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Youth migration: What forms of mobility? What forms of anchorage? The positioning of family links and intergenerational relationships

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1 The subject of youth migration is one that today has been widely investigated through scientific research that raises interest as much in industrialized Western countries as in emerging societies, as evidenced by a very recent edition of the Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, entitled “Youth migration and transitions to adulthood in developing countries” (Juarez et al., 2013).

2 Migration is defined here as geographic mobility involving the usual residential set-up in a locality other than that in which the youths lived with their parents. One can distinguish between several types of migration, depending on the scale of displacements concerned and the reality to which they correspond. Migrations can be intraregional, interregional and international. Moreover, the reasons for such migrations are numerous. Thus, juvenile migrations may be for the purpose of studying, for professional reasons, or to try out new lifestyles (whether or not linked to marital life) (Gauthier et al., 2003).

3 As far as the researchers involved here are concerned, it is a matter of assessing and understanding these migratory behaviours, the reasons for such moves, and their impact on young people’s social and professional integration processes.

4 Youth is seen both as a period of transition and of insertion. Placed between adolescence and adulthood, it corresponds to a life transition phase, where the individuals learn “to make choices, take on responsibilities, in other words to take their place in the city” (Gauthier and Laflamme, 2009: 2), to integrate into society.
Within the context of today’s Western societies, this period of their lives tends to stretch out because the period devoted to studies is longer than in the past, but also because there is uncertainty as to their pathways towards professional integration and family life. Professional integration is often a progressive matter, and labour contracts can be fragile. Integration into family life is also something achieved one step at a time: between the time when young people live with their parents and that of settling in as a couple in their own lodgings, there are periods of solitary life, of shared accommodation, of the couple staying with parents, etc. If one can generally classify this period as a time when they are seeking personal independence and deeper knowledge of their own identities, they nevertheless include age subcategories that involve different issues. Today, we recognize a new stage in youth, that of emerging adulthood (ages 18-25) (Arnett, 2004), a form of “semi-dependence” (Van de Velde, 2008) resulting from the tension between young people’s search for personal autonomy and material and financial conditions that leave them still largely dependent on their families. Subsequently, they reach the “young adult” stage (25-30 years), characterized by parental, marital and professional commitments, and the period of entry into full adulthood would normally be completed in their early 30s (30-35) (Gaudet, 2007).

Geographic mobility impacts young people’s pathways towards adulthood and social and professional integration. The “stages” leading to adulthood—the end of studies and the beginning of a professional life, the departure from the parental home and setting up as a couple—involve a strong likelihood of migration. Mobility would appear to be an intrinsic part of the family axis (leaving the family home and setting up as a couple), and indeed to be the very condition of the changeover (Flipo, 2013).

Juvenile migration is today more frequent than formerly

Young people are multiplying the number of their experiences in geographic mobility. This is certainly not a new phenomenon, but it has acquired importance amongst young adults over the past decades.

In volume 1 of Serge Côté’s Regard sur... Jeunes et dynamiques territoriales, (2008), the author offers a useful comparison between two major Quebec surveys that explored various aspects of youthful migration1, one of which dates from 1999, the other from 2004. The most significant finding was certainly the growth in the phenomenon of young people’s geographic mobility within the province. This change matches the development and lengthening of postsecondary studies. The same phenomenon can be found in Europe. For example, in France, the works of Myriam Baron et al. (2003, 2005) also demonstrate that studies and the subsequent professional insertion lead to mobility within the national framework. Given the major increase in the number of students since the 1990s, there is nothing surprising about this phenomenon. Over Europe as a whole, the international migration of young people has also intensified, more especially from East to West, as young East Europeans come to study or to go through professional integration (Flipo, 2013).

These migratory phenomena have intensified to the point where they have begun to worry the public authorities in certain geographic zones, more especially the rural areas. Whatever the country we consider, it would seem that the geographic displacement of young people seeking social and professional integration is directed mainly to major urban centres, where they will find post-secondary teaching establishments and/or a
greater number of job offers. In Quebec the expression “regional exodus” has often been used to describe this mobility and it reflects a crucial problem. As of the beginning of the 1990s, public authority has drawn attention to the migration of young people aged between 15 and 34 as they moved from rural areas to urban centres, thus leading to the desertification and social and economic underdevelopment of a number of regions, and creating obvious problems as to the attractiveness of such territories.

### The paradoxes of mobility

These legitimate worries do however give rise to a certain paradox. Indeed, spatial mobility is today seen as a social standard. In a spaced-out, densely populated and cosmopolitan world, one of the qualities required and expected from the social player is the ability to move, to go from one place to another, wherever required. When you are young, such mobility is a trump card that allows you to open up to the world, to garner new experiences, to face up to otherness. Such mobility is deemed to be positive and a creator of fulfilling and valuable experiences within the logics of social and professional integration.

It has been found possible to demonstrate the positive yield obtained from geographic mobility as regards professional integration (Perret, 2008; Deschenaux et Laflamme, 2004). Such mobility generates “spatial capital” whose “increase in volume [...] correlative favours the acquisition of knowledge and the development of skills likely to be involved in the employment process” (Garneau, 2006: 294).

Public authority, especially in France, organizes itself by offering specific programs designed to support youth mobility, both on the national and on the international platform. These programs are portrayed here as an answer to professional integration problems. Emmanuelle Santelli’s article in this number takes the example of one of these programs, developed within a regional framework, and uses it to study the international professional mobility of young working-class immigrants from the Maghreb. Their mobility is initiated with a view to improving their employability and their chances of professional integration when they return to France.

Paradoxically, young people are urged simultaneously to leave, to stay away, and to return. Such reflections have been largely considered in Quebec discussions, but one finds the same debates in Europe, more especially in France.

It appears quite clear here that the question of the mobility of young people cannot do without some thought regarding their anchorage. With this in mind, the Quebec Groupe de recherche sur les migrations des jeunes (GRMJ) preferred the term migration to that of exodus, since the latter suggests a permanent move. In other words, one needs to recognize and understand departures from regions, but also returns there, when they occur. Indeed, GRMJ research indicates that a significant number of those who have left their home region come back there to settle down. The challenge is to achieve a better understanding of the affiliation links—which we also call anchorage—with the territories involved, whether they be the point of departure or the point of arrival. The basic lesson that we draw from such work is that it would be a mistake to attempt to understand the phenomena of spatial mobility per se, i.e. without connecting them to territories. The original anchorages affect the creation of mobility trajectories in diverse ways: they may lead to voluntary displacement or to an obligation to move away from places deemed too small, too restrictive, under-endowed in academic or professional resources, etc.; or to
the desire to set up again in one’s home territory, thus re-establishing access to one’s resources of family and friendships. The agglomeration of the data collected thanks to all this research has made it possible to understand the migratory trajectories of these different types of youth by learning, on the basis of the representations put forward by the young people themselves, the motives behind their different forms of mobility, their characteristics and their mechanisms.

The role of family links and intergenerational relationships when it comes to understanding youth migration

Taking this as its perspective, the present edition of Enfances Familles Générations hopes to contribute to reflections on juvenile migration by looking at it specifically from the standpoint of family and intergenerational relationships. Between them, the articles collected in the present number, by bringing together a number of original and varied field studies, show us the centrality of the family as concerns the migratory behaviours of young people. However, these contributions are restricted to Western cases, since they all originate from North America and Europe. The focus is on the geographic mobility and anchorage practices of different populations of young people: the mobility of students, of teenagers and of young people from working-class neighbourhoods, of teenagers placed by court order, of young people of immigrant backgrounds. A number of national contexts are also presented—Quebec, Switzerland, France—along with several different disciplinary approaches: sociology, social geography and psychology. Over and above such diversity, these different articles all provide us with elements that help us understand the role played by family links and intergenerational relationships with respect to the mobility and anchorage behaviours of young people.

On the one hand, family generates and supports geographical mobility. By combining a range of resources (emotional, material, financial), the family group affects the young person’s ability to change their location or not. Additionally, the analysis of juvenile migration shows how the family link functions and how it evolves with the young person’s transition to adulthood. This is a stimulating initiation to a report on these changes.

The family generates and supports the geographical mobility of young people

We live in a scattered society where the multiple locations that we have to frequent if we are to carry out our activities (work, family, material consumption) require mobility (Le Breton, 2005a). By developing their ability to move around, human beings have been able to enlarge their world, while at the same time turning mobility into a requirement. But mobility quickly passed from being a requirement to becoming a procedure and thence the source of social integration. Mobility has become a skill that requires the acquisition of resources. For example, one needs to have the ability and the knowledge required to move around: ability, by having the economic means to use transport (a personal vehicle and public transport); knowledge, by possessing the cognitive resources needed to make use of the tools appropriate to travel (reading a map, identifying one’s location, coping with the language...).
Family characteristics impact the skills specifically required for mobility

18 The acquisition of mobility skills—or motility, as Kaufmann (2006) calls them—is a family matter. The structure of the family and the way it operates on a daily basis have a direct impact on the mobility of its members (Kaufmann and Widmer, 2005). For example, parental divorce will result in individuals developing a greater mobility potential. When parents live separately, this often means that the children are required to move back and forward between the domiciles of father and mother.

19 The family interactions approach, i.e. whether it gives priority to the individual over the group or to the group over the individual, will also affect the way in which travelling is viewed. According to Vincent Kaufmann and Eric Widmer (2005: 204), “families who adopt a contractual style of socialisation, where independence is valued, promote higher scores among preteens for individual competence in managing space. By contrast, those families who give priority to the group and to the collective dynamic seek to make their children dependent on the family means of mobility.”

20 These family styles will be reflected very differently according to the gender of the child, as is demonstrated by Nicolas Oppenchaim’s article in the present number. The author makes a study of adolescent mobility practices in the segregated neighbourhoods of the Paris region. This spatial segregation translates into the residential concentration of populations having the same social or ethnic origin. Within the sensitive urban zones (ZUS) observed by the author, the characteristics of the populations studied include socio-economic insecurity and a multicultural background. The teenagers who live there have mobility habits different from those of teenagers from other areas of the Paris region, due to the lesser availability of parents to make journeys with their children, which means that a number of the young people, more especially the girls, are obliged to stay within their home neighbourhood. This lesser availability is due partly to material curbs such as less possession or use of cars, and partly to social and cultural measures. The author then brings out the different ways of considering mobility and its use according to gender. The girls remain under parental supervision and achieve independent use of their mobility with greater difficulty and later than the boys, the latter attaining earlier autonomy, thanks more specifically to the use of public transport.

21 The social and economic characteristics of the family also constitute significant variables when it comes to understanding variations in behaviour and in ways of experiencing mobility. In the present number, Magali Hardouin, Bertrand Moro and Frédéric Leray take into consideration mobility as concerns studies, in this case within the French context, and more specifically in the Brittany region. They are particularly interested in the choice of university training localities. Their research, which makes use of a number of quantitative studies, analyzes the distances between parental homes and the town or city that the students have chosen for their training. In the Brittany region, most students enlist for post-secondary studies in the Department where their parents’ home is located, a trend confirmed by research focused on other areas of France (Vassal, 1990), more especially in the Nord-Pas-de-Calais region (Dumont and Piédanna, 1998). The importance of the role played by family resources would appear to be a significant factor in explaining this situation. The choice of training may be the main motive given by students for selecting their urban study location, but the second reason is the importance...
of their proximity to the family domicile. This proximity facilitates frequent and regular visits by the students to their parents’ at weekends and during academic vacations. Sociological studies of youth have long described this commuting behaviour adopted by young French students whose “lifestyle places them on a dual lifepath” (Erlich, 1998: 192), switching from a week in the university town, where they study, to a weekend in their own town. The authors also point out that the family’s economic resources play a role when it comes to the choice of location. Depending on what training the student chooses, it would appear that those who come from another department or another region are also those whose parents’ economic resources are the highest. Without negating the importance of the family link brought up earlier, this also demonstrates that a lack of sufficient family resources may oblige the young person to stay within the family vicinity.

This lack of mobility, deemed to be imposed, leads the authors, like other French researchers, to raise the question as to whether local university establishments do indeed make available a genuine educational democratisation. As of the 90s, there was considerable development of such establishments with a view to setting up a national network of university training centres. Although such establishments have allowed less mobile and economically fragile populations to have access to post-secondary training, what they offer is no more than partial educational coverage. This may oblige young students to make what could be default choices for locally available training that does not really meet up with their ambitions, since their lack of economic means prevents them from signing on at a major regional university campus offering a much wider spectrum of advanced training opportunities.

Researchers often consider the family financial and material resources to be elements that allow for the support of youth mobility. But Laurence Faure-Rouesnel and Éliane Le Dantec’s article, which concerns itself with the residential experiences of French working-class youngsters, invites us to take a second look at this affirmation. These two sociologists carried out a qualitative survey of young people experiencing both housing and employment problems, whom they met within two different social insertion structures that made up their integration process. The analysis of their residential trajectories shows that family resources play unexpected roles. For example, non-mobility indicates the existence of a safe family network on which young people may rely while going through their integration process locally. Although such anchorage may be ambivalent, it nevertheless contributes to the social safety of these young people. On the other hand, mobility is an unwanted necessity that indicates the lack of a secure family environment and that places the young person in a precarious situation during the integration process.

The situations described in Magali Hardouin, Bertrand Moro and Frédéric Leray’s article, and in that of Laurence Faure-Rouesnel and Éliane Le Dantec, are revelatory with respect to what is going on in France. Geographic mobility and independent residential integration are difficult to achieve without the financial and material assistance of parents. Without these, young people’s migration and integration trajectories are very liable to lack stability. While going through this stage of social integration into the adult world, young French people are caught up in long-term situations of “semi-dependence” (Van de Velde, 2008). This indicates the political choices made by French society with regard to accompanying young adults towards their autonomy. The concept chosen is that of parental responsibility. Should the State intervene, it will be through supporting the family link via family allowances and tax reductions. On the other hand, if you look at
the social democratic model of Scandinavian countries, State support for all young adults aged 18 and over allows them to emancipate themselves from their families. Anglo-Saxon countries also follow the principle of providing young people with early independence from their families. But when there is no major direct assistance from the State, the model turns rather towards the culture of indebtedness. The acquisition of independence encourages self-financing through loans.

Questions about juvenile migration practices draw one towards those processes of self-empowerment and emancipation of young people with regard to their families and parents. Such questions also allow a look at the reformulation of family and intergenerational relationships that mark the passage into adulthood. The young adult is not the only person concerned by this transition: “it is the entire family that ‘migrates’ from one phase to another” (Scabini and Marta, 1995 cited in Cicchelli, 2001, p.12), from a child-parent relationship to an adult-to-adult relationship, thus setting up a healthy relational distance (Maunaye, 2001).

Juvenile migrations demonstrate the way the family link functions and how it evolves during the passage to adulthood

The work carried out on the geographic migration of young people has contributed to the updating of ideas with regard identity migration, and to the place and status of each member within the family, in the same way that the analysis of spatial distance between generations provides us with information as to what constitutes a proper relational distance between young people and their parents. The analysis of migrations is a way of understanding how relationships between parents and children may move from the register of dependence to that of emotional and elective relationships between adults.

The analysis of youth migrations shows both the challenges of readjustment when it comes to intergenerational relationships, and the use of geographic mobility as part of this process.

The extension of family cohabiting

Over a number of years now we have seen an increase in the length of time that young people cohabit with their parents. This change can be found on both sides of the Atlantic, in Europe (Van de Velde, 2008) and in North America (Gaudet, 2007; Molgat, 2011). What must also be stressed, pretty much everywhere, is the phenomenon of leaving and returning, as practised by what the Anglo-Saxons call the “boomerang kids,” (Mitchell, 2006) (for French examples, see: Villeneuve-Gokalp, 1997; Pellissier, 2002). In France, as of 1997, according to Catherine Villeneuve-Gokalp, one out of five children who left home before the age of 25 would later return to their parents. According to Barbara Mitchell, with regard to the year 2006 in Canada, the rate was roughly one young person in three.

These new behaviours have contributed to the media building up stories of extended parental dependence among young adults who are very little inclined to leave the family home, an attitude consecrated by the French media in the movie Tanguy. However, this representation does seem rather far from reality. It is safe to assume that such cohabitation today is often facilitated by material living conditions and changing family
patterns. Parents’ homes are today more spacious than they were for former generations, and the nature of intergenerational relationships allows young people, more than in the past, to combine material dependency and individual autonomy. Longer schooling, difficulties in accessing the labour market, together with the shortage and high cost of lodgings, all contribute to explaining this change. A qualitative analysis of cohabitation situations shows that, on the whole, young people go through this prolongation of home life as something they put up with rather than as something they choose, whatever social level is taken into consideration (Van de Velde, 2008).

30 In a modern world that emphasizes personal autonomy and self-realization, moving away from home is considered to be an essential and obligatory element in the acquisition of personal individuality.

31 A young person does not see autonomy and self-realization as something that can be acquired in the family home. Geographic mobility is “both an ally and a support for self-empowerment. Moving out means you are no longer being supervised and you have the possibility of defining yourself.” (Le Breton, 2005: 83). Vincenzo Cicchelli (2008) explored student migration phenomena starting with a survey of young people who had taken part in an Erasmus programme. Responding to an injunction of mobility and knowledge of the other (cosmopolitanism, to adopt the term used by the author,) Cicchelli describes these encounters with “otherness” and their impact on the personal identity and more generally on the construction of a European identity. This encounter with the other that allows “the individuals first to discover themselves and then to declare their plurality through fraternization within a foreign environment.” (Cicchelli, 2008: 249). As far as Jean-François Guillaume and Geoffrey Pleyers are concerned (2008: 222): “These experiences are favourable to personality construction and to the affirmation of an ability to take control of one’s ‘own’ life.”

32 In the present number, Emmanuelle Santelli explores the international professional mobility of young working-class French people of North African origin. Supported by a public agency, these young people travel to London where they will be undergoing a professional experience. This experience in mobility is intended to improve the employability of these young people and their professional integration once they return to France. Over and beyond the strictly professional impact of such migration, it is also seen as a way for these young people to become independent from their families and their backgrounds. The author demonstrates that living alone in London allows them to experience youth like any “young middle-class white French person.” Safe from parental observation, they may thus experiment with different lifestyles (nightlife, emotional and sexual experiences other than steady relationships) which are not allowed within their own families, more especially as regards young women.

33 Migration may thus allow these young people to become independent by providing them with the opportunity to emancipate themselves from their social roles, and more especially from the gender roles imposed on them by their families (Molgat, 2011; Flipo, 2013).

The standard for generation separation

34 Geographic mobility, thus, appears here as a truly constitutive element of family relationships, relationships whose prime issues, in our Western contemporary world, are the residential separation of the generations and the setting up of an appropriate
relational distance (Maunaye, 2001). When researching the departure process of young people leaving their homes, Maunaye (2000) put the question to a young woman as to how young people today make that move, quitting family life and building up their personal independence. “We stay with our parents until we reach a certain age, allowing them to teach us as much as possible, after which we need to leave home and stand on our own two feet.” She brings to mind the social standard one is required to respect and that has become little by little general and official over the 20th century (Bonvalet, 1991): parents and children need to separate when the latter have reached adulthood and must consequently live separate lives.

This element of the interview also emphasizes the complexity and the contradictions that line the pathway to independence and self-empowerment, by insisting on the content of the parents’ educational role. It is up to the latter to pass on to their children the rules, values and standards that will allow them to gradually become part of the adult world. In a study on adolescents, François de Singly (2002) provides a subtle picture of the basic identity issues that younger people use to ensure their own freedom of movement. Negotiated with their parents, controlled by the latter, this freedom of movement allows teenagers to go out of the house alone, to begin expanding their world, a world that will gradually separate them from that of their family. This acquisition of daily independent mobility is used here as “a central element of the process of youthful independence with regard to their family” (p. 21).

**Creating links in order to break links**

At this point parents are stakeholders in their children’s process of self-empowerment. They keep track of them, give them permission, accompany them. This is what is paradoxical as regards the young person’s condition (Maunaye et Cicchelli, 2001): they are subject to the injunctions that underline self-construction while at the same time being (and wanting to be) provided with support. This is where the links allow severance.

This is demonstrated in the present number, by the article submitted by Julie Mareschal and Éric Richard. These authors are studying the phenomenon of migration as it affects Quebec CEGEP students. Depending on the geographical location of the CEGEP, moving into post-secondary studies obliges many young Quebecers to leave their families in order to be within reach of their place of study. Based on an analysis of quantitative and qualitative data collected in several Montreal and Quebec City CEGEPs, the authors stress the central role played by the family and the background when it comes to the many changes to which young students need to adapt as a result of their migration: adapting to a new urban context, adapting to a new academic context, adapting to a new relational context. The article also points out the role of the family as a supplier of economic and material resources: for example, the parents are never very far from their children when it comes to providing financial and material assistance on a regular or timely basis. Family and background also provide emotional resources. In a context where young people are separated from their origins because of their studies, a context from which the pangs of loneliness are not absent, family and background play an essential support role thanks to the continuation of exchanges, but also thanks to the identity anchorage they represent. For Sandra Gaviria (2012), this type of separation may be compared with genuine “self-empowerment suffering,” a situation where these young, former
cohabitants, find themselves assailed by feelings of loneliness, which may be considered as the negative side of independence and freedom.

In the present number, writing from a psychological point of view, Rebecca Ganem and Ghayda Hassan look at the place of sibling relationships in the process of severance and integration. The authors examine the contribution of sibling relationships to identity building and to the self-empowerment of young adults. Traditionally, sibling relationships are presented as links allowing the individual to move between family and society. In a transnational migration context where there is exposure to otherness, such links are used also to rebuild continuity between one’s social background, family and the host society and to find one’s place therein.

**Anchorage and mobility: when roots stimulate movement**

Over and beyond the analysis of the reformulation of intergenerational relationships that mark the passage into adulthood, work on youth migration also puts into question the meaning of anchorage and of a sense of belonging. This question is basic to Elsa Ramos’ survey, *L’invention des origines* (2006) dealing with identity-related anchorages. Rather than proposing a representation of a society of unattached individuals, the writer shows us the need to construct anchorages in order to achieve some stability in one's identity, by seeking those spaces that makes sense for the individual.

Within the context of Quebec young people’s geographic mobility, Stéphanie Garneau (2003) explores the feeling of belonging to territories, whether they be the original or the host locations, by attempting to encompass the meaning of these local and regional territories. One of the aspects of this work is understanding if there is a link between the absence of any sense of belonging to the place of origin and the decision to move away. Even if most of the young people interviewed have a feeling of territorial belonging to their place of origin, this did not prevent them from leaving it in order to pursue their academic training and to broaden their horizons.

Oddly enough, it would appear that it is the anchorages themselves that allow migration. A number of surveys carried out after young people leave their family homes show the other side of the relationship between children and parents, that of maintaining a certain level of intergenerational proximity. Subsequent to such departures, they continue to see their parents on a very regular basis, often at weekends. For the young people, this coming together is initially seen as a trip back home. The parents’ house is still viewed as their home, a place where the young people hope to find their own space still available, more especially that of the bedroom, and where they show a strong attachment to the furnishings and to the different areas of the parental home. This attachment plays a specific role in the creation of self-empowerment: it is an anchorage point, a benchmark that allows one to define distance (Maunaye, 2001). This proximiry remains, but takes on a modified form according to the rhythm of events: departure, setting in elsewhere, but also the entry into professional life, the beginning of life as a couple, etc. In a recent survey on student housing in France (Maunaye, 2010), young people were found to be individuals anchored in different places. The independent lodging is a “home,” just one of several. It is impossible to level a student home to just one space that is their independent dwelling. But it does certainly have its own characteristics: it is a place for learning, for becoming independent, and it takes on all its meaning via its confrontation with the other meaningful spaces, the first being the family home, seen as the anchorage and
childhood point that one leaves with pleasure, but also with concerns about being able to organize one’s personal life alone. The building up of autonomous spaces and the moving away from spaces to which one belongs does not signify an absence of links.

**Cutting the cord without breaking the ties: maintaining the right distance**

The need of the family tie is dealt with in this number by Fleur Guy. In the specific context of child placement (youngsters taken away from their families pursuant to a court decision and placed in an institution or with a foster family), the author highlights the value of the family tie. In these situations of limited mobility, the familiar family territory becomes a challenge, more especially for the institution dealing with the placement of such adolescents. It is necessary to take these young people away from the territories deemed to be potentially dangerous, while at the same time it is important to set them up in peripheral territories that will nevertheless allow a continuance of family relationships.

Apart from this specific case of child placement, all work on intergenerational relationships between parents and adult children points towards the maintenance of numerous freely agreed-upon contacts: by telephone, via the Internet (social networks, Skype), home visits, etc. In a Quebec-based survey, for example, Patrice LeBlanc (2011: 45) points out that “links are maintained with the home environment following the accomplishment of such migration. Almost a third of young migrants, both rural and metropolitan, quite often, sometimes very often, meet with people from their home environment, and more than 50% of them pay visits between 1 and 24 times per year (i.e. once or twice a month) to friends or family in the home environment.” In France, Catherine Bonvalet has put forward the notion of local family circle (2003: 39):

a reality that does not correspond to an overall trend to domestic return: 30% of those surveyed are part of a local family circle, i.e. they live in the same commune (or a bordering one) as someone referred to as a close family member, being in contact with that person at least once a week, and being part of a mutual help network; 17% belong to dispersed family circles and maintain strong ties with a relative without living in the same or an adjacent commune. In all, almost half of those surveyed function on a family-circle basis.

In the present number, Gil Viry and Éva Nada, basing their article on a quantitative survey carried out in Switzerland, re-explore this theme and invite us to consider the importance of the question of mobility and geographical distance when researching family and intergenerational relationships. They show how the geographical distance between parents and adult children affects intergenerational relationships, and more specifically the preservation-of-trust link. In other words, the authors attempt to discover whether or not children refer less to their parents as their discussion partners when they are physically at a distance. It does seem, on the whole—and this has already been stressed by other European studies—that family contacts remain frequent and lively after the children have moved away. However, distance has different impacts on intergenerational relationships. Even if it has few overall effects on the child-parent link, it can nevertheless contribute to weakening it under certain circumstances. For example, young mothers are less inclined to consider their own mothers as privileged discussion partners when they live far away from them. This is not the case as regards daughters who are living close by, whether they have children or not, nor is it the case with sons.
The importance attached to maintaining family links thus appears to be affected by one's geographic mobility, as discussed in the present number by Sabrina Aouici and Rémi Gallou. The latter are focussed on the development of relationships within families of Sub-Saharan origin now living in France. The way they relate to their countries of origin and to France affect the development of personal identities both on the parental side and on that of their children, each in their own way living out their duality. The attachment to the home country and the anchorage in France can be articulated in many different ways. On the other hand, the intergenerational relationships have an impact on the individual sense of belonging. The choice of where to grow older or even to die are difficult questions for the generation of African parents now immigrants in France. Though the attachment to their country of origin cannot be denied, the maintenance of closeness to their children and grandchildren also plays an important part in their decision to leave or to stay.

It is clear that the development of new means of communication as a whole, and of the Internet in particular, provides a virtual reduction of distances to be covered and helps maintain contacts. Nevertheless, those last articles invite us to consider the importance and the sense of face-to-face meetings when it comes to maintaining the intergenerational family link.

Conclusion

Geographic mobility has become a normal standard and taken on a truly mandatory character. In our multipolar and far-reaching world, moving elsewhere is not only a right, but has become a real obligation that has a weakening effect on the most vulnerable populations or on those who live in remote or landlocked territories.

As concerns young people, mobility is presented as an asset that allows one to open up to the outside world, to enjoy new experiences, to face otherness and, finally, to build up one’s individuality. In practical terms, youth migrations are statistically important and have been growing over the past decades. The process of social and professional integration (training, seeking work, becoming a couple) often creates that need to move.

Within this context, the family is an important player and factor in youth migration because, thanks to the resources it can pass on (economic, material, sentimental), it supports the young in their personal development. The absence of such resources may, in some cases, lead to certain forms of forced immobility. And this is an important factor as well, because juvenile mobility results in the separation of generations, and this really is a standard that needs to be taken into account. It also requires a readjustment of intergenerational relationships and a re-examination by young people of the meaning of the family link and their affiliations. The study of youth migrations thus allows one to understand how the relationships between parents and children may evolve from child dependence to emotional and elective adult-to-adult relationships.
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NOTES

1. We are here using a definition developed by the Groupe de recherche sur les migrations des jeunes (GRMJ), a group set up in the middle of the 1990s and made up of a number of Quebec University research workers.

2. We do not use the term “migration” when the youth is living within the same city area as its parents. As far as the GRMJ is concerned they are simply re-locators.

3. A number of other subjects are taken into consideration: the sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents, the initial migration, return migration, the representations of the original environment, the way in which the residential neighbourhood is perceived along with the potential mobility, and opinions regarding the labour market and employment.


5. Established in 1987, the Erasmus (European Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students) programme is a cooperation and exchange programme between universities within European Union States. It supports student and teacher mobility within the European space. The success of this programme has not lessened over the years. A little over 3000 students were involved in these exchanges at the beginning of the programme and today over 3 million take part.


ABSTRACTS

These days, geographic mobility has become a normal standard and taken on a truly mandatory character. In our multipolar and far-reaching world, moving elsewhere is no longer a right: it has often become a real obligation. Where young people are concerned, mobility is presented as an asset that allows one to open up to the world, to enrich one’s life thanks to new experiences, to face up to and deal with otherness and, finally, to build up one’s own individual characteristics. Effectively, migratory practices amongst young people are statistically significant and have tended to grow over these past decades. In such a context, the family plays an important role and is a major factor as concerns youthful migration. An important role because it is through the resources it may provide (economic, material, emotional) that it supports the young on their pathway. And a major factor too since juvenile mobility leads to the separation of the...
generations. This also requires readjustment of intergenerational relationships and a review, by the young people, of the meaning of their family ties and of their affiliations.

Aujourd'hui, la mobilité géographique est devenue une norme et fonctionne comme une véritable injonction. Dans notre monde multipolaire et étendu, le déplacement n’est plus seulement un droit mais bien souvent une véritable obligation. Pour les jeunes, la mobilité est présentée comme un atout qui permet de s’ouvrir au monde, de s’enrichir de nouvelles expériences, de se confronter à l’altérité et, au final, de construire son individualité. Concrètement, les pratiques de migration chez les jeunes sont statistiquement importantes et ont eu tendance à se développer ces dernières décennies. Dans ce contexte, la famille est un acteur et un enjeu importants de la migration des jeunes. Un acteur car, par les ressources qu’elle peut transmettre (économiques, matérielles, affectives), elle soutient le cheminement des jeunes. Un enjeu aussi car la mobilité juvénile entraîne la séparation des générations. Celle-ci demande aussi un réajustement des relations intergénérationnelles et un réexamen, par les jeunes, du sens de lien familial et de leurs appartenances.

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**Mots-clés**: migration, mobilité géographique, lien familial, relation intergénérationnelle, jeune

**Keywords**: migration, geographic mobility, family ties, intergenerational relationships, youth

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