may be relevant in improving future wellbeing analyses, particularly in the context of slum communities.

(i) The research presented in this article has highlighted the importance in wellbeing analysis of **a substantive focus on collective wellbeing and a community-focused view of wellbeing**. This places a spotlight particularly on relational wellbeing, which the community of Vila dos Pescadores drew upon strongly in the wake of environmental shocks and disasters. Paying more attention to collective and community wellbeing also counters a concern expressed about applications of wellbeing, namely an over-emphasis on individuals in taking responsibility for what happens in their lives, along with an overly-individualistic approach in public policy (White, 2010, p. 167), with a wellbeing focus potentially used perversely to justify reduced state support to social programs (p. 166–167). Further, a collective and community wellbeing focus, by emphasizing the agency of the community, not only the individual, could enable a better examination of power imbalances as a root problem of poverty, of the lack of both individual and community freedoms, and of trade and labor discrepancies between slums and the mainstream society.

(ii) This article has also emphasized the role in wellbeing analysis of **a holistic approach considering racism and inequality**. This can include connecting community wellbeing with environmental racism in slum areas. Notably, mainly non-white Vila dos Pescadores lies in an area of environmental risk, near the Cubatão industrial hub, where community members are susceptible to environmental disasters and subject to ongoing pollution. From the perspective of wellbeing analysis, concerns of "cultural contextualism" and "cultural fairness" may also arise (Biswas-Diener & Diener, 2001, p. 332). In the context of Vila dos Pescadores, for example, while a large number of slum-dwellers are non-white, most researchers in the region are white – reflecting an educational and cultural gap between whites and blacks (and mixed-race), as non-whites have fewer opportunities to access education (Heringer, 2002, p. 62). Faced with these substantive differences, wellbeing analysis must make a particular effort to avoid cultural bias. Finally, wellbeing analyses also require suitable collection of statistical data on racial groups and place of origin. In Vila dos Pescadores notably, such data in the community would potentially result in development policies better benefiting Afro-Brazilians, and therefore the community in general.

(iii) Finally, this article has highlighted **the interaction between community wellbeing and community leadership**. The latter, and its contributions to the development of the community, helps to counterbalance the effects of social inequality, and, given a lack of state support, community leadership fills the gaps in providing for the wellbeing of the community, as the community suffers the side effects of societal power imbalances and inequality. By linking community leadership to community wellbeing, this article focuses on what impoverished communities can do to improve their livelihoods and wellbeing, and specifically to combat problems such as environmental degradation and racial discrimination. This is based on a logic that since slums are not about to disappear in the short-term, it is important to make them better places to live, and to change society's views that slums represent only problems. If instead, government and the private sector consider slums as partners, and if the state plays its role in conceiving structures to strengthen these partnerships, then public and private investments in slums can improve the economic conditions of slum dwellers.

Further, the inclusion of slum community leaders in policymaking can improve the wellbeing of slum-dwellers by giving these communities a voice in a true democratic society.

## Conflict of Interest Statement

None.

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## Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wdp.2019.02.006.

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