

The Relevance of Neighbourhood of Residence in Shaping the School Choice in a Quasi-Market Educational System. the Case of Milan

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Quasi-market educational settings that promote freedom of choice, emphasizing the agency of households as an instrument to counteract inequalities in accessing educational opportunities, have only softened the link between housing and school, favouring a limited part of the population. Several studies have in fact proven how school segregation is still present in these systems. Moreover, research shows that this freedom of choice has favoured more affluent and educated families over the more disadvantages, inhibiting then the goal of reducing inequalities.

This article aims at disentangling the link between residence and school choice in quasi-market educational urban contexts, by analysing the case of Milan as a paradigmatic example.

A survey, disseminated from June to October 2021, addressed to families with children to be enrolled in primary school, have permitted to collect data on 1300 families about the criteria guiding the choice. The questionnaire also focused on potential constraints and opportunity provided by the place of residence. The sample represents the heterogeneity of the population in terms of nationality, level of education and professional status.

In the analysis, neighbourhoods of residence have been clustered according to their socio-economic profile in order to understand whether and to what extent they affects families' chance of opting out from the local school, including public or private options. We hypothesis that parents' choices depend on a complex mix of reasons driven by both own socio-economic status and profiles of neighbourhoods of residence. Proximity as a criteria varies of relevance accordingly to households' and territorial profiles.

Shading some lights on these relationships would raise policy implications also related to the supply side, since the school offer is strictly connected to territory, and to wider reflections about the role of housing market in narrowing or expanding educational opportunities.

Preliminary results show that the likelihood to opt out (while remaining in the state system) is higher for students with high socio-economic backgrounds. Furthermore, it goes down as territorial socio-economic level improves. Flows more likely if CAs is neighboring a CA with better socio-economic make-up.

In CAs with lowest socio-economic levels (Q1), most disadvantaged parents are considerably much less likely to choose outside of CA (25% for those in Q1 vs >60% for in Q2+Q3+Q4). Moreover, in CAs with socio-economic levels below average (Q2), families with high socio-economic background are more than twice more likely to move out of the CA school (58% vs 22%). On the other hand, in CAs with above average makeu-ups, specific patterns are not distinguishable based on the socio-economic profiles of the families.

Finally, it emerges that low-socio economic profile families living in disadvantaged neighborhoods prioritize some specific criteria in school choices distinguishing them from other profiles living in better-off neighborhoods are: convenience (less relevant), size of the school

support services for special needs students , absence of architectural barriers