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Between Macro and Micro: Theorizing Agency in Nineteenth-Century French Migrations

Paul-André Rosental

The explosive increase in migration that uprooted the peasantry from the countryside is traditionally considered one of the great historical "ruptures" of the nineteenth century. According to this view, rapid economic and technological transformations pressured traditionally sedentary rural inhabitants to move to urban areas. For several decades, scholars have challenged this pattern of rural exodus, and yet it still prevails in the collective imagination. The malleability of the model has contributed to its resilience. The model of a rural exodus fits well with the moralizing tale of the corrupted peasant (the "paysan perverti")—a character well-known to readers of Rétif de La Bretonne—who once freed from the constraints of the rural environment was willing to do anything to achieve his or her social ascent. A more "radical" scenario posits that the advent of capitalism destabilized the countryside, its culture, and even (from a more reactionary vantage point) its folklore. Although this idea stems from the nineteenth century, critics of globalization have recently revived it.[1] Even more than foreign immigration, rural exodus in nineteenth-century France has been connected to the idea of both the emergence of a national culture (e.g., by Eugen Weber) and its decline—the countryside as a reservoir of identity emptied of

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1 Pierre Bourdieu analyzes the idea of region as a reaction to a loss of control linked to the internationalization of economic and political processes in "L'identité et la représentation: Eléments pour une réflexion critique sur l'idée de région," *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 35 (1980): 64–72; for an Anglophone synthesis of nineteenth-century representations, see Raymond A. Jonas, "Peasants, Population, and Industry in France," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 22 (1991): 177–200.

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its substance.[2] Even the "biologist" and "ethnicist" schools of historical interpretation that emerged in the second third of the twentieth century incorporated this scenario into the most sophisticated analyses of the nineteenth-century population. In his classic works *La formation de la population parisienne au XIXe siècle* (1950) and *Classes laborieuses et classes dangereuses* (1958), Louis Chevalier claimed that nineteenth-century Parisian immigration put an end to a millennial history in a French countryside composed, he suggested, of microregions whose populations had never intermingled. The stability of the rural exodus model has also been increased by administrative statistics that draw attention to the rising number of provincials who reached the capital, thereby reinforcing the belief that rural inhabitants streamed into the cities.

Partial confirmations of each of these ideal-type scenarios can, of course, be found in a specific context, but none of them encompass the complexity of the migratory system in nineteenth-century France. The task of historians today is to test, refine, and coordinate these scenarios in order to derive a new model, one that can clear the path of received ideas, influenced by outdated political and ideological agendas, and that can explain the phenomena comprehensively. Thus migration must be studied as an object of historical inquiry requiring the tools and methods of the social sciences. Migration as a historical phenomenon is exceptional in that it follows regular patterns even if these are not universal. In 1885 the German-British geographer Ernst Georg Ravenstein identified a dozen of these repetitive patterns. The most important can be synthesized as follows. First, most population movement occurs over a short distance. Second, like a chain reaction, emigration is a process that enables migration from more remote or poorer regions by "making room"—creating an availability of housing or work—in the region of departure. Third, women migrate more often than, but not as far as, men. Fourth, migratory flows leave migrants in their wake who settle along the way. Later, in the 1920s, the American economist and statistician Harry Jerome provided the foundations of a "push and pull" economic model, based on the distinction between repellant forces at the place of departure and attractive forces at the place of arrival. In the 1950s the Swedish geographer Torsten Häger-

2 Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870–1914* (Stanford, CA, 1976). Foreign immigration, relatively secondary in terms of volume and especially political importance at the time, is treated here in the context of a general construction of our model, which does not mean that such migrations do not contain specificities, notably in how they are framed juridically and may create local political turmoil. Cf. Gérard Noiriel, *Le creuset français: Histoire de l'immigration, XIXe–XXe siècle* (Paris, 1988).

strand showed that pioneering migrants remained in contact with relatives who had stayed behind, which led to increases in the migratory flow by creating new privileged areas where information, men, and goods could circulate. Consequently, these new "migratory areas" channeled population exchanges at both short and long distances, in a way that was not always directly measurable through statistical studies.[3]

To historicize migration requires conceptualizing migrants as active but constrained agents embedded in larger networks and institutions, not as passive masses reacting simply to macroeconomic stimuli. Migration is structured by actual currents that push members of certain groups to seek solutions to life's difficulties by moving to one area rather than another. The causes and forms of these movements, as well as the nature of the geographic configurations that guide them, change over time. Focusing on intermediary structures is a good research strategy to make them apparent. Whether formal institutions such as a kinship, village, or professional group, or informal relationships such as interpersonal networks, these intermediary structures mediate and connect the micro- and macroscopic determinants of migratory patterns.[4] Economic causes, though important, cannot simply be applied mechanically because they are mediated by these intermediary, mesoscopic structures, which are located between the microscopic level (individuals) and the macroscopic level (global environment). These mesoscopic structures determine the way individuals understand and face the constraints of their environment. By treating nineteenth-century France as an experimental case, both socially and historically, this article examines how the different determinants of migratory behavior, operating at various levels, can be enumerated and explained.

Rural Exodus: The Persistence of a Refuted Model

Given the progressive shift of the majority of France's population from the countryside to the city, what could be more indisputable than the scenario of rural exodus? But although it was long uncontested, the model's conventional explanations are highly unsatisfying. The very gradual nature of the process, compared to those that unfolded in other

3 For these references, see Ernst Georg Ravenstein, "The Laws of Migration," *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* 48 (1885): 167–227; 52 (1889): 241–301; Harry Jerome, *Migration and Business Cycles* (New York, 1926); Torsten Hägerstrand, "Migration and Area: Survey of a Sample of Swedish Migration Fields and Hypothetical Considerations on Their Genesis," in *Migration in Sweden: A Symposium*, ed. David Hannerberg, Torsten Hägerstrand, and B. Odeving (Lund, 1957), 27–158.

4 See Paul-André Rosental, "Pour une analyse mésoscopique des migrations," *Annales de démographie historique* (2002): 145–60.

large European states, suggests that its development needs to be reexamined. In France, rural migration to urban areas hardly disrupted the traditional hierarchy of the cities, and it is only at the end of the 1920s that the urban population exceeded the rural.[5] Three decades ago Jean Pitié overturned yet another assumption of the rural exodus model: that cities irresistibly attracted villagers.[6] In his work on the Poitou region, he revealed that studies showing the large presence of rural masses in the migration flow to cities masked a structural effect—their overwhelming majority in the entire population. By controlling for this "mass effect," he showed that migrants born in cities were more likely to be attracted to Paris than those born in villages. In my study of migration to the Ile-de-France (Paris and its two adjacent departments at the time, Seine-et-Oise and Seine-et-Marne) from 1803 to 1902, I demonstrated how this trend affected all of France (it also holds true for other countries). I found that only 3.2 percent of men born in villages moved to Ile-de-France, whereas 4.1 percent of men born in small cities did so, 6.8 percent of men born in medium-size cities, and 7.1 percent of men born in large cities.[7]

The model of rural exodus, then, has been reevaluated in current historiography but still remains an "obvious fact" in common knowledge. Macroscopic quantitative data, particularly at the departmental level, extracted from the censuses, which have been used since the second half of the nineteenth century, leave much room for interpretation. Departments can be characterized as "rural" or "urban," but to infer from this that they necessarily produce "rural" or "urban" migrants is fallacious. Generally speaking, these works reveal the difficulties of using macroscopic statistical data to shift from studies of migration to studies of migrants.[8]

In this regard, a decisive moment in the historiography of French interior migrations was the elaboration of the "historical demography" model by Louis Henry in the 1950s. His "seminominative" method drew on individual data from parish registers—baptisms, weddings, buri-

5 In 1806, 83% of the total population was rural; in 1851, 75%; and in 1901, 59%. Maurice Garden, "Le bilan global," in *Histoire de la population française*, ed. Jacques Dupâquier et al. (Paris, 1988), 3:130–32. See also Bernard Lepetit and Jean-Pierre Poussou, "L'urbanisation de la France," in Dupâquier et al., *Histoire de la population française*, 3:198–213.

6 Jean Pitié, *Exode rural et migrations intérieures en France: L'exemple de la Vienne et du Poitou-Charentes* (Poitiers, 1971).

7 Paul-André Rosental, *Les sentiers invisibles: Espace, familles et migrations dans la France du XIXe siècle* (Paris, 1999), 42. For comparative examples, see Jane Moore, *Cityward Migration: Swedish Data* (Chicago, 1938); W. F. Ogburn, "Size of Community as a Factor in Migration," *Sociology and Social Research* 28, no. 4 (1944): 255–61; and Samuel A. Stouffer, "Intervening Opportunities and Competing Migrants," *Journal of Regional Science* 2 (1960): 1–26.

8 G. A. Marker, *Internal Migration and Economic Opportunity, France, 1872–1911* (New York, 1981).

als—and aggregated them quantitatively. The massive amount of data compiled reduced the analytic scale to the parish and raised the problem of geographic mobility: every married couple who left their residence moved out of the sphere of observation. In *La population de Crulai, paroisse normande* (1958), the work that he authored with Etienne Gautier and that served as both an illustration of his method and a model for hundreds of subsequent monographs, Henry did not deny the existence of rural mobility but conceived of this mobility as "demographically neutral." Whenever necessary, he hypothesized that population exchanges between villages were statistically insignificant for general demographic patterns.[9]

Ironically, the first applications of the "Henry method," in the 1950s, challenged this assumption. These studies found that in many rural parishes it was impossible to complete a considerable number of the records of family histories because of the mobility of couples. British historical demographers who transposed the Henry method to their own population registers discovered a similar phenomenon, but they saw the significance of this fact and concluded that mobility between villages became an important demographic phenomenon as early as the sixteenth century. French historical demographers, on the other hand, were more timorous in their conclusions, and many still clung "to the stereotype of a sedentary preindustrial rural population."[10]

How can the quantitative observation of massive population exchanges between villages be acknowledged while its historical importance is denied? As often happens in historical research, evidence that resists interpretation has led to the creation of ad hoc concepts. In this case, the concept of "micromobility" was employed to characterize villagers who moved without affecting larger migratory trends because they did not move very far and essentially stayed in the rural world.[11] This form of argumentation repudiated quantitative observation by

9 Etienne Gautier and Louis Henry, *La population de Crulai, paroisse normande: Etude historique* (Paris, 1958). For all of these points, see Rosental, *Sentiers invisibles,* as well as Alain Croix, "L'ouverture des villages sur l'extérieur fut un fait éclatant dans l'ancienne France," *Histoire et sociétés rurales* 11, no. 1 (1999): 109–46.

10 David E. Vassberg, *The Village and the Outside World in Golden Age Castile: Mobility and Migration in Everyday Rural Life* (Cambridge, 1996), 176n4. Croix shows the limits of this vision for the early modern era in "Ouverture des villages." See also the larger perspective offered by Daniel Roche, *Humeurs vagabondes: De la circulation des hommes et de l'utilité des voyages* (Paris, 2003).

11 Jean-Pierre Poussou, "Mobilité et migrations," in Dupâquier et al., *Histoire de la population française,* 2:99–143. The author tries to respond to the reevaluations of the importance of rural mobility in "L'enracinement est le caractère dominant de la société rurale française d'autrefois," *Histoire, économie et société* 21 (2002): 97–108. See also Jacques Dupâquier's response to Alain Croix, "Sédentarité et mobilité dans l'ancienne société rurale," *Histoire et sociétés rurales* 18, no. 2 (2002): 121–35.

offering qualitative explanations: namely, that short-distance mobility did not transform the individual's environment because it proceeded from "secondary," intimate causes, such as the desire to find a partner.

Unfortunately, these hypotheses have not yet been tested by rigorous research. What does it mean, in traditional rural society, to change villages, in terms of interpersonal ties, family dynamics, or even local citizenship (access to communal goods, for instance)?[12] What are the aggregate consequences of this movement for the functioning of land markets or local political dynamics? The micromobility model has discouraged the investigation of these questions by implicitly perpetuating the old rural exodus model—only long-distance migration toward cities mattered and everything else was both secondary and compatible with the dominant model of a sedentary rural population.

The Emergence of a New Analytic Framework

In the past two decades—late compared to the rest of Europe[13]—French historians have begun to study the causes, process, and effects of internal rural mobility and have recognized its importance both quantitatively and at an analytic level. This development is particularly important for the nineteenth century because, even when concentrating on a purportedly stable section of the village population, such as men who married, we discover that mobility between villages prevailed over sedentarization. Half of newlyweds left the commune in which they were born at the time of their marriage. Mobility continued after marriage: even when we exclude migration in old age,[14] about a third of married couples subsequently moved to another commune. Mobility also affected households with children, a population with a priori greater residential stability. Contrary to the old myth, mobility of urban inhabitants from one commune to another was less frequent than that of rural inhabitants: about 60 percent of them remained in the same place from birth to marriage, 10 percent more than people from the villages.[15] If people living in cities of all sizes moved frequently, they did so first and foremost *intra muros*.[16]

12 Nadine Vivier emphasizes the importance of this in "Les biens communaux en France au XIXe siècle: Perspectives de recherches," *Histoire et sociétés rurales* 1, no. 1 (1994): 119–40.

13 See the synthesis by Leslie Page Moch, *Moving Europeans: Migration in Western Europe since 1650* (Bloomington, IN, 1992).

14 Vincent Gourdon and Marion Trévisi, "Age et migrations dans la France rurale traditionnelle: Une étude à partir du recensement de l'an VII à La Roche-Guyon," *Histoire, économie et société* 19 (2000): 307–30.

15 Rosental, *Sentiers invisibles*, 42.

16 In Paris, for example, the majority of conscripts from the class of 1880 who had been born in the capital moved four to six times during the last two decades of the century, most of

The "qualitative" arguments suggested by the micromobility concept can now be tested. One generation after Henry, Italian microhistory has encouraged historians to consider seriously individual information contained in parish registers rather than to see the data only as raw material for aggregated statistical studies.[17] If the wholesale importation of microhistory to France was impossible because of a lack of equally dense and well-organized nominative sources,[18] the use of its methods and conclusions enabled French historians to grasp the effects of individual and family migratory trajectories on the individuals themselves. These newer approaches showed that the personal environment of the rural inhabitant in the nineteenth century was likely to be affected by movements that had previously been considered insignificant. Depending on local family histories and the economic situation of a particular village, moving just a few kilometers could mean breaking away from a hostile kinship group (particularly after the remarriage of the father); constructing one's own life trajectory (this includes women relying on aunts, older sisters, or cousins to help them find new opportunities); gaining access to new professions to counteract downward social mobility; tapping into long-distance migratory networks; or even escaping confrontation with a brother or sister who had achieved an intolerably higher level of social success.

Beyond the lives of individuals, these movements affected family dynamics as well. Men who migrated sometimes became dependent, after marriage, on their wives' kinship groups. Short-distance migrations brought about shifts of the center of gravity in family lineages from one commune to another, because pioneer migrants had already established attractive family colonies. In these cases and others

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them without leaving the city. See Jean-Claude Farcy and Alain Faure, *La mobilité d'une génération de Français: Recherche sur les migrations et les déménagements vers et dans Paris à la fin du XIXe siècle* (Paris, 2003), 402. At the same time, almost 40% of the residents living on the Rue Wacquez-Lalo in Loos, a suburb of Lille, left between the two censuses—a period of less than five years. Only 20% stayed twenty years or more. See J. Hontebeyrie and Paul-André Rosental, *Les lieux et les liens: Parenté, transmissions et territoires dans un faubourg lillois (Loos-lès-Lille, 1840–1960)* (Paris, 1999). Whether based on studies of intercensus turnover or individual trajectories or focused on large cities or small towns, several other monographs have shown the frequency of residential moves within the city. See Jean-Luc Pinol, *Les mobilités de la grande ville, Lyon fin XIXe–début XXe siècle* (Paris, 1991); Claire Lévy-Vroelant, "Séjourner ou demeurer à Versailles au XIXe siècle," *Annales de la recherche urbaine* 41, no. 2 (1989): 27–33; and Jean-Louis Lenhof, "Mouvements de population, courants migratoires et transition industrielle avortée: Le cas d'Alençon (Orne), ville moyenne de l'Ouest français au XIXe siècle," in *Migrations, cycle de vie familial et marché du travail*, ed. Dominique Barjot and Olivier Faron (Paris, 2002), 175–205.

17 Henry should not be reproached for ignoring the rich potential of these data. In *La population de Crulai* he rejects the possibility of using this information for an analysis of trajectories only for a technical reason, namely, the lack of appropriate statistical tools at the time. The later development of a panoply of longitudinal analytic techniques would confirm Henry's conclusions.

18 Paul-André Rosental, "La rue mode d'emploi: Les univers sociaux d'une rue industrielle," *Enquête* 4 (1997): 113–33.

short-distance migration enabled migrants to rebuild their lives without breaking the bond with their family network.

A microscopic approach makes it possible to demonstrate in detail the importance of personal motivations in short-distance migration. As long as the historian adheres to the methodological control of a systematic and detailed comparison of individual trajectories and simultaneously refuses to succumb to the "biographical illusion," serious consideration of the nominative data contained in parish registers leads to two insights. First, the reference group within which each individual evolved and formed his or her horizon of opportunity can be re-created. Second, one can analyze, in a detailed chronology, the little successive stages that comprise the history of individuals and families, through which they created, without always being conscious of it, irreversible situations. If this conjunction between a diachronic axis—the trajectories—and a synchronic axis—the referential networks and groups—is treated comparatively, linking together each family trajectory to overcome individual idiosyncrasies, it becomes possible to account for motives for migration that individuals were blind to, or that they refused to reveal to other people because they were too private, sensitive, or painful. In this way migration studies can free themselves from the vicious circle—the assumption of the primacy of economic causes—in which they find themselves trapped. This assumption leads to the collection of testimony from migrants providing economic explanations, because these kinds of explanations both are socially legitimate and preserve discretion. It is much easier to claim that one has moved to look for a job or to escape poverty than to admit that one has fled a confrontation with a reference group, for example, that has prospered too much.

The Spatial Inscription of Economic Variables

When we reevaluate the exclusive place given to economic variables, we do not deny their importance. Rather, we simply suggest that these variables should be inserted into a more general explanatory framework, as sociologists have done for years. In 1940 Samuel A. Stouffer, dissatisfied with models that relied solely on demographic and economic differentials to explain mobility flows between two points in space, tried to think more generally about the problem in terms of opportunities.[19] Stouffer proposed shifting the analysis of migrations to the study of migrants themselves. He argued that different kinds of

19 Samuel A. Stouffer, "Intervening Opportunities: A Theory Relating Mobility and Distance," *American Sociological Review* 5 (1940): 845–67.

"opportunities" would encourage migration at the point of departure depending on the category of migrant under consideration.[20] Moreover, analysis of the distribution of these opportunities in geographic space revealed that migrants privileged "intervening" opportunities closer to the point of departure. In 1957 the Swedish geographer Torsten Hägerstrand turned this idea on its head by arguing that preestablished spatial links structured the possible influx of migrations, not because of the greater objective attraction presented by a given opportunity but because greater information circulated between these departure and arrival points. Opportunities—like a factory opening, for instance—exert an effect only by making activation of preexisting channels necessary and desirable. This model, which incorporated the social use of space, interpersonal networks, and geographic allocation of resources, clarified the importance of economic factors. They orient the migratory influx toward one destination rather than another, once the conditions allowing for the possible circulation of information (personal or community networks) have been created. However, in Hägerstrand's analysis, the release mechanisms—what it was that allowed migrants to leave in the first place—remained obscure. Answering this question requires studying migrants from a microscopic point of view.

Several aspects of these microscopic models are relevant to nineteenth-century France, beyond the obvious role of economic differentials (between point of origin and point of arrival). At the national level, of course, economic motivations attracted migrants toward major cities and the great industrial regions such as the Nord or Creusot. More important, the volume of migration toward Paris increased during the century. The capital became the magnet for migratory influx from all over the country; only in the South did migration at the regional level remain of greater significance. It is likely, however, that this phenomenon was motivated by political as well as economic factors. Certainly, the long-distance migrant wanted to go to Paris for material reasons—bigger transportation facilities over the century, a wide range of occupational opportunities—but also, no doubt, the migrant was attracted by the capital's increasing political magnetism. But if the ever greater

20 The analysis applies directly to the mobility of skilled workers. The spatial distribution of their "opportunities" was geographically discontinuous and thus pushed them toward long-distance migrations. Among numerous examples of this phenomenon, see Joan Wallach Scott, *The Glassworkers of Carmaux: French Craftsmen and Political Action in a Nineteenth-Century City* (Cambridge, 1974); and Philip E. Ogden, "Industry, Mobility, and the Evolution of Rural Society in the Ardèche in the Later Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries," in *Migrants in Modern France: Population Mobility in the Later Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, ed. Philip E. Ogden and Paul E. White (London, 1989), 118–41.

hold that Paris exercised over the country in the nineteenth century has been established, it is still difficult to fully detail its effects on migration.[21] By contrast, it has been demonstrated that salary differentials are a statistically significant variable for the direction of migratory influx, not only to large cities, but also within the countryside, not only at the departmental but also at the communal level.[22] This discovery further reveals the limits of the concept of micromobility, which ignores economic hierarchies within the rural world.

Adding a spatial dimension to this purely economic analysis makes it possible to understand how these different levels of incentive relate to one another.[23] Interdepartmental movements, which were largely directed toward the neighboring department, seemed to be oriented geographically in the direction of the very large cities, and especially Paris. Like magnets, these cities seemed to turn migrants in their direction.[24] It would be deceptive, however, to interpret this effect at the microscopic level as proof that provincials migrated toward Paris in a "stepwise" fashion. The recent work by Jean-Claude Farcy and Alain Faure has invalidated this deeply rooted myth of progressive migration.[25] Farcy and Faure argue that across generations, migrants who completed the same long-distance migration did so more often in one journey than in successive stages.

In fact, migration in nineteenth-century France should be understood as a combination of three spatial mechanisms. First, people migrated directly to Paris or to large cities, especially those living in towns. Second, migrations occurred along a hierarchical system of "vacancy networks": migrants living close to large cities would move

21 Leslie Page Moch, "Migration and the Nation: The View from Paris," *Social Science History* 28 (2004): 1–18. In a related field (the study of French birthrates in the nineteenth century), Noël Bonneuil, in *Transformation of the French Demographic Landscape, 1806–1906* (Oxford, 1997), has constructed a regional representation of central state control in matters related to the civil state.

22 Louis M. Goreux, "Les migrations agricoles en France," *Etudes et conjoncture* 10 (1956): 327–76; Pierre Sicsic, "Labor Markets and Establishment Size in Nineteenth-Century France" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1991); Jérôme Bourdieu, Gilles Postel-Vinay, Paul-André Rosental, and Akiko Suwa-Eisenmann, "Migrations et transmissions inter-générationnelles dans la France du XIXe et du début du XXe siècle," *Annales: Histoire, sciences sociales* 55 (2000): 749–90.

23 This mechanism applies to foreign immigration within the limits emphasized by Gérard Noiriel, "Les espaces de l'immigration ouvrière, 1880–1930," in *Villes ouvrières, 1900–1950*, ed. Susanna Magri and Christian Topalov (Paris, 1989), 171–86. On the change of Flemish Belgian immigration from a logic of proximity to one of industrial influxes, see Paul-André Rosental, "Scomposizione spaziale di una migrazione internazionale: L'integrazione dei belgi nel nord della Francia nel XIX secolo," *Memoria e ricerca* 8 (1996): 33–56.

24 Maurice Garden and Hervé Le Bras, "La dynamique régionale," in Dupâquier et al., *Histoire de la population française*, 3:145–62. Farcy and Faure confirm this mechanism in *Mobilité d'une génération de Français*, 318n40.

25 Farcy and Faure, *Mobilité d'une génération de Français*, 320–21. This is despite numerous refutations since the publication of Dorothy Swaine Thomas, ed., *Research Memorandum on Migration Differentials* (New York, 1938).

to them, thus temporarily "making room" for migrants coming from neighboring regions. These migrants, in turn, allowed migrants from more remote regions to take their place, and so forth. Little by little, every migration toward a metropolis indirectly led to an influx that had a domino effect on the entire territory.[26] These movements were made toward "central" places—Paris at the national level, but also regional capitals, or even particularly attractive local areas—and followed economic differentials whose steepness was determined by the salary differential.[27]

This model—first recognized by the geographer Ravenstein—can be applied at the national level.[28] The process was so influential that, decades after Ravenstein identified it, Hägerstrand used it to formulate one of the most detailed definitions of rural exodus. For Hägerstrand, rural exodus consisted of the rupture of these vacancy networks—the point when nobody would replace the people who had left their farms. This was not the dominant case for the period under consideration here. Rural France in the nineteenth century was economically very polarized, to be sure, but it was far from moribund.

A third spatial mechanism that is key to the understanding of migration movements operated within rural areas. For the rural economy to function, a village usually needed to have a wide "territory" that provided essential resources.[29] A network of invisible spatial structures unified or separated rural communes. These territories served as zones of preferential exchange and circulation and can be defined as migration areas, even though they were not necessarily contiguous and their borders were not necessarily clear.[30] To define these areas, historians have created ad hoc indicators by using individual data from nominative parish registers. By quantifying the origins and destinations

26 On the double phenomenon of immigration into and emigration from villages, see Fabrice Foroni, "L'espace géographique des familles en contexte d'immigration: Les comportements résidentiels au sein des familles de la Valserine (Haut-Jura) de la fin du XIXe au milieu du XXe siècle," in *Questions de population: Actes du Colloque Jeunes Chercheurs*, ed. Brigitte Baccaini et al., vol. 6 (Paris, 1997). More generally, on the vitality and complexity of internal movements in the nineteenth-century rural world, see Leslie Page Moch, "The Importance of Mundane Movements: Small Towns, Nearby Places, and Individual Itineraries in the History of Immigration," in Ogden and White, *Migrants in Modern France*, 97–117.

27 See Bernard Lepetit, "Les dénivellations de l'espace économique en France," *Annales: Economie, société, civilisations* 6 (1986): 1243–72. The departmental studies undertaken by Farcy and Faure all validate the schema of a movement oriented toward Paris, while indicating local orientations toward attractive areas. For example, in the Côtes-du-Nord, people migrated toward ports or areas where vegetables were grown. See Farcy and Faure, *Mobilité d'une génération de Français*, 180.

28 Ravenstein, "Laws of Migration."

29 Paul-André Rosental, "Qu'est-ce qu'une ressource locale? Homéostasie et micro-analyse en histoire sociale," *Revue de synthèse*, 4th ser., 1 (2001): 71–91.

30 Hägerstrand was the first to formalize the expression "migration area" (see "Migration and Area").

of all the inhabitants from one village systematically, it is possible to trace the preferential zone of a given village. However, this method, which has been used for a long time, has one flaw: focus on the single village does not permit a regional understanding of the zones.[31] How were these communal territories aggregated, and what were the relations between them? What were their characteristics? Were they very cohesive, as implied by the idea of a *pays* developed by regional geography, or was proximity a mere geographic contingency, without any real preferential links between communes, as implied by the micromobility concept? In 1972 Ron J. Johnston and Peter J. Perry applied a factorial analysis to data collected in several villages in the Lozère and were able to show that spatial segmentation derived from the region's specific topographical constraints.[32] More recently, an extended study of the Lille region confirmed that exchanges between rural areas were not determined solely by proximity. Communes were coordinated into groups formed by networks of circulation.[33] This structural organization did not completely conform to the compartmentalized model of the *pays*. First, none of these rural areas were closed in on themselves. Second, their characteristics were highly varied. Some of these areas had dense internal links and yet were very open to external contacts; others had a looser internal structure but were less open. Thus the geographic hierarchies mentioned above were composed of preferential ties but were heterogeneous in form, and their structures varied widely from one region to the other. This segmentation created subterranean migratory currents that channeled the flow of mobility in such a manner that individuals born in a certain town would choose to migrate in one direction rather than another.

Temporary migrations were also the result of a combination of economic motivations and spatial dynamics. These kinds of migrations had existed for so long and were so common that they could be seen as an inherent characteristic of rural societies.[34] Seasonal agricultural labor

31 See Jean P. Renard, "De l'intérêt du dépouillement d'actes de mariage dans le cadre général de l'étude des limites et des frontières," *Espace, populations, sociétés* 1 (1984): 125–30; Peter J. Perry, "Mariage et distance dans le canton du Bleymard (Lozère), 1811–1820 et 1891–1900," *Etudes rurales*, no. 67 (1977): 61–70; André Burguière, ed., *Bretons de Plozévet* (Flammarion, 1977); and Georges Augustins, "Mobilité résidentielle et alliance matrimoniale dans une commune du Morbihan au XIXe siècle," *Ethnologie française* 9 (1981): 319–28.

32 Ron J. Johnston and Peter J. Perry, "Déviation directionnelle dans les aires de contact: Deux exemples de relations matrimoniales dans la France rurale du XIXe siècle," *Etudes rurales*, no. 46 (1972): 23–33.

33 Claire Lemercier and Paul-André Rosental, "'Pays' ruraux et découpage de l'espace: Les réseaux migratoires dans la région lilloise au milieu du XIXe siècle," *Population* 55 (2000): 691–726. The cartographic representation of the spread of epidemics is another way to objectify spatial structures, as Patrice Bourdelais and Jean-Yves Raulot have shown in *Une peur bleue: Histoire du choléra en France, 1832–1854* (Paris, 1987).

34 Annie Moulin, *Les maçons de la Haute Marche au XVIIIe siècle* (Clermont-Ferrand, 1986).

was just one form of part-time or occasional labor, leading rural workers to migrate seasonally at a time when agriculture had yet to be organized into a full-time profession.[35] However, this vision of temporary migrations as part of an unchanging countryside cannot account for the particular variants or historical transformations of temporary migration patterns. Laurence Fontaine, for example, in her recent comparative study, identified the peculiar characteristics of temporary migrations in mountainous regions.[36] Furthermore, it should not be forgotten that French temporary migrations—though an ancient and varied practice—exploded during the nineteenth century. It would be far-fetched to argue that these migrations had only domestic causes, because they included Belgians' seasonal migrations to the Nord region of France, or Italians' in the Southeast.

Numerous studies published during the interwar years by the *Revue de géographie alpine*, and a few decades later Abel Châtelain's encyclopedic synthesis, have insisted both on the variety of migratory patterns and on the distinctiveness of their specific historical circumstances.[37] More recent works on migrations in other countries, such as Caroline Douki's study of migrations in Italy, have shown that beyond the multiplication of particular flows (combining a specific place of origin, a definite destination, and a given occupational specialization), it is possible to see entire regions shifting as well toward a new economy based on temporary migrations.[38] In the case of France, without minimizing the incredible diversity of this kind of mobility, it is possible to describe a specifically nineteenth-century conjuncture (with chronologies that vary by region) when rural and urban patterns of temporality complemented rather than conflicted with one another.

There was an off-season in the countryside, indeed, but this was also the case in the cities, where many industries were subject to seasonal effects. Beginning with the key regional dissertations produced by the French school of geography in the early twentieth century, a series of monographs have emphasized the importance of seasonal phenomena in nineteenth-century France, in both rural areas and

35 Yves Rinaudo, "Un travail de plus: Les paysans d'un métier à l'autre (vers 1830–vers 1850)," *Annales: Economie, société, civilisations*, no. 2 (1987): 283–302; Jean-Pierre Bompard, Thierry Magnac, and Gilles Postel-Vinay, "Emploi, mobilité et chômage au XIXe siècle: Migrations saisonnières entre industrie et agriculture," *Annales: Economie, société, civilisations*, no. 1 (1990): 55–76.

36 Laurence Fontaine, "Montagnes et migrations de travail: Un essai de comparaison globale (XVe–XXe siècle)," *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 52, no. 2 (2005): 26–48. See, for the French case, Abel Poitrineau, *Remues d'hommes: Essai sur les migrations montagnardes en France aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (Paris, 1983).

37 Abel Châtelain, *Les migrants temporaires en France de 1800 à 1914*, 2 vols. (Lille, 1976).

38 Caroline Douki, "Le territoire économique d'une région d'émigration: Campagnes et montagnes lucquoises, du milieu du XIXe siècle à 1914," *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 48, nos. 2–3 (2001): 192–244.

cities, from the closing of big construction sites during winter due to the lack of public lighting or tarps to protect materials, to the dependence on changing river flows in industries using hydraulic energy.[39] At a certain phase of economic development, rural and urban temporalities may have converged,[40] but within decades the rise of year-round industrial activity had spurred competition between urban and rural work rhythms. This development led more rural migrants to settle permanently in cities. Yet even then the shift was not total or unidirectional. Between the world wars automobile factories still had to adjust their production schedules because some of their employees would return to their villages to work during the harvests.

Temporary movements underscore the need to account for the spatial distribution of resources to understand the economic determinants of mobility; at the same time, such movements show the importance of clarifying the very notion of "migration." Indeed, in addition to temporary migrations—defined as movements based on the idea of return within a fixed period—the nineteenth century saw movements of people going back and forth between rural areas and cities in patterns that seem to parallel the "sieve-city" [*ville passoire*] of the early modern era.[41]

The aggregated, macroscopic effects of these round trips on the progressive movement toward urbanization during the nineteenth century must be emphasized. Statistically, some of the increase in urban population could simply be the result of migrants' staying longer in cities. Imagine that initially migrants stayed in a city for one year. If they decided to stay for another year, the number of urban immigrants would double. This effect is hard to measure, not only because it is difficult in the case of France to follow trajectories continuously over time but also because doing so requires a subtle distinction between residence and domicile. Between the moment when immigrants to the city conceived of their stay as a "trial period" and the moment when they decided to settle (or return home), the way in which they imagined

39 Precisely for these two points, see Alain Corbin, "Les paysans de Paris: Histoire des Limousins du bâtiment au XIXe siècle," *Ethnologie française* 10 (1980): 169–76; and Michael Hanagan, "Nascent Proletarians: Migration Patterns and Class Formation in the Stephanois Region, 1840–1880," in Ogden and White, *Migrants in Modern France*, 74–96. For key work from the early twentieth century, see Jules Sion, *Les paysans de la Normandie orientale* (1909; rpt. Saint-Pierre-de-Salerne, 1978).

40 Many examples of this can be found in Guy Thuillier, "Pour une histoire du temps en Nivernais au XIXe siècle," *Ethnologie française* 6 (1976): 149–62; Frank Mendels, "Les temps de l'industrie et les temps de l'agriculture: Logique d'une analyse régionale de la proto-industrialisation," *Revue du Nord*, no. 248 (1981): 21–33; and Gay L. Gullickson, *Spinners and Weavers of Auffay* (Cambridge, 1986).

41 Farcy and Faure, *Mobilité d'une génération de Français*, 297–307.

their "residence" changed. Sources do not permit us to reconstitute this microchronology directly. Historians, therefore, must study more than just the causes of departure; they must explain as well why migrants would stay longer in the city or, more exactly, why they would be less tempted to leave quickly. This kind of investigation also requires us to distance ourselves from the "rural exodus and magnet city" model in order to consider seriously the importance of other migratory projects and their progressive reformulations.

The distinction between the more and the less settled has direct statistical repercussions. The fraction of the migrant population that was less firmly settled was the most vulnerable to economic crises during the nineteenth century, either because these migrants were very poor or because they had not yet established themselves in family networks. This distinction can be seen in a comparison of the 1846 and the 1851 censuses, a period of crisis that reveals that for many cities the population decreased in part because of return migrations.[42] Yet statistical studies of settled long-distance migrants over the same period reveal a remarkable level of linear growth: over the entire century and for the entire population, including sedentary people, long-distance migrations increased from 18 percent to 31 percent for men and from 14 percent to 28 percent for women.[43] The steadiness of the increase—a near doubling—shows that it cannot be accounted for by the traditional contextual explanations. Neither economic nor political crises, nor even great technological breakthroughs (like railroads), affected this progressive movement to the cities.[44] Instead, this movement should be understood as a "diffusion phenomenon," whose causes cannot be found in purely contextual macroenvironmental determinants. This is where the microscopic study comes back into play because of its ability to explore the causes of departure for migratory projects.

From Migrations to Migrants

General Characteristics of Migrants

Avoiding economic reductionism and giving serious consideration to qualitative motivations for departure is not new. For a long time, historians described the attraction of urban areas as a response to village

42 René Le Mée, "Les villes de France et leur population de 1806 à 1851," *Annales de démographie historique* (1989): 321–93.

43 Paul-André Rosental, "La migration des femmes (et des hommes) en France au XIXe siècle," *Annales de démographie historique* (2004): 123.

44 A good bibliography can be found for this point in Farcy and Faure, *Mobilité d'une génération de Français*, 263n34. The authors confirm the difficulty of measuring the effect of economic crises on migrations.

boredom. Traditional explanations of causes for emigration included a seemingly inevitable series of factors, such as military service, which allegedly helped rural youth adapt to cities. In a sense, this argument was an existential version of the rural exodus model, but this version was based not only on an economic disparity but also on a cultural, or even civilizational, contrast between urban and rural. The recent discovery that cities appeared more attractive to people from urban than from rural regions has shown the limits of this kind of reasoning. The greater precision of recent research, which makes use of increasingly detailed data, confirms the need for a reevaluation. In 1998 A. R. H. Baker showed that at the end of their military service, rural draftees settled in urban areas no more frequently than their exempted counterparts.[45] Farcy and Faure confirmed this by showing that the phenomenon was not limited to the period following military service. Throughout the entire life cycle, the migratory profile of a former recruit was similar to that of a man who had never been recruited.[46]

It is therefore crucial to evaluate other explanatory mechanisms that focus on the characteristics of the migrants themselves. In an increasingly systematic manner, contemporary historiography has compared migrants to sedentary people by presenting immobility as a phenomenon that should not be taken for granted. Indeed, if the reasons advanced for rural exodus are so numerous and varied, why would rural inhabitants stay put? This blindness toward the causal processes that determine individual trajectories is typical of historical explanations that content themselves with correlating synchronous macroscopic developments.

Another major trend has been the growing role attributed to nominative sources. Scholars no longer use these sources merely to refine the statistical series produced by the *Statistique générale de la France*, as did the old historical demography. Recent nominative studies have created an entirely new conceptual universe by focusing on migrants rather than on migrations. They have helped locate other causes and have contextualized many macroscopic factors that, for a long time, monopolized all explanations regarding mobility. These macroscopic factors remain important, to be sure, but they can no longer be considered the ultimate engine of causation.

The move from migrations to migrants cannot be characterized as exclusively microscopic, in the sense that it analyzes much more than

45 A. R. H. Baker, "Military Service and Migration in Nineteenth-Century France: Some Evidence from Loir-et-Cher," *Transactions: Institute of British Geographers* (1998): 193–206.

46 Farcy and Faure, *Mobilité d'une génération de Français*, 248–52.

individual or family trajectories. Indeed, this method has made possible the elaboration of precise characteristics of migrants in general, which in turn requires revision of another aspect of the rural exodus model. Rural exodus, and migration more generally, is often associated with a veritable black legend. From the moralizing denunciations of the Old Regime to the Marxist vision of the forced exodus of a proletarianized peasantry, the migrant has been perceived as a miserable wretch who either succumbs to urban delusions or is tragically uprooted. This interpretation used statistical data to describe patterns of interregional migrations in detail but provided almost no information on the people who constituted that influx.

However, contemporary social history that studies the nominative characteristics of migrants has shown that long-distance migration was often used as an offensive strategy, especially among socially privileged people who sought to climb higher up the social ladder. This strategy, as noted above, was used more by urban than by rural inhabitants. It was also more commonly the literate than the illiterate who moved to cities; literacy is thus the second most important factor. The propensity to migrate far away was much higher among those who could write, and it increased with level of education.[47] Among the migrant population, 55 percent of illiterate men moved within fifteen kilometers, while only 34 percent of men who could write did so, whereas the trend is reversed (12 percent and 29 percent, respectively) for migrants who moved more than one hundred kilometers away.[48] The third variable was socioprofessional position. Long-distance migration was a socially selected phenomenon. Philippe Pinchemel's thesis on the importance of the emigration of rural artisans was confirmed by Farcy and Faure, who showed that peasants were not only less likely to move but also more likely to return.[49]

47 See Rosental, "Migration des femmes." See also, at the departmental level, M. J. Heffernan, "Literacy and Geographical Mobility in Nineteenth-Century Provincial France: Some Evidence from the Department of Ille-et-Vilaine," *Local Population Studies* 42 (1989): 32–42. The organic relationship between long-distance urban migration and literacy has been analyzed by Alain Corbin, "Migrations temporaires et société rurale au XIXe siècle: Le cas du Limousin," *Revue historique* 246 (1971): 293–334; and Moulin, *Maçons*. Farcy and Faure rightly nuance the meaning of the educational gap by taking into account the structural effects—departmental origin, professional milieu—that were likely to be involved (*Mobilité d'une génération de Français*, 252–53). But their definition of long-distance emigration as a displacement beyond a canton contiguous to the canton of origin makes a direct comparison with other works difficult. This criterion leads to the inclusion of a majority of middle-distance migrations (and even several short-distance ones), whereas the literacy effect has been measured especially at distances of more than one hundred kilometers. Rosental, "Migration des femmes."

48 Rosental, "Migration des femmes," 134.

49 Farcy and Faure, *Mobilité d'une génération de Français*, 264–65. See also Philippe Pinchemel, *Structures sociales et dépopulation rurale dans les campagnes picardes de 1836 à 1936* (Paris, 1957).

The social status of the individual was not, however, the only nominative variable that predicted individual migration. Among women from the Nord, the capacity to mobilize family networks after a long-distance move, whether to maintain connections with their original home or to create contacts in a new place, was greater for literate migrants than for illiterate ones.[50] Several studies have shown that in nineteenth-century France, "link activation" had a cost, particularly after a migrant had moved, and that the ability to rely on mutual aid within the kinship network depended on social position.[51]

Qualifying the black legend of long-distance migration has been part of a general movement in demographic historiography, and not only in France.[52] Social selection among long-distance migrants constitutes a real structure, more important even than other variables such as gender. Throughout the nineteenth century, differences in level of education between migrant women and migrant men from the same social classes were less significant than the general discrepancy between migrant women and men, even as the gender differential in long-distance migration tended to increase during the same period.

These findings are based on more than a descriptive sociology of male and female migrants. By correlating levels of literacy, career trajectories, and migratory paths and mapping these onto the economic evolution of each French region, it is possible to show that long-distance migration was the most effective way to ascend the socioprofessional ladder rapidly—much more effective than remaining in one's region.[53] This effect has been confirmed for both genders, but it was even truer for women: for them, migration toward a big city, especially Paris, made rapid ascension possible. Such an undertaking, of course, was risky. Long-distance migration was the route most likely to lead to increased wealth, but it was also the most uncertain.[54]

50 Paul-André Rosental, "Liens familiaux, position sociale et mobilité des femmes dans la France du Nord au milieu du XIXe siècle," *Cahiers du MAGE: Marché du travail et genre* 3 (2000): 27–40.

51 See Bourdieu et al., "Migrations et transmissions." On the recruitment of marriage witnesses by migrants, see Maurice Garden, "Mariages parisiens à la fin du XIXe siècle: Une micro-analyse quantitative," *Annales de démographie historique* (1998): 111–33; Rosental, "Scomposizione spaziale"; Leslie Page Moch, "I bretoni a Parigi: Legami regionali e reti urbane in un'epoca di urbanizzazione," *Quaderni storici* 106 (2001): 177–99; and Laurence Fontaine, "Rôle économique de la parenté," *Annales de démographie historique* (1995): 5–16.

52 See the remarkable work by François Manchuelle, *Willing Migrants: Soninke Labor Diasporas, 1848–1960* (Athens, OH, 1997).

53 Noël Bonneuil and Paul-André Rosental, "Changing Social Mobility in Nineteenth-Century France," *Historical Methods* 32, no. 2 (1999): 53–73. For an international comparison that uses comparable evidence in a similar time period, see Jan Kok and Henk Delger, "Promotion ou sélection? Les effets de la migration sur la mobilité professionnelle dans une province néerlandaise, 1840–1950," *Histoire et mesure* 13, nos. 3–4 (1998).

54 Bourdieu et al., "Migrations et transmissions."

Just as the better off and the better educated self-selected for long-distance migration, those who found themselves in the most unfavorable situation were also the most likely to become short-distance migrants. Here then is another reason why the notion of micromobility is insufficient. To say that moving to a nearby village was an extension of sedentarity fails to take into account the multiple social underpinnings of this phenomenon. Short-distance migrants were more poorly educated than sedentary people, and short-distance migration was also an indicator of their less favorable economic status.[55] Migration in nineteenth-century France can be understood only as a tripartite phenomenon that distinguishes among (1) long-distance migration, as an option preferred by the most privileged; (2) short-distance migration, as an option primarily for people of the most modest backgrounds; and (3) sedentarity, as the "average" of these two behaviors.

The demarcation between short- and long-distance migrations may be understood, depending on the study and the specific phenomena under scrutiny, to be between twenty and thirty kilometers from the commune of origin—that is, beyond the circumference of the first three or four neighboring communes. During the early modern era, the circumference of the sphere of short-distance migrations was smaller than this by about ten kilometers.[56]

This analytic distinction can be validated econometrically by controlling for the structural bias of the statistical data. A recent study, conducted at the national level, confirmed the large discrepancies in the sociodemographic profile of these three types of mobility.[57] Thus this tripartite model should be taken as a point of departure for all studies of migration in nineteenth-century France.

As always, focusing on the characteristics of migrants in no way precludes a macroscopic synthesis of the aggregated effects of these microsociological differences. We can show, first of all, that geographic long-distance mobility paradoxically caused the lowering of the average education level both in the region of departure (an effect of the positive selection of long-distance migrants) and at the place of arrival (because long-distance migrants from the countryside were more poorly educated than their urban counterparts).[58] However, this purely static effect should not be overestimated. The historiography has also shown

55 For a comparable formulation of the problem in the early modern era, see Croix, "Ouverture des villages."

56 Ibid.

57 Noël Bonneuil and Paul-André Rosental, "Familial Components of First Migrations after Marriage in Nineteenth-Century France" (unpublished manuscript, 2003).

58 For a local application, see Serge Chassagne, "La formation de la population d'une agglomération industrielle, Corbeil-Essonnes (1750–1850)," *Le mouvement social* 97 (1976): 104.

that the attitudes and aspirations of migrants were at least as important as their initial "human capital" in determining their economic and social integration.[59] A second general effect, more important because it concerned migrants' potential impact on the labor market at their point of arrival, was their social diversity in cities. Every study of migration should recognize the fundamental dualism between the perspective of the point of origin and the perspective of the destination. In the village of origin, long-distance migrants were better educated than average. But once they arrived in the city, they mixed with the less well-educated short-distance migrants from the outskirts of the city. This ebb and flow of an impoverished and fluid migrant population was an essential feature of nineteenth-century cities, especially those undergoing rapid growth.[60]

Statistical observation thus confirms a complex mechanism combining two flows of immigration in the formation of urban populations. Forty-six percent of men migrating toward the cities who came from a distance of less than fifteen kilometers were illiterate—a very high number for nineteenth-century France. By contrast, only 11 percent of men who traveled more than five hundred kilometers were illiterate. Among women, the parallel numbers were, respectively, 60 percent and 33 percent.[61] More focused and detailed analyses, such as Leslie Page Moch's *Paths to the City*, have confirmed these results, which echo Chevalier's observation that "immigration cannot be compared to homogeneous troops entering the city limits on a particular day."[62] Contemporary social history confirms the heterogeneity of migrant populations that resulted from their multiple social origins and motives. This heterogeneity underscores the importance of thinking systematically in terms of a tripartite model of population mobility. It is an indispensable tool if we are to move beyond the "social diversity" of migrants and begin to understand how that diversity occurs and operates.[63]

59 The first author to insist on this point—not without an ethnicist background—is Louis Chevalier, *La formation de la population parisienne au XIXe siècle* (Paris, 1950). For the importance of the perspective preceding migration, see Leslie Page Moch, *Paths to the City* (Beverly Hills, CA, 1983).

60 Patrice Bourdelais and Michel Demonet, "L'industrialisation: L'exemple du Creusot; Essai d'histoire des itinéraires individuels (1836–1881)," *Cahiers du CRH*, nos. 14–15 (1995): 17–21.

61 Rosental, "Migration des femmes," 127.

62 Louis Chevalier, *La formation de la population parisienne au XIXe siècle* (Paris, 1950), 154.

63 See Maurice Garden, "L'intégration des nouveaux citadins dans la ville moderne: Quelques questions," in *Immigration et société urbaine en Europe occidentale, XVIe–XXe siècles*, ed. Etienne François (Paris, 1985), 145–54.

Causes of Migration

Complex nominative data are nowadays pieced together into a single picture: demographic events, of course (which are recorded in civil registrations of births, deaths, and marriages), but also places of residence (which appear in census and conscription records, electoral lists, and even, in some cities, population registers),[64] property transactions (extracted from fiscal registers of title deeds and notarial archives), declarations of godparenting at births or weddings, and so forth. By connecting all of these types of data, it has become possible to reconstruct schematic biographies.

The most complete analyses of these biographies have combined both the diachronic axis (the person's trajectory) and the synchronic axis (his or her network of relations). Faure, the great historian of urban population, argued that personal characteristics exclusively should be studied.[65] But if we limit our interpretation of long-distance movements to the individual migrant's qualities, we run the risk of replacing the old black legend by an equally schematic, albeit heroic, version of the same story, which could in any case result in a tautology. Moreover, unless we possess extremely rich qualitative information (memoirs, correspondence, etc.), the range of personal motives is too large to yield generalizations about individual behavior. By contrast, if we shift our analysis to the reference group (for example, the history of a family or the inhabitants of a single city block),[66] we may capture the relative constraints that affect every one of the group's members—and that therefore limit an individual's options. Finally, this configurational scale of observation makes it possible to compare migrants' individual trajectories.

This type of analysis, even more important, introduces a temporal dimension to the study of migration. Insofar as we simply correlate a departure and a conjuncture, or limit ourselves to identifying individual characteristics or motives, we lose sight of an essential dimension of human activity: its inscription in its own temporal sequence. The close observation of individual paths within a group reveals the genesis of configurations whose resolution will take the form of migration. Only from this perspective can we grasp migratory causality—the causes that specifically affect the individual—at the microscopic level.

64 Lévy-Vroelant, "Séjourner ou demeurer"; François-Joseph Hahn and Jean-Luc Pinol, "La mobilité d'une grande ville: Strasbourg de 1870 à 1940," *Annales de démographie historique* (1995): 197–210.

65 Alain Faure, "Paris, 'gouffre de l'espèce humaine'?" *French Historical Studies* 27 (2004): 49–86.

66 Hontebeyrie and Rosental, *Lieux et les liens.*

This does not diminish the significance of environmental variables; rather, it permits us to analyze how these social constraints affected individual options within the group. The mesoscopic method that I am proposing is a strategic form of analysis that can reveal how the various levels of causal determination—from the most individual to the most general—are related to and influence one another.

Proposing the interpersonal configuration as a relevant unit of observation need not entail hypostasizing interpersonal links and networks, a problem as ubiquitous and counterproductive today as excessive reliance on quantitative classification was in the heyday of Labroussian history. This is a particularly serious risk in the study of migration. Because many of these studies of population movement concentrate exclusively on flows from one community and on sources at the point of arrival, they encounter a problem of circularity that they either ignore or sweep under the rug. Such studies presume the very mechanisms of migratory chains that are meant to be discovered. The only way to avoid this bias is to analyze the general population without preselecting for any kind of trajectory. Only then is it possible to examine who migrates with whom, or who rejoins whom, in a nonteleological and nontautological manner.

It is well recognized that French sources, which often document the place of departure but rarely the destination, lend themselves poorly to the resolution of this problem. Military registers, though valuable for men, are here of little use because their logic is individual. In configurational terms, they can mostly clarify the role of age groups in migration (groups of peers of age who migrate together). Age (in the sense of birth cohorts) did exercise a role on trajectories of mobility, especially in small rural communities where this variable had anthropological dimensions, but these trajectories remain to be studied. The data, collected for twenty years from the civil registry in the context of the study known as "Three Thousand Families," reconstitute the patrilineal descendants from thousands of French lineages since 1803.[67] These data are the only sources to date that permit us to measure the effect of interpersonal connections (at least familial ones) on individual trajectories. The study that we have produced of the migratory paths of seventeen thousand married couples who were attached to five thousand lineages in the nineteenth century has made it possible to calcu-

67 On the study, see Jacques Dupâquier and Denis Kessler, eds., *La société française au XIXe siècle: Traditions, transition, transformations* (Paris, 1992); and Patrice Bourdelais, ed., "3.000 familles, vingt ans après," special issue, *Annales de démographie historique*, no. 1 (2004).

late, move by move, whether migratory movements brought individuals into greater proximity with members of their kinship group. The answer is that they did not. This finding, of course, runs counter to what has been for half a century the common understanding of migration.[68] Statistically speaking, if we remove all indices with structural effects and use a national sample that does not privilege a predefined migratory flow, it cannot be said that migration in nineteenth-century France brought the family together geographically.[69]

Two phenomena explain this result. In the first place—and this applies to the contemporary period as well—the density of familial networks, as well as the possibility of mobilizing them, depends on social position. Familial aid is a socially stratified phenomenon. It is so hierarchically distributed that certain historians see in it a late fruit of the early modern era, when economic improvements freed a larger and larger part of the population from the logic of survival and the fight against precarity and allowed relatives to enter into a long-term system of exchanges and solidarity.[70] This finding is consistent with our observation that long-distance migrants from humble origins had greater difficulty maintaining and mobilizing their kinship networks.

In the second place, even at comparable social levels kinship is not a fixed social mechanism; its contours and contents vary by individual lineage. We find both "autocentric" networks, where the kinship group and close acquaintances constitute a common reference group, as well as "exocentric" lineages, in which members evolve in their own relational environment. These two forms produce different migratory mechanisms. Counterintuitively, the volume of migration by autocentric families was not linked to their number of surviving children, because the classic economic effect of "too many mouths to feed" was counterbalanced by a network effect. Because these lineages circulated resources internally, they developed fewer weak ties, that is, fewer diverse connections with the exterior that provide information about professional or migratory opportunities.[71] It was therefore more diffi-

68 The analytic framework defining the importance of the personal link in migration was defined in 1957 by Hägerstrand, "Migration and Area." For a foundational study of chain migration, see J. S. Macdonald and L. D. Macdonald, "Chain Migration, Ethnic Neighborhood Formation, and Social Networks," *Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly* 48 (1964): 82–97.

69 Lionel Kesztenbaum, "Une histoire d'espace et de patrimoine: Réseaux de mobilités professionnels ou familiaux entre XIXe et première moitié du XX siècle" (PhD diss., IEP-Paris, 2006), has arrived at similar conclusions from a comparable data set.

70 Laurence Fontaine and Jürgen Schlumbohm, "Household Strategies for Survival: An Introduction," *International Review of Social History* 45 (2000): 1–17.

71 Mark S. Granovetter, "The Strength of Weak Ties," *American Journal of Sociology* 78 (1973): 1360–80.

cult for them to construct migratory pathways, even when they were impoverished locally.[72]

These autocentric lineages were very sensitive, however, to social differentiation within the family group, and these discrepancies in social status provoked tensions often resolved through migration.[73] Depending on the regions where the familial groups resided, rhythms of economic growth in the broader environment played a more or less significant role in the creation of divisions between family members: interpersonal and environmental logics were thus interrelated. Furthermore, the better we appreciate the importance of these intrafamilial dynamics, the clearer our understanding will be of the linear growth of long-distance mobility during the nineteenth century. Innovations—new migratory patterns or professional networks—had potential repercussions, beyond the pioneers who initiated them, on other members of their close circle of relations: they exerted a diffusion effect at the microscopic level (within reference groups), which brought about linear macroscopic effects (such as the progressive rise in long-distance migrations). As for the genesis of these social forms, we may briefly say that in certain contexts family networks organize themselves to take full advantage of the resources in their environment.[74] Moreover, the genealogical approach does not lead to a systematic overvaluation of the role of kinship. In fact, the internal dynamics of kinship appear to be quite secondary in the case of exocentric lineages.[75]

Further studies of the causes of migration will need to examine the effects of other reference groups pertinent for the individual, from age group to professional milieu. Constructing an analytic framework for the study of migration that is more inclusive than the rural exodus model will require still more conceptual precision. Historians are often content to "explain" migration by the infinite accumulation of heterogeneous motivations, which in the end make mysterious anyone's reasons for staying put.[76] The distinction between causes, conditions of possibility, and modalities of migration; the articulation of levels of analysis from a mesoscopic vantage point; the spatialization of previ-

72 A similar mechanism is shown by Foroni, who argues in "Espace géographique" that families well established locally were slower to emigrate because they benefited from more active familial solidarity.

73 The general value of this mechanism was shown by Oded Stark, "Labour Migration as a Response to Relative Deprivation," *Journal of Population Economics* 1, no. 1 (1988): 57–70.

74 Christophe Duhamelle, *L'héritage collectif: Familles, institutions et société dans la noblesse d'Eglise rhénane (XVIIe–XVIIIe siècles)* (Paris, 1998). Hontebeyrie and Rosental, *Lieux et les liens*, study the origins of autocentric dynamics in a suburb of Lille.

75 For a summary of these points, see Rosental, *Sentiers invisibles*.

76 See the criticism by Sune Akerman, *From Stockholm to San Francisco: The Development of the Historical Study of External Migrations* (Uppsala, 1975).

ously disembodied economic factors; consideration of the interdependence of different forms of migratory flow, including short-distance migration; greater attention to nominative data for a reevaluation of macroscopic constructions long overemphasized: attention to all of these factors—which less rigorous conceptualizations have taken to be transparent—will make it possible to interpret anew the architecture of internal migration in nineteenth-century France.

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