

Local Commons in rural São Paulo – study among 46 inhabitants in a rural area
by Alexander Dill with help from Bruna Augusto Pereira



Bruna Augusto Pereira (right) with Celia Maria da Silva

Photo: Instituto pela Revitalização da Cidadania

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Summary

Helping neighbours is the major social common in the small rural community of Quatinga Velho near São Paulo. 50 per cent of the labour capacity is dedicated to others without being paid – these are the results of a survey among 46 inhabitants. The community is part of a project to deliver an unconditional basic income to individuals and books and toys for free to the children. This is a sample for a social capital survey in very small and completely unorganised communities.

I Situation and Partners

Quatinga Velho is a settlement near the town of Mogi das Cruzes, which is part of the Greater São Paulo.

The activists of the *Instituto pela Revitalização da Cidadania* (ReCivitas) started to map the area and to set up the distribution of a Basic Income of Citizenship (BIC) of 30 Real (13 Euro in Feb 2011) per month and participant.

Quatinga Velho is typical for the lack of industrial and agricultural income, of schools, public traffic and medical care. The aim of the BIC approach is to stimulate and to encourage self-aid and social capital.

The survey has been conducted by Bruna Augusto Pereira in order to measure the social capital by the use of handsome and realistic methods.

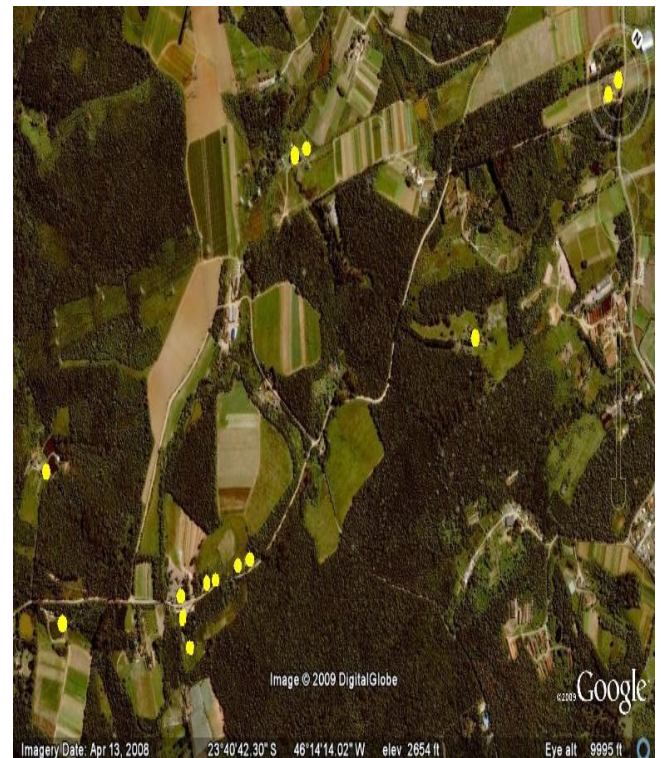
The Setting: discovering the existing assets

Exploring commons and social capital in rural areas requires quite clear targets and settings. In opposite to Western approaches on social capital, organized networking and volunteering don't exist and can therefore not become a major criteria to measuring social capital. The spread of social capital and social commons among people who are even no formal citizens (with the legal and economic impact of citizenship) can only be explored in personal talks. Therefore local stakeholders, enthusiasts and employees of NGO are the only ones to conduct a survey. Of course the conduction of a survey itself becomes part of the activities to encourage and to promote self-aid based on existing resources, values, honorary capacities and voluntarism. It's not about the results only – it's about becoming aware of local assets in order to start to explore and develop them. The local commons report is a letter to the citizens and at the same time a document for professional development aid for government and NGO.

The Survey: *What is my community worth?*

In order to avoid the scientific terminus technicus „social capital“ the questionnaire's title is: *What is my community worth?* It contents only four questions concerning free goods and services. Answering the four questions may take about ten minutes in theory – practically the answers only appear within a longer talk and meeting. They can not be separated from all kinds of small talk and organisation issues. Therefore the answers can be in no way anonymous and become very personal

statements on life, community, neighbourhood, family and society. Although the questionnaire offers the opportunity to give qualitative answers and categories, this individual aspect is strongly considered and leads to topics that come from the people.



The yellow points represent settlements of Quatinga Velho

Results

I Which products and services do you offer others for free?

Product/Service	No. per cent	
Take care of the family plantation	18	39,1
Cooking	9	19,6
Fix something in the other's house	9	19,6
Cleaning	8	17,3
Don't know	8	17,3
Got to market	6	13
Give a ride by car	6	13
Nursing	4	8,7
Teaching	3	6,5
Total	46	

II Which percentage of your labour capacity do you dedicate to others without being paid?

Percentage	No.	Per cent
10	7	15,2
25	11	23,9
40	5	10,9
60	5	10,9
90	1	2,2
100	14	30,4
Don't know	3	6,5
Total	46	



Children in Quatingo Velho: Developing and maintaining or leaving their neighbourhood?

II a – And how many hours per day?

Time	No.	Per cent
30 minutes	7	15,2
1h	7	15,2
2h	7	15,2
3h	7	15,2
6h	1	2,2
24h	14	30,4
Don't know	3	6,5
Total	46	

III Which common goods in your community are most important to you?

Common Good	No.	Per cent
Neighbourhood	9	19,6
Family	9	19,6
Health	6	13
Labour&Job	5	10,9
Nature	4	8,7
Peace	4	8,7
Security	3	6,5
Education	3	6,5
Religion	2	4,3
Culture	1	2,2
Total	46	

IV To which important common aims would you dedicate your voluntary work?

For this question the interviewer gave examples.

Common Aim	No.	Per cent
Helping weaker people	10	21,7
Renovating and building neighbour house	9	19,6
Planting trees and gardening	8	17,4
Sharing equipment&cars	6	13
Organising common events	4	8,7
Don't know	4	8,7
Providing joy and fun	3	6,5
Collecting waste	2	4,3
Security patrol	0	0
Renovating and building public houses&schools	0	0
Total	46	

Learnings and conclusion

In opposite to surveys in industrial countries the participation in social capital surveys in development countries is almost 100 per cent – so in rural São Paulo. In Quatinga Velho *neighbourhood* in all forms seems to be the most important social common. The time dedicated to others outside the family without being paid is more than the average working time per capita in many developed countries.

This represents an enormous asset to maintain, to develop and to grow.

The recently published *World Giving Index* ranked Brazil No. 76* and published the following table:

	Brazil	Chile	Haiti	Colombia
Percentage giving money	25	48	40	24
Percentage Volunteering time	15	16	38	20
Percentage helping a stranger	49	49	35	63

The database of the *World Giving Index* is the result of a Gallup survey with samples in all states.

The poor result for Brazil – only 15 per cent of the people provide volunteering time – can not be testified by our survey.

In opposite it seems that volunteering defined as help for neighbours is the major social common.

Of course the question “Have you recently dedicated time to a social organization”? (Brazil: 15 per cent) requires a clear definition of social organisations.

Neighbourhood is not among the definitions of social organization.

Source: Charities Aid Foundation
The World Giving Index 2010, Gallup

The study shows an effect that we may call the *Social Capital Paradox*: The less people are fully employed, the more time they have to contribute to their local community and commons. Taking care of the neighbour's plantation, guarding his children and helping him or her to renovate the house are the activities that build the local social commons.

Services such as health, public traffic and education that are provided by tax-wealthy governments as public goods don't exist.

But their absence is not that critical than the absence of money to guarantee essential needs. According to the report of ReCivitas more than 50 per cent of the BIC were spent on clothing and food – and astonishing 14 per cent for *Material escolar*, for school material.

The normal target of development aid is to provide infrastructure, training and material in order to build up a local production to generate income.

The BIC project in Quating Velho shows, that providing a Basic Income may be the cheaper solution with a better effect on the local social capital and commons.

According to the Senator of São Paulo, Eduardo Matarrazzo Suplicy, who is a pioneer of Basic Income since 1979 – Alexander Dill met him in Karlsruhe in 2008 – BIC and/or *Bolsa* today reach almost 25 per cent of the 190 million Brazilians.

Finally Brazil separates between a highly effective agriculture and industry in selected areas and non- and underdeveloped rural areas. By financing BIC and *Bolsa* through a tax on financial transactions Brazil is in general capable to maintain social commons and social capital all over the country. The local common report may be a useful and cheap way to explore and to develop these assets.

Credit: <http://www.whatisconomy.com/Suplicy%20LAP.pdf>