RESIDENTIAL ITINERARIES IN THE PARIS REGION

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ABSTRACT Within 50 years, as urban concentration intensified and housing conditions underwent considerable change, France became a nation of property owners. The consequences of this "urban revolution" were felt at all levels of society. This is the overall picture that emerges from an analysis of cross-sectional data. Yet, residential mobility is an expression of individual decisions, which are determined by a combination of factors (social background, place of origin, family and occupational history) and are highly dependent on local and historical factors (housing stock or policy, urbanization processes). Based on longitudinal data from two retrospective surveys, a detailed study of Parisian biographies and cluster analyses of residential itineraries reveal the complex rationales governing a household's choice of location and tenure status. The history of the generations born between 1926 and 1935 yields an extraordinary diversity of itineraries. It shows the limitations of many models based on typical itineraries, such as the upwardly mobile residential model. Despite the obvious centrifugal movement of Parisians away from the center to the suburbs, one may also observe parallel reverse processes, both in the past and of late.

Introduction

The geographical distribution and the housing conditions of the population of France underwent considerable change after the Second World War. At the same time, the rate of urban concentration - a phenomenon whose origins reach back to the French Revolution - began to increase. Paris had always played a crucial role as a magnet for internal migration, even though other cities, such as Lyons or Marseilles, were also developing. During the 1970s, this century-old trend was reversed: with the spread of urban areas around Paris and other big cities, residential mobility declined and residential flows changed direction.

During the postwar period, as urban concentration intensified, home ownership became increasingly popular. Within 50 years, France became a land of property owners. The consequences of this "urban revolution" were felt at all levels of society.
The period from 1950 to 1963, was one of rapid development in the housing construction industry, especially in the sector of dwellings meant for private home ownership. This was a time when senior and middle-level executives solved their housing problems by purchasing their primary residence. Nevertheless, given the variety of housing types offered on the market and the availability of mortgages, blue-collar workers and office and business staff were also able to become homeowners. This period of growth was followed by a decline between 1963 and 1968 touching all levels of society, but particularly blue-collar workers. During the next period, the rate of home ownership once again increased, but at a slower pace than in the fifties. Those who gained most from this growth were executives, as well as skilled workers and foremen, but semi-skilled and unskilled workers were left out. After 1974, home ownership declined once again. Following the 1977 housing reform, new types of housing appeared on the market: serially built single-family houses. These are popular mainly among skilled workers, office and service staff, and middle-level wage-earners.

Thanks to government policies encouraging home loans, the proportion of homeowners rose from 34 per cent in 1954 to almost 55 per cent in 1990. The purchase of a home became an important goal and a crucial event in the residential itineraries of French households.

That is the overall picture which comes out of the analysis of censuses and housing surveys. Yet residential mobility is first and foremost an individual, or family, pattern. As such, it is highly dependent on local and historical factors. Thus, cross-sectional studies cannot reflect the variety and diversity of the migrational histories of households. Only biographical data, through the analysis of individual itineraries, can provide the facts enabling us to describe the residential itineraries of different cohorts (Dieleman, 1992; Myers, 1990). Two retrospective studies were thus sponsored by the National Institute of Demographic Studies (INED). The first, a national survey ("Triple biography" or "3B" survey), was carried out in 1981 by Daniel Courgeau. It covers the migrational, professional, and family histories of generations born between 1911 and 1935. The second one, carried out by Catherine Bonvalet in 1986, concentrates on the Paris region ("Population and Depopulation of Paris" or "PDP" survey). It concerns the generations born between 1926 and 1935. A strict comparison between life stories is possible only up to age 45, since the people interviewed in the first survey were at least 45 years old in 1981.

For the generations born between 1926 and 1935, the two surveys taken together (Bonvalet and Lelièvre, 1990; Lelièvre and Bonvalet, 1994; Bonvalet et al. 1995) show the filtering role played by Paris in terms of residential mobility and occupancy patterns. This aspect will be discussed in the first part of the article with regard to the structure of the housing stock as well as the migratory flows headed towards Paris and its suburbs. The second part will be devoted to a more detailed analysis of Parisian residential itineraries (Bonvalet, 1995), revealing the more complex rationales which govern a household’s choice of location and tenure status.