Aspiration for residential mobility in large urban agglomerations: between residential and social mobility

Aspiração por mobilidade residencial em grandes aglomerações: entre a mobilidade residencial e a mobilidade social

Aspiración a la movilidad residencial en las grandes aglomeraciones: entre la movilidad residencial y la movilidad social

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Abstract

This essay analyses residential mobility considering aspirations and desires to migrate. Considering the aspiration for migration as a methodology for grasping preevents before mobility, one must take into consideration that it is merged with political, economic, cultural, and social factors. Thus, because of the diversity of relations between migrants and migration, the decision to migrate and the action itself, there are shades of meaning that theories often neglect. We use primary data from the Metropolitan Region of Vitória (MRV) to achieve this purpose. Our main goal is to understand the relationships between family, household, and residential mobility in the metropolitan regions of Brazil. The results show that aspirations for residential mobility could also be interpreted as aspirations for social mobility. This demonstrates the relevance of mobility as a strategy for social reproduction in large urban agglomerations.

Keywords: Aspiration; Migration; Residential mobility; Metropolitan region.

Resumo

A presente proposta vislumbra elementos da mobilidade residencial analisadas a partir da ideia de aspiração e desejo de migrar. Entendendo que a aspiração pela migração é uma metodologia de compreensão dos processos de mobilidade pré-evento integradas aos fatores políticos, econômicos, culturais e sociais que, sob a diversidade das

relações entre migrante, migração, decisão do projeto migratório e ação deste projeto existe uma complexidade cujas teorias muitas vezes não abarcam. Nossa base de análise está em pesquisa de campo na Região Metropolitana da Grande Vitória (RMGV), cujo objetivo é compreender as relações entre família, domicílio e mobilidade residencial nas regiões metropolitanas do Brasil. Os resultados aqui analisados apontam que as aspirações por mobilidade residencial poderiam ser interpretadas como aspiração por mobilidade social, o que expõe a relevância da mobilidade como estratégia de reprodução social nas grandes aglomerações urbanas.
Palavras-chave: Aspiração; Migração; Mobilidade residencial; Região metropolitana.

Resumen
Esta propuesta contempla elementos de movilidad residencial analizados desde la perspectiva de la aspiración y el deseo de migrar. Entendiendo que la aspiración a la migración es una metodología para comprender los procesos de movilidad preevento integrados con factores políticos, económicos, culturales y sociales que, bajo la diversidad de relaciones entre migrante, migración, decisión del proyecto migratorio y acción de este proyecto, existen una complejidad cuyas teorías muchas veces no abarcan. Nuestro análisis se basa en una investigación de campo en la Región Metropolitana de la Gran Vitória (RMGV), cuyo objetivo es comprender las relaciones entre familia, hogar y movilidad residencial en las regiones metropolitanas de Brasil. Los resultados aquí analizados indican que las aspiraciones de movilidad residencial podrían interpretarse como aspiraciones de movilidad social, lo que expone la relevancia de la movilidad como estrategia de reproducción social en las grandes aglomeraciones urbanas.
Palabras clave: Aspiración; Migración; Movilidad residencial; Región Metropolitana.

Introduction

Transformations experienced by society members, at the most diverse scales of structural analysis, are profoundly related to population movements in space. They were historically at the bottom of urbanization processes and the expansion of large and medium-sized cities, playing a key part in the growth and spatial consequences of segregation and social and territorial inequalities of these large urban zones.

Both migration and residential mobility, however, are usually taken as events; they are examined just after the episode itself, and the background of the analysis is based on the differentiation of the moving population, migrants themselves, and those who stayed behind. There are indeed few studies of migration or aiming at residential mobility aspirations, intentions, and desires, especially considering the Brazilian context.

Some contributions, such as Carling and Collins (2018), Carling and Mjelva (2021) and De Haas (2010), argue that the perspective of aspirations for migration captures the present impact of a possible future event. When examining migratory processes, functionalist-subjective or structuralist-collective types of dualities, for example, usually emerge, generating opposing facts without even relating them. De Haas (2010) and Carling and Collins (2018) point out that modern mobilities are complex and consist of interaction processes, and this goes beyond the analytical uncertainties of international migratory studies. Politics, economy, culture, and society are therefore integrated into these relationships.

Considering the potential of analyzing aspirations in the Brazilian urban context, we evaluate how the aspiration for residential mobility is related to the sociodemographic characteristics and housing conditions of families. Our hypothesis is that aspirations for residential mobility are linked to living conditions and the prospect of future improvement and achieving social mobility.

Residential mobility in large urban agglomerations is related to the scales of medium- and long-distance migration, whether internal or international. We start from the assumption that there is no intangible cause for mobility but rather a set of social, economic, political, and cultural relations that have at home the main space for decision-making (DE HAAS, 2010).

The second element we uncover demonstrates that residential mobility is both the result and the reflection of family dynamics. The relationship between family unity and spatial analysis should be highlighted in thinking about mobility processes, and it must be addressed considering that displacements are not only driven by desire or needs, even if both are vital elements. It also has to be studied under broader aspects of society and its related economic and political arrangements, whether it is restricted to the local scale or influenced by global processes.

The first part of this paper addresses aspirations as a scale of analysis. The following section engages with the family unit and its aspirations for residential mobility, based on primary data from the Metropolitan Region of Vitória in the State of Espírito Santo, Brazil. We conclude with a discussion based on broader family aspirations for residential mobility.

Materials and Methods

We used primary data from the survey "Family demographic dynamics and migratory pattern in large urban agglomerations" (CAPES-SNF), a study based on the Metropolitan Region of Vitória, in the state of Espírito Santo, Brazil. Specific census data were selected considering both the intensity of migration inside the metropolis, from microdata produced by the 2010 Demographic Census, and the vicinity of critical areas of urban expansion at the regional level, the latter being analyzed from satellite images selected between 2010 and 2020.

The collection was conducted in 2022 through a random household sampling of 300 households in census tracts from six different locations inhabited by poor people.

In this research, the family characterization was contemplated, bringing up information on occupation, income, household arrangement and workplace. Sociodemographic information about the legal guardian was also collected, such as education, marital status, time of union, and occupation condition of the household.

The first part of the questionnaire was composed of a *survey*. The second deals directly with the residential mobility of families through the reconstitution of the residential trajectory with open-and-closed questions. Thus, we captured the origin,

destination, and reasons for displacements, since the family composition and the main person responsible for the household, as well as the aspirations for residential mobility. The typology of motivations for residential mobility was grounded in the debate proposed by Shapira, Gayle and Graham (2019) from longitudinal data from the United Kingdom. The cornerstone motivations for residential mobility are (1) residentials, (2) familiars, (3) environmental and life cycle and (4) work purposes. Within these motifs, we list subcategories specific to Brazilian reality that are connected to residential mobility from the specialized bibliography (MÓDENES, 2008; DOTA, 2015; CUNHA, 2016; 2018).

Regarding aspirations for residential mobility, two questions were adapted from the propositions of Carling and Mjelva (2021): "Do you intend to leave this household in the next year?" and "Do you intend to leave this household in the next 5 years?". The questions were asked in sequence. If the answer was positive for one year, destination and reasons were collected. If negative, it was asked if there was a claim for 5 years, following the same logic. It is important to note that in this format, there is either aspiration for one or 5 years, and the respondent should not flag positively for both. If the answer was negative for both options, then we collected the reason for not wanting to move to another household.

Desires and aspirations for residential mobility encompass spatial and temporal changes that lead to specific social relations and public policies for and in that locality. Capturing these elements within short- and medium-term intervals allows us to evaluate which factors brought about the desire for residential mobility. This procedure also highlights which factors contribute to determining possible destinations. The intention, although, may never be translated into a residential movement. It is thus not an indicator of future mobility but rather of existing perspectives confronting their past residential trajectory and of structural elements of contemporary family life.

On aspirations and spatial mobility of families

It is important to state here what aspiration means. The idea of aspiring to attain something involves projecting desire or necessity. The future and present are linked to decisions and aspirations, which may or may not promote fissures in building the family relationship. As shown by Giddens (2000) and Aslany et al. (2021), the aspiration to migrate is grounded in the perspective of agency as a precedent of the structure. Every intention to act and the action itself is a first step toward spatial and temporal changes and disruptions.

This means that the movement of people goes beyond the separate notions of agency and structure (GIDDENS, 2000). Likewise, aspirations and desires to migrate promote new arrangements for grasping the current situation, which is related to work, place of residence, and family and neighborhood bonds due to the possibilities of residential mobility. Aspirations and desires form multifaceted processes and help to consolidate multiscale frameworks of mobility and permanence (MARTINS, 2019).

As Carling and Colins (2018) demonstrate, many factors lead people to migrate, and understanding the in-depth complexity and plurality of these processes is theoretically challenging (DE HASS, 2010). Comprehending the political and social context is fundamental. Migratory trajectories cannot be interpreted exclusively as logical outcomes of our decisions but also as resulting from past and present ruptures and divergences, elements that could impact the future.

According to the authors, a theory of migration needs to account for multiple components that involve migration, which include imaginative geographies, emotions, social and spatial power relations, and requirements for quality of life (CARLING; COLINS: 2018).

Aspiration should be thought beyond the ability, or lack of it, to achieve mobility. It is a positioning facing changes in various scales of projection and decision to move, be they internal, international, residential, collective or individual. Regarding the family, this complexity is even more significant, and it is more challenging to deal with since it has several layers of meaning. Aslany et al. (2021) point out that the aspects that lead to subjective and individual aspirations are relational. Their motivations are influenced by the family and family members who stimulate them. Therefore, familiar transformations also encourage changes in family relationships themselves.

We want to understand the multiple scales of family relationships and their implications for aspirations and decisions toward another household by thinking from the perspective of Brazilian families. Geography still does not pay proper attention to family spatialities (MARTINS, 2022). However, relevant contributions in human sciences were made, such as in Cunha (2018), Becceneri, Brusse, and Aparicio (2021), and Aparicio and Farias (2019).

Regarding aspirations for international migration, Carling and Schewel (2017) accentuate a fundamental difference between aspirations and the ability to migrate. The author argues that we need to investigate different aspects without replicating "universal" precepts. They exemplify that a young British person may have much more resources to migrate than a young Mozambican, but the decision to leave of the former involves a more radical choice than for the latter, which has an old and social project in migration.

Czaika and Vothknecht (2014) contribute by talking about "aspirational windows", which are spaces of opportunity to gradually produce quality of life and social ascension. According to the authors, social variables are determinants, and aspirational levels are also connected to the trajectories of individuals migrating. Jung and Jung (2019) highlight cosmopolitan aspirations, that is, the desire for mobility from a global multiterritorial experience. Aslan et al. (2021) understand that any research or instrumental approach needs to go beyond supposing families' desires but rather investigate the local context.

The aspirations of families become central to tracing the spatialities in the process of transit migration and effectively how mobility occurs. In addition, the reasons that compel the movement of Brazilian families living in urban outskirts include both material

(poverty, mainly) and immaterial perspectives as starting points for aspirations. The understanding of the temporal layers of this mobility is fundamental to understanding sociospatial realities.

The work of Carling and Collins (2018) clarifies the relationship between aspirations and mobility: first, aspirations and desires are synonymous and, as a methodological approach, also drivers of mobility. Second, decisions are reflections of aspirations. This differs from the French structuralist school, which sees desire and aspiration as separate processes. Decisions indeed integrate familiar generational changes, but it is not necessarily a gamble, something that rational-choice theory understands, nor is it a logical-mathematical chain. There is a host of interconnected factors.

Third and last, aspirations are born out of decisions, which in turn generate new decisions and so on. It is the set of decisions that affect the power of choice. Such events are not shaped coherently but by multiple and complex relationships and phenomena.

Residential mobility trajectory and aspirations

The analysis of aspirations for residential mobility requires an understanding of the context in which people find themselves. We must look at the present considering historical aspects and perspectives of transformations within everyday life. The results depict a tendency to deny any aspiration for residential mobility, with most of those responsible for households revealing that they did not intend to move. Out of 300 families interviewed, only 28.3% (85 of them) said they had some kind of aspirations for the 1- or 5-year period.

From a historical point of view, the central element we are considering is the family's residential mobility trajectory. Trajectories consist of rupture with places, people, institutions, equipment, etc. In every movement, the family itself is at change: marriage-like relationships starting or ending, children born or leaving home, or even the help and care of relatives. As Shapira, Gayle, and Graham (2019) point out, migratory movements are stressful for family dynamics, a situation that may bring grave instability to the union.

Graph 1 shows that only 12.7% of families did not make any movement and had their education in their current residence. Another 29.7% made the last move more than 20 years ago, and the "up to 3 years", "4 to 9 years" and "10 to 19 years" categories had approximately 20% each.
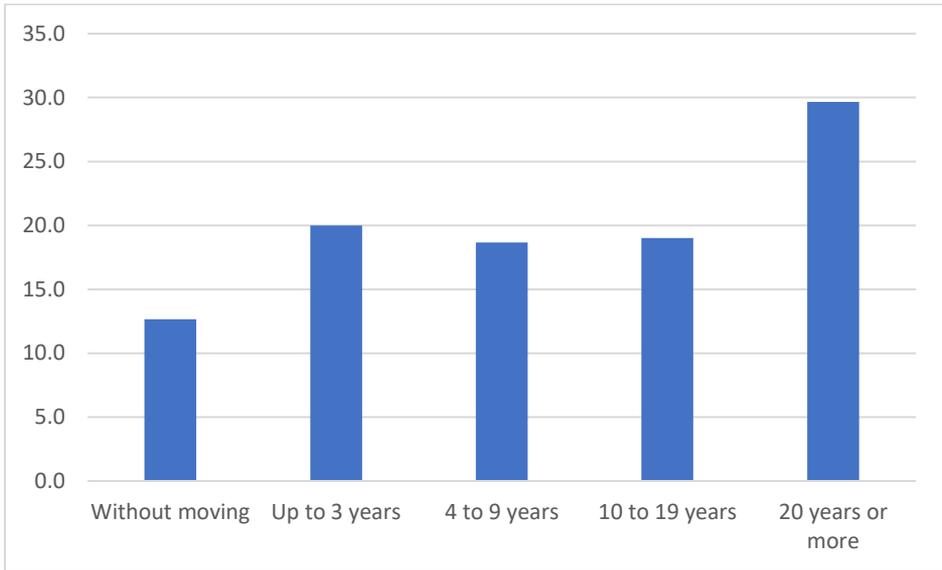
Figure 1: Proportion of household heads according to the last change of residence. Selected neighborhoods of RMGV, 2022.
Source: MigraFamilia. Tabulations by Lagedep/UFES.

The period of the last displacement is important to consider, accepting that the existence of aspirations can be influenced by previous movements (CZAIKA; VOTHKNECHT, 2014).

In Figure 2, home ownership appears to be a major factor for the last displacement. This relationship between residential mobility and home ownership is shown to be the most important reason for keepers of the household in all age ranges, except those over 65 years.
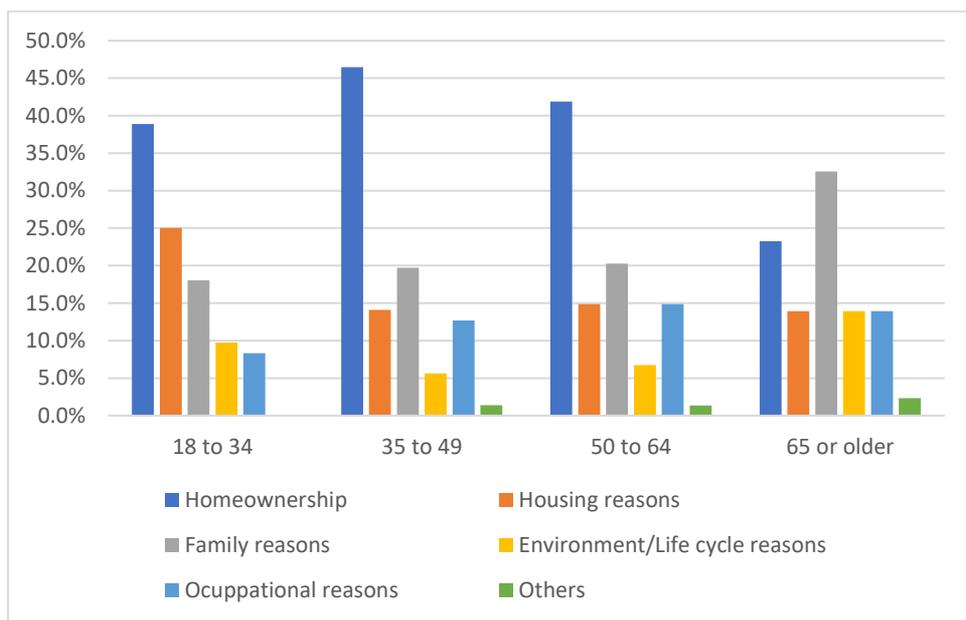
Figure 2: The main reason for the last movement (%) according to the current age of the household head. Selected neighborhoods of the MRV, 2022.
Source: MigraFamilia. Tabulations by Lagedep/UFES.

It is noteworthy that there is a gradual decrease in housing reasons as age rises and an intense variation in reasons linked to work, the latter being significant even among those over 65 years old. Considering familiar reasons, 20% of the youngest pointed out this as the principal motif, with the highest peak of 32.6% among the oldest (65 years or more).

Taking into account that movements through space, such as migration and residential mobility, are strongly connected with age and events of a life course (BERNARD; BELL; CHARLES-EDWARD, 2014), it is possible to read the answers as reflecting each family's everyday life.

It is expected that the youngest group would present greater aspirations for residential mobility, precisely because of the circumstances within this interval, such as family formation, the birth of children, and finishing school. It was clear that younger families are in the process of material and immaterial consolidation, and their aspirations involve expectations for security and stability, key elements to analyzing family geographies (MARTINS, 2022).

The data presented in Figure 3, however, do not confirm this expectation. There is no clear connection between those who aspire for mobility in 1 or 5 years compared to differences in age groups (p value=0.147 for 1 year and 0.480 for 5 years).
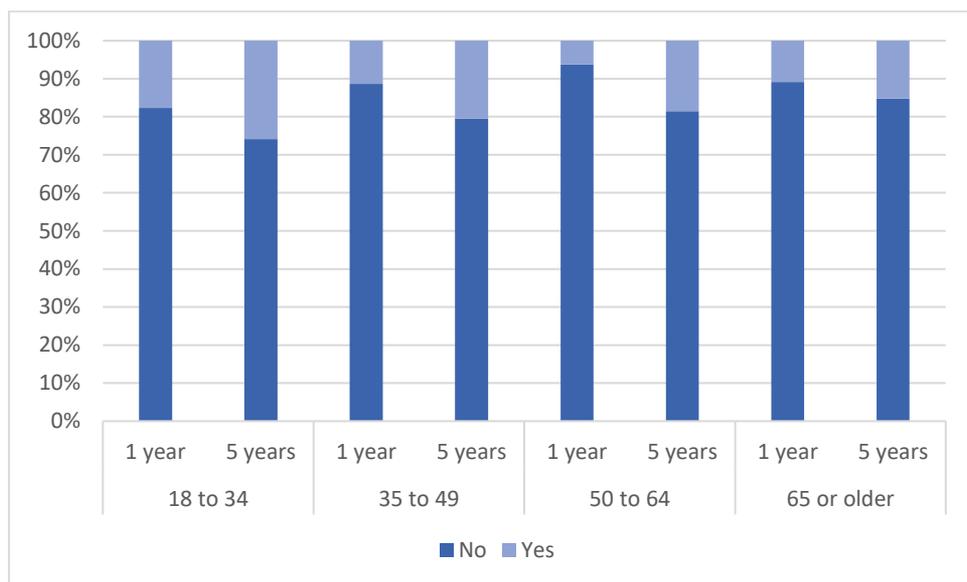
Figure 3: Aspiration for residential mobility in 1 or 5 years (%) according to the age of the household head. Selected neighborhoods of the MRV, 2022.
Source: MigraFamilia. Tabulations by Lagedep/UFES.

The pattern of having more aspirations targeting the 5-year plan in all age groups remained, with younger people having little more interest in moving than those older than 65.

The aspiration for residential mobility, being conditioned by numerous elements that make up the lives of individuals and families, directly interacts with the security and stability of life in cities. The fact that the house is owned, rented, or assigned is prominent, especially considering the intense motivation in the last movement for the acquisition of one's own house and other housing reasons (Cf. Figure 3). The acquisition of home ownership is pointed out as an important element in reducing mobility (ROSEMAN, 1971; DOTA, 2015). Housing and land markets appear among the main factors for residential mobility in large urban centers (MÓDENES, 2008; CUNHA, 2018).

Figure 4 provides data to confirm this relationship: among those who declared themselves owners of the house they were residing in, only 8.7% and 18.6% aspired for residential mobility in 1 or up to 5 years, respectively.
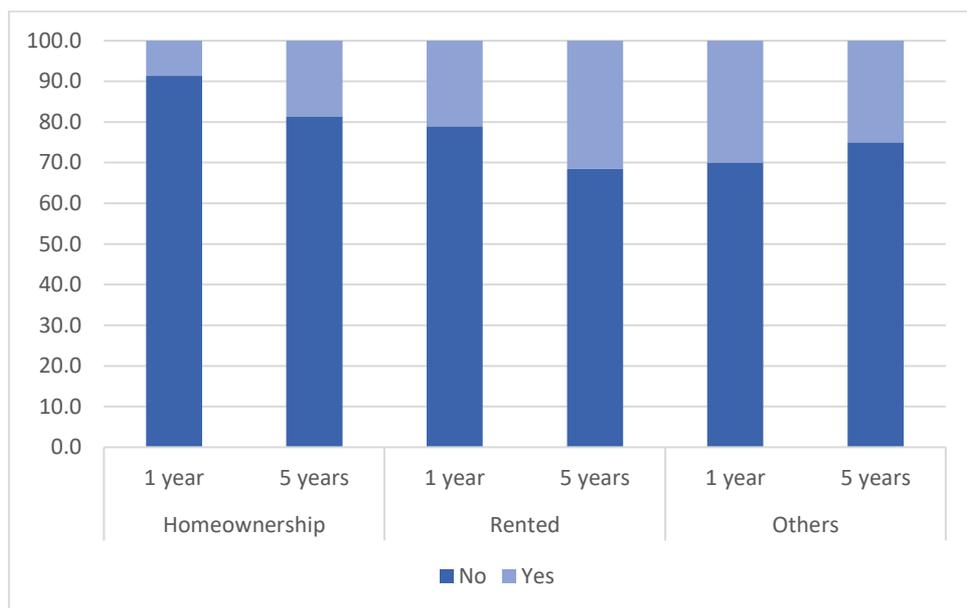
Figure 4: Aspiration by migration in 1 or 5 years (%) according to the occupation condition of the household. Selected neighborhoods of RMGV, 2022.
Source: MigraFamilia. Tabulations by Lagedep/UFES.

It should be noted that the differences observed between occupation status and the aspiration for residential mobility are significant for 1 year (p value=0.003). This highlights that being in one's own house, renting, or assigning one is related to the proportion of household heads who indicated having an aspiration for residential mobility.

The inequality and the prospects for improvement of Brazilian urban areas can be pointed out as a driver of aspirations toward residential mobility. This is true especially when we identify that affection for the place is a major factor for not aspiring to migrate at all. We conclude that this affection becomes visible through valorization policies and the increase in public services, especially informal works that receive assistance from political and religious entities of these locations.

The aspiration for residential mobility and explanatory variables

In this section, we examine the relationship between aspirations for future residential mobility and the significant elements in the study of aspirations (CARLING, 2002; CZAIKA; VOTHKNECHT, 2014) and residential mobility (MÓDENES, 2008; CUNHA, 2018).

We start by considering that the characteristics of household heads aspiring (and those who do not) for future residential mobility enable us to make associations about the processes that explain the existence of aspirations. Aspiration, then, is closely linked to

living conditions and prospects, especially in resource-poor contexts such as those analyzed here.

Here, we employ the binary logistic regression model, which has been used in migratory and aspirational analyses for the ability to produce regression coefficients representing the effect of independent variables on the probability of an event occurrence (HAIR, 2009). Therefore, it uses the logistic function to model the relationship between dependent and independent variables.

Our model has a binary dependent variable based on whether there exists aspiration for residential mobility or not, with the negative answer being the reference category in this analysis. To compose the variable, we differentiated those who did not have aspiration from those who had it for 1 or 5 years, evaluating them together.

The independent variables and their categories are as follows: age in years (18 to 34; 35 to 49; 50 to 64; 65 or older), household arrangement (couples with children; childless couples; single-parent; single-person; extended or composite); education (until primary school; high school or beyond); if the interviewee was working on the date of the survey; race/color (Pardo Brazilians; whites; blacks); occupation condition of the household (owned; rented; other); if and when the last residential mobility had occurred (without moving; up to 3 years, from 4 to 9 years; from 10 to 19 years; more than 20 years).

Descriptive statistical analyses were performed for categorical variables (Table 1) by Pearson's chi-square test, considering them in relation to the dependent variables of the model. It was noted at this stage that only the education level and occupation conditions of the households presented significant results in Pearson's chi-square test. This is an indication that the difference in values in the categories of independent variables is not large enough to be considered significant to the dependent categories.

Table 1: Proportion of the categories of independent variables according to the existence or not of aspiration for residential mobility. Selected neighborhoods of the MRV, 2022.

Variables	Does not aspire to residential mobility	Aspire to residential mobility	p value
Age			
18 to 34	24.7	37.6	0.142
35 to 49	30.2	27.1	
50 - 64%	29.3	21.2	
65 or older	15.8	14.1	
Education			
Until primary school	66.5	54.1	**0,045**
High school or higher	33.5	45.9	

Variables	Does not aspire to residential mobility	Aspire to residential mobility	p value
Race/color			
Pardo Brazilians	60.9	56.5	0.185
White	14.4	9.4	
Black	24.7	34.1	
Household arrangement			
Couples with children	38.6	36.5	0.978
Childless couples	14.0	12.9	
Single parent	13.0	15.3	
Unipersonal	12.6	11.8	
Extended/Composite	21.9	23.5	
Working at the moment			
No	48.4	42.4	0.346
Yes	51.6	57.6	
Occupational status of the households			
Homeowner	85.1	69.4	**0.008**
Rented	9.5	20.0	
Other	5.1	10.6	
Migrant according to the last displacement			
Without moving	14.9	7.1	0.369
Up to 3 Years.	19.1	22.4	
4 to 9 years old	17.2	22.4	
10 to 19 years old	18.6	20.0	
20 years or more	30.2	28.1	

Source: MigraFamilia. Tabulations by Lagedep/UFES.

Then, the gross and adjusted odds ratios (OR) were calculated using the logistic regression model, and 95% confidence intervals were calculated. To ensure the quality of the final model, only variables with significance up to 20% were included, with the 5% level adopted as the minimum parameter.

The results in Table 2 reinforce the first readings of the contingency table presented (Table 1). Only education and occupational condition met the minimum criteria

to enter the model. They depict that the context of homogeneity of the outskirts of metropolitan areas relativizes the role of important variables such as age, race/color, and previous residential mobility.

Table 2: Result of the binary logistic regression model for having aspirations.

Variable	Odds Ratio	CI (95%)	p value
Education			
Until primary school	1.00		
High school or higher	1.786	(1.057-3.018)	**0.030**
Occupational status of the households			
Homeowner (ref.)	1.00		
Rented	2.694	(1.319-5.503)	**0.007**
Other	2.551	(0.999-6.518)	**0.050**
Constant	0.253		**0.000**
R^2	0.045		

Source: MigraFamilia. Tabulations by Lagedep/UFES.

The model data indicate that those responsible for the household with high school or higher education (undergraduate or graduate) were 78.6% more likely to have aspirations for residential mobility than those with up to elementary school (p value=0.030). Residing in rented houses or under other conditions (assigned, borrowed) increased the chance of having aspirations by 2.6 and 2.5 times, respectively (p value=0.007 and 0.050), compared to household heads who lived in their own homes.

The household occupational status can be taken as a strategy in its relationship with residential mobility, especially due to the need to maintain a minimum income for direct consumption (food and basic assistance). Therefore, the highest chance of aspiration among those who are not living in their own home is linked to the cost. This situation affects net expenses and the displacement to work and other family activities, in addition to the social framework and the cultural value that a house, a physical capital, has for the Brazilian population.

However, analyzing these data also requires considering the period of the collection as decisive for interpretations. The year 2022, when the pandemic slowed down, was also a time of high unemployment rates, increased poverty, decreased access to housing policies and intense political polarization, which was even stronger due to the presidential election.

This context may have been decisive in bringing back variables such as age and race/color, both historically present in the structure of inequalities and their fallout in the Brazilian peripheries.

Another important factor is the set of specificities in the Brazilian household arrangement, especially in peripheral areas. The search for quality of life is deeply connected to home ownership, be it irregular occupation or derived from housing programs, among other possibilities. This does not represent only material possessions but also social and financial ascent, which we can see promoted with greater effort in the 21st century.

Concluding Remarks

The inequalities and conditions of the peripheral zones of Brazilian cities are widely known, but the transformations over recent decades have been intense, with new elements for the debate emerging.

The intense population growth in these agglomerations seems to be over. Endogenous dynamics, however, are still effervescent, and the strategy of residential mobility is a key element in thinking about the lives of families, on the one hand, and urban restructuring, on the other.

The aspirations for residential mobility, in an environment in which many of the respondents are living in irregular occupations or an ongoing process of regularization, reinforce the sense of aspirations as a type of spatiality, as something influenced by spatial arrangements. Do not establish a standard definition for what home ownership may mean reinforces the sense of belonging shown by the interviewee, a variable that, in turn, stands out.

A higher level of aspiration was noticed within the 5-year range than within the 1-year range. As we associate education and household occupation status, it was revealed that the aspiration for residential mobility, primarily in the Brazilian peripheral urban context, is part of the desire to improve the quality of life. The aspiration could be accounted for as a planning stage looking, in this scenario, toward a better quality of life and social promotion through likely spatial mobility. This result was similar to that found by Czaika and Vothknecht (2014) for internal migration in Indonesia.

Residential mobility, then, can be an instrument for social mobility, since the quality of life is directly linked to the place we live and how we interact with the surrounding environment. This conclusion is in line with Carling (2002), who argues that it is not mathematical factors that govern the success of mobilities but the subjective and collective elements linked to families and places.

According to Carling and Schewel (2019), it must be stated that it is necessary to understand the involuntary nature of not aspiring to move, something greatly influenced by contexts of vulnerability, as depicted in our research. It interferes with the whole extent of migration possibilities and the act of moving itself.

If any major variables have not been entered into the model, it indicates their low influence on this phenomenon, even though it is known that they are important in shaping the decision-making process. There is no doubt that sociodemographic characteristics are

related to the expectations and aspirations of residential mobility. The results deserve further study to understand new social contexts of ongoing demographic changes in Brazilian peripheries.

The analysis of aspirations for residential mobility, despite differing from the traditional way of looking at migration, aims to complement and enrich the analysis from another angle of analysis. The focus of this procedure is to ponder ideas being formulated and needs and desires, allowing us to particularly understand the role and performance of traditional elements that condition migratory movements.

Finally, we must deepen the local-national scale and the geographical perspective for such phenomena. Only then can we insert ourselves into specific dynamics of residential mobility toward formulating social policies and making all-inclusive analyses of the Brazilian periphery from the perspective of aspirations.

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