Intra-metropolitan mobility, social networks, and vulnerability: A study of the Metropolitan Region of Campinas in São Paulo, Brazil

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At the end of the 1960´s, Brazil initiated a process of metropolitization, especially in southern region. Migration has often been cited as one of the major reasons for the high rates of population growth in these large urban agglomerations, with the immigrants coming mainly from the northeast and south of the country. This process of expansion of the large metropolitan areas, both physical and demographic, has been a question of concern for various researchers in the areas of sociology, geography, urbanism, and even demography. Despite of this, little is yet known about the mobility of the population inside the metropolis, although such local migrations may be just as significant as those of people from other regions for the understanding of the dynamics of the demographics and sociospatial transformations of the metropolitan area. Indeed, various studies in Brazil have shown the importance of this intra-metropolitan migration in regions of great demographic concentration, such as São Paulo (Cunha, 1994 and Antico, 2003), Rio de Janeiro (Lago,2000), and Belo Horizonte (Matos, 1994 and Rigotti, 1996).

Using data from a survey, the present paper was designed to analyze the dislocation of people in a particular metropolitan area in Brazil, by tracing their paths in the metropolis and ascertaining what they are like. It will be given special emphasis on the influence of social networks in the migratory process; the relations between these networks and the vulnerability of families to specific situations of poverty will also be explored. The paper will report the case study of the metropolitan area of Campinas (MAC), a region with 2.3 million inhabitants composed of 19 municipalities.

Theoretical background: Spatial mobility, social networks and vulnerability

This study is based on the assumption that spatial mobility (especially residential mobility) may affect the vulnerability of families and/or individuals, especially those with a low income, in different ways. Considering that housing may represent the most difficult problem to be face in order to stay in the metropolis, moving can be one of the strategies used to deal with this need. Indeed, insofar as occupied space is a reification of socially constructed space (Bourdieu, 2003), mobility can help overcome the

limitations imposed by the land market for large segments of the metropolitan population. On the other hand, mobility may involve more than mere occupation of another space. It may be accompanied by the acquisition or loss of important assets such as social and family relationships or, more generally, social capital.

The concept of vulnerability used here encompasses more than just the traditional dimensions involved in studies of poverty, such as socioeconomic and educational level and salable skills. Other factors can also interfere in the capacity of families to overcome the problems to which they are exposed, especially in large metropolitan areas. The analysis here will thus consider not only the sources of assets, both tangible and intangible, but also actual access to them by the population, especially that with a low income.

This study will present the main characteristics of the intra-metropolitan migratory process, and provide an attempt to explain the reasons for this trajectory, especially for those who are heads of households. It is assumed that migration cannot be understood only as a search for better economic conditions. Additional elements will have to be considered to understand the complete migratory process, especially in large urban centers. Factors such as previous experience or knowledge about the region and availability of social capital and social support networks will be considered in this study since they can have a tremendous impact on family life, especially for low-income families. Nor can one ignore other demographic elements such the family life cycle and its influence on the strategies adopted for dealing with housing issues.

Data and methods

The data to be analyzed come from a survey conducted in the Metropolitan Area of Campinas using a stratified sample selected on the basis of general socio-economic conditions, including access to networks of social protection, both familiar and governmental (Cunha et.al.,2006).

Information about migration is obtained for all individuals living in the household, including data about previous residence and time of residence in the municipality, the neighborhood and the home itself, as well as the number of moves in each level of analysis. This has made it possible to reconstruct some details of the migratory trajectory, from original arrival to the region (for the non naturals) to the present. Based on the hypothesis that a large number of the decisions about migration will be defined within the family, more specific information was also collected about

the details of the migratory process of the heads of households, such as information about reasons for moves, who accompanied them, social support networks at their destination, and sources of information about the destination.

These data have shown that more than 50,8% of the population in the metropolitan region was born in that region, although this number decreases significantly when only the heads of the households are considered (32%). For these individuals, the data also show that 17.6% are intra-metropolitan migrants, although the large majority (82,4%) had previously lived outside the MAC; 22,4% of the heads of household had lived for some time in at least two other municipalities before arriving at their present residence. The main reason given for migration to the MAC was linked to work issues (36.8%), and 31,5% of the heads of households actually had a job waiting for them when they arrived. Reasons involving the family (29,5%) included those individuals who migrated with their parents in the past, but some 33,8% reported other reasons. The reasons other than jobs were more common for triggering moves within the region. It also seems that, for the intra-metropolitan migrants housing motivations were responsible for some 13% of the moves.

The frequency of intra-municipality moves is elevated, with more than 56% of the heads of households having participated in at least two moves from one house to another. This again reinforces the role of housing in intra-metropolitan mobility.

Moreover, in relation to social networks, the information provided by the survey shows that relatives and friends were the main source of information leading to the choice of the present residence (61,5% of heads of households). For families living in poorer areas, this percentage is even higher. The choice of present neighborhood was less influenced by these networks of relatives and friends (33,6%). Some 56,5% of the household heads linked the move to the municipality with an increase in social capital due to the increased possibilities for help from relatives, whereas 46,6% perceived no significant changes due to neighbors.

The indicators of poverty level to be used in this analysis include a hybrid measure combining a shortage of income (based on the poverty line (Rocha, 2003.) and unmet social needs (CEPAL, 2001), with the latter including dimensions as yet unavailable in other brasilian studies and/or databases, such as the conditions of the surrounding area, the frequency of specific public services (such as electricity and garbage collection) etc.. Considering the heterogeneity of socioeconomic conditions, especially in terms of space (Marques and Torres, 2004), a gradient is established to

classify the residents of the MAC: poor (insufficient income and high degree of unattended needs), "remediables" (those who are above but close to the poverty line and/or present some unattended needs), and not poor (sufficient income with few or no needs). Once these categories have been defined, it will be fit a statistical model to determine the effects of specific sociodemographic characteristics, especially conditions of migration and social capital, on the poverty condition.