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“Territorial Identity and Geographical Mobility Projects”

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Abstract: Presently, geographical mobility strongly influences professional insertion. Although, when we ask pupils from rural environments about their future life and work environments, they appear to prefer countryside in their present life region and to be strongly reluctant to live in a big city, and even more in a foreign country. It makes wondering about the possibilities: precocious entry in the local labour market or migration towards more qualified jobs.

Many factors can affect these future choices: what is the part of the origin family socio-professional environment, the personal history of these young people who are or not from the region where they presently live, the regular or occasional frequency of their family travels, the representations they have of anchorage and territorial identity.

The follow-up, from the so-called “CM2”(which corresponds to 5th grade) to the so-called “Seconde” (which corresponds to the second year at the Senior school) of a cohort of more than 2000 pupils who belong to various types of rural environments and who are interrogated five times, allows giving some answers to the question of territorial identity and geographical mobility projects among the pupils from rural environments.

Keywords: école rurale, identité territoriale, mobilité géographique.

The geographical mobility of people presently broadly conditions their professional inclusion. Furthermore, the recent mutations of the French rural spaces show deep changes in the employments offer that is available in these territories. Thus, the geographical mobility will impose itself to some active people native to the rural world, who are nevertheless very attached to their original territory.

However, at which moment people plan this possible geographical mobility? If their mobility project is inscribed in an actual looking for a job, does it necessarily mean that they contemplated this mobility during their childhood or during their adolescence?

This article concerns their knowledge of the factors that are likely to influence the determination of the children's and adolescents' future mobility choices. It allows understanding the impact of the family environment and of the living place, in this case the rural territory, on the mobility planned desire.

The research action that is presented here comes from a work that has been led since 1999 in six French rural departments with pupils and their family who have been regularly surveyed since this date. This work is made by researchers of the Observatory of Rural School who work in various disciplines (sociology, education sciences, geography), with the help of many local partnerships that are indispensable to gather and key-in data.

Figure 1: The study area: Ain, Ardèche, Alpes de Haute-Provence, Drôme, Haute-Loire, Haute-Saône.



Surveys are made in an iterative way with a two thousand three hundred ninety-four pupils cohort; they are native to the rural territories that were chosen for this study. The surveys include some questions that are asked both to the pupils and to their parents, it was made several times all the observation period long. The questions concern various fields that are for example linked to the perception of school and of its environment, to the desired and lived school trajectories, to the self esteem, to their territory representations...

The questionnaire addressed to their pupils and to their family is one of the main chosen survey techniques; nevertheless, interviews with the surveyed people were made so as to detail the gathered information and to open the field of the started study.

Thus, we examined the results of the 1999 survey, when the pupils were in the so-called CM2 (10-11 years), of the 2001 survey, when they were in the so-called "Cinquième de collège" (12-13 years), of the 2003 one, when they were in the so-called "Troisième de collège" (14-15 years), and we closed this diachronic study with the analyse of the surveys that were made in 2004. We took into account the pupils who had a normal itinerary (college then high school without lateness) and those who had a different curriculum, either because of a repeating either because of a reorientation (family rural houses, apprenticeship...)

The parallel analysis of the surveys directed to the parents allowed us completing our study.

Among the numerous fields that were studied in the survey, we selected several parameters that are likely to give information in our survey field, according to the hypotheses we made. Thus, we paid interest to the socio-professional origin of the pupils' parents, to the pupils' birth place to know their parents' mobility, to the regular or episodic practice of family travels because it could provoke a "elsewhere desire", and lastly to the representations of anchorage and national identity in the determination of their future life choices. From the statistic treatment of the data coming from the questionnaires, we could extract some information linked to the observation of factors that are likely to influence the pupils' choice as regards their possible mobility project; they allowed us measuring the evolution of their project in long duration.

In this article, we will try to firstly understand the nature of the geographic mobilities of the rural pupils' parents, we will observe the vision the pupils have of their life environment and we will measure if it evolves when the children grow up. We will wonder about the nature of the mobility projects that are evoked through the expression of the wished life places. Lastly, we will identify the family factors that are likely to influence the determination of the mobility project.

1. THE WEAK GEOGRAPHIC MOBILITY OF THE RURAL PUPILS' PARENTS

The students and their family constitute a population that is relatively geographically stable, as the recent movements had a low amplitude (83, 4% of the pupils were born in the department or in the Region where they presently go to school). There are some newcomers among the families; they are from other French regions, and rarely from the so-

called “DOM” (Ultramarine departments) and “TOM” (Ultramarine territories). Only, 2% of the children were born abroad.

These figures that show a good geographical stability of the rural populations hide many disparities.

1.1. The territorial disparities

The repartition study of the pupils who were born somewhere else than in the schooling department or Region show that it mostly takes places in an isolated rural environment.

As a consequence, we can notice the pupils’ birth place has an impact on the place of residence. The newcomers can be distinguished into two categories. Some graduate families that belong to a high socio-professional category and that wilfully decide to settle in the countryside. Here, we can find the attraction of some geographic areas of Mid-range Mountain. Some families that have more or less important difficulties may expatriate to the countryside where the housing costs are cheaper, for financial reasons. This phenomenon which is amplifying modifies the life within the village: mentalities and cultures mixing, new requirements of the new rural inhabitants who want to find in the countryside the service they had at their disposal in the town, stimulation of the associative networks that are linked to school, it is sometimes accompanied by a genuine unbalance of the local social life that questions the traditional municipal majorities...

Figure 2: The weak geographical mobility of parents living in rural areas.



1.2. Strong family disparities

The study of the fathers’ socio-professional categories allows detailing the social characters of the new populations. Indeed, the pupils that were born somewhere else than in the schooling department are part of families which father belongs to a higher socio-professional category than the pupils born in the department’s ones. The mothers’ diploma degree notably follows these variations.

These figures illustrate the re-urbanisation phenomenon we already evoked, where we notice the families with a high socio-professional level are usually those that move to rural

environments.

It is possible to distinguish attractive departments for executive people (Alpes de Haute-Provence, Drôme) and department that are rather attractive for families that have a low diploma and qualification level (Ain, Haute-Saône, Haute-Loire).

These differences can be explained by the inter-departmental contrasts of the economic structure that are confirmed by the gaps between the other families' socio-professional categories. Thus, the rural sectors of Ain, Haute-Saône, Haute-Loire appear to be territories where the industries, especially the small-businesses/small-industries give more importance to the workmen employments with a low qualification level. On the other hand, the rural areas of Alpes de Haute-Provence and Drôme offer higher qualification level employments, which are often linked to the service sector and also both to the rural local structures of the economic base and to the daily migrations towards the urban intra-department or extra-department poles.

2. THE PUPILS' DEEP ATTACHMENT TO THE ORIGINAL RURAL TERRITORY

During the surveys, the pupils were asked about the contemplated living place to practise their professional activity. They had to estimate the attractivity or push-up of some given places.

The diachronic observation of the surveys results show wills of places of occupational practise at the time similar and contrasted, according to the surveyed departments.

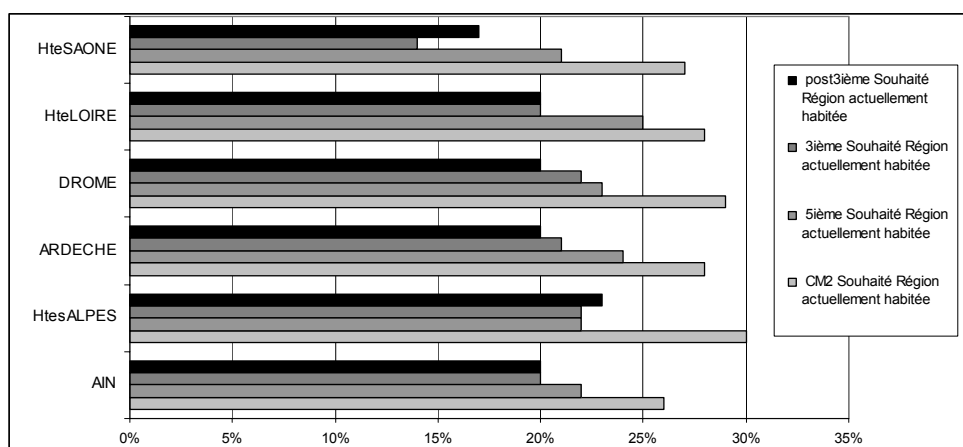
The recurring trends mainly concern an attachment to the life territory that decreases as the pupils grow up and an increasing interest in the foreign countries.

2.1. A perennial will to stay and live in the same environment that decreases whilst growing-up

During the so-called CM2 (10-11 year), the surveyed pupils want more to stay and live in the region where they presently live, and it is true whatever the origin department is (and even in an almost equivalent way, with only 4% gaps). The countryside is their second priority living place consequently a space that is closed to their present housing territory.

Between the end of primary school (11 years) and the end of the college (15 years), the interest in the region where the pupils live decreases, whatever the analysed department is. It is in Haute-Saône where the pupils of the so-called "Troisième de college" (14-15 years) less positively consider staying and working in their department and in a more sharp way (14% against 27% during the so-called "CM2" (10-11 years), whereas the pupils who are from Drôme or Hautes-Alpes express more interest in this territory (22% during the "Troisième"). Nevertheless, when they were surveyed after the college, the young people from Haute-Saône and Hautes-Alpes quoted more their region as a wished place to practise their occupation than they did in "Troisième", whilst the interest diminution was confirmed for all the other pupils.

Figure 3: A deep feeling for the native rural territory, decreasing while the pupil is growing up.



The answers of the Haute-Saône pupils to the latest two surveys make us wonder about the reasons of these life wills. Which representations do they have of their department as a potential employment territory? Do they have representations that are linked to unemployment? The observation of the unemployment figures show a rate that is lower than in Drôme and Ardèche and that is always inferior to the national average. These figures express an economic reality and the perceptions the pupils can have about the employment world and its social environment could be extremely different.

Besides, can not they imagine a few diversified employments offer on this territory and think that somewhere else they will find a more exhaustive one? The most numerous students who want to locate in another region or another country are the Haute-Saône ones (“Troisième” and “post-Troisième” surveys). At the same time, the urban environment attracts them, and they prefer the small and middle-size towns.

The push-up of the region when they live increase with time, in particular between the “CM2” (10-11 years) and the “Troisième” (14-15 years) and it continues beyond the college only for the Ardèche pupils. The year of “Troisième” seems to constitute for many pupils a will to break with their living place, whatever their original department is. The orientation choices they contemplate surely participate to the elaboration of their representations on their future professional life places.

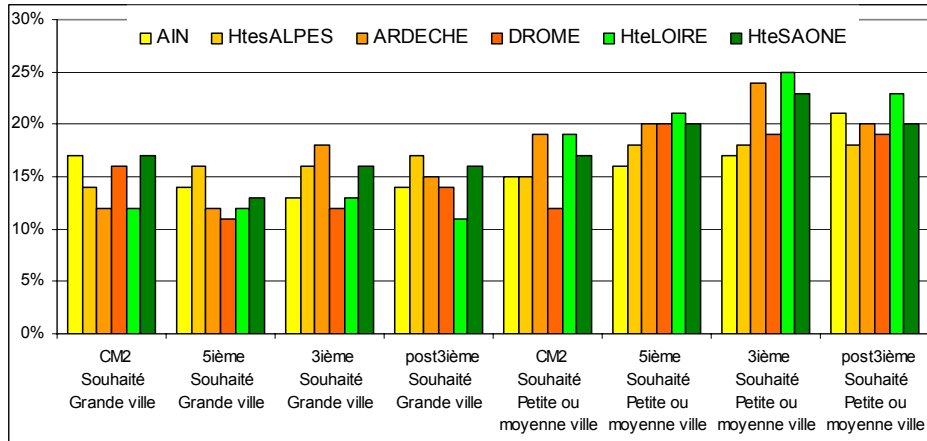
The attachment to the countryside is obvious at the end of the primary school (11 years) but it tends to decrease when the surveyed pupils grow up. At the end of the college (15 years), the disinterest for the rural environment clearly initiates.

2.2. A permanent push-up towards the large towns

In “CM2” (10-11 years), the differentiation between the surveyed departments depends on the towns attractiveness, whatever their size is. Indeed; between the Haute-Loire and Ardèche pupils who are little eager to live in an urban environment (12%) and the Ain and Haute-Saône pupils (17%) who are more eager to live in this kind of environment, the gap

is quite important. Nevertheless, the small and average town seems more and more welcoming for all the pupils in the course of years. The pupils express a more important interest in the towns when they enter the college (11 years). The discovery and the appropriation of a new territory, in some cases more urbanised than the one where they live, can modify their initial representation when they enter the secondary school (15 years).

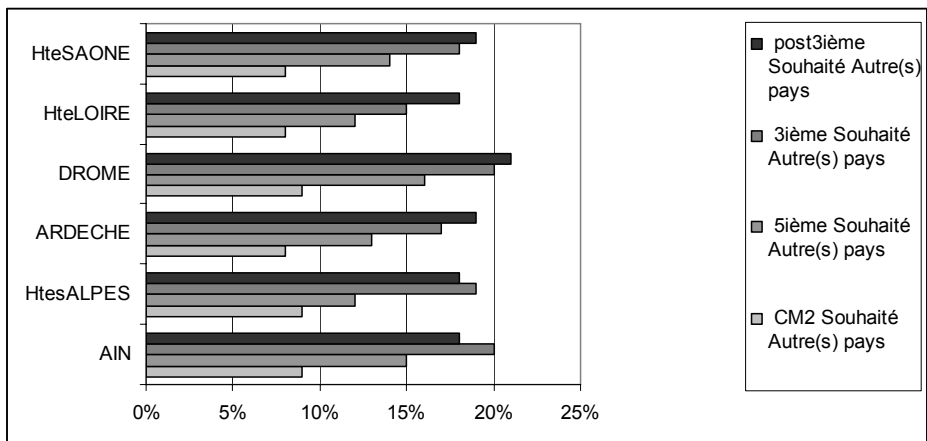
Figure 4: A moderate attraction for urban life.



2.3. A desire to discover the other countries whilst growing-up

The surveys diachronic analysis makes observe an evolution of some pupils' representations about the interest in the foreign countries that could potentially receive them to work there. In "CM2" (10-12 years), settling in another country that theirs does not seem possible to the pupils, particularly to those from Hautes-Alpes and Drôme. Nevertheless, the pupils' opinion changes at the end of the college (11 years). However, among them, an average between 8% and 9% contemplated this possibility at the end of primary school (11 years) when the question about their wished living place was asked. They will be between 15% and 20% to think about this option in "Troisième" (15 years).

Figure 5: A desire to discover other countries which increases while growing.



Percentage of pupils who declare they want to dwell in a foreign country.

The pupils have a benevolent look on their own living environment, within which they want to practise their professional activity. Their representations testify a feeling of belonging to a lived territory and consequently underline the identity character to which they refer to contemplate a project of professional and geographic mobility.

Which implicit or explicit role the family can play in their child's project?

3. THE FAMILY IMPACT IN THE DETERMINATION OF THE MOBILITY PROJECT

3.1. The birth place influences the project of professional life

The pupils' birth place, geographic origin has an indisputable influence on their life projects. Among the pupils, the ones who were not born in the department and the region feel less attachment to their region of present residence than the others and they more easily contemplate to go to live and work somewhere else in France. In the same way, they feel fewer push-ups to live in a large town, like Paris, Lyon or Marseille...

On the other hand, all of them prefer the life in the countryside rather than in a town, whatever the size of the latter is.

3.2. The territorial factors seem to be discriminatory in a variable way

The crossing of the future places of professional life that are wished and not wished by the surveyed pupils four year after the "CM2" allows noticing that:

- the wills of pupils from an isolated rural environment and under a low urban influence are closed, they are more attached to the countryside and to their region than the other pupils.
- the pupils who go to school in a rural pole are less reluctant to the idea to live in a large town or to go abroad.

3.3. The influence of the belonging social-professional environment

The father' social-professional category and the mother's diploma distinguish neither the relish for countryside nor for town (that can be large, middle-size or small). On the other hand, the gaps are more important as regards the idea of mobility in another French region and above all abroad: the children of the upper social-professional categories are more open to the mobility idea, even of international mobility, as regards the future professional entry.

CONCLUSION

The main results of this study were expected but we could verify and establish them through a quantitative approach as it was done here.

The role of the social context is confirmed showing different attitudes towards mobility.

For the future, complementary investigations would need to take into account the representation features related to mobility in the mind of pupils.

For instance:

- How they can define the characteristics of their future environment if they have to move there?
- What they like or worry about in a big city, in a given foreign country etc...?
- In that way, it would be possible to see not only if they would accept to move or not for finding jobs but also why.

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