The reward of audacity?
Looking at migration gains in urbanizing France, 1870-1940.

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Very preliminary. Do not quote

Abstract
Migration may be view as a way to take advantage of opportunities on distant labor markets. However few studies were able to quantify the relationship between social and geographic mobility. By combining a large database that gives information on both individual and their family with military registers that provide detailed migration history, we can precisely assess social and wealth mobility for both migrants and stayers. During the end of the 19th century, France experienced at the same time economic growth that creates spatial heterogeneity and standardization of education with every young men receiving primary education. Then we expect social mobility to be high. We show that, indeed, migrants are more socially mobile but they also have much less wealth than stayers. This may be linked to the high cost of migrating as well as to different strategies or tastes regarding assets accumulation. Finally, we use family characteristics to account for migrants' selection.

Keywords: social mobility; migration; wealth; local labor market; industrialization.

JEL codes: N33, J61, J62

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Introduction: social mobility and industrialization

The context, especially the structure of the economy appears to be a key determinant of social mobility. Many studies try to disentangle social mobility linked to social structure and "pure" social mobility (Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1993; Goux and Morin, 1997). However, the mechanisms underlying social mobility are themselves changing over time. So historical analysis is crucial to better understand the relationship between the transformation of economic structure and the evolution of social mobility (Ferrie, 2005). In this context, two investments appear to be important factors in promoting social mobility: human capital and geographic mobility (Solon, 2004). As such, Third Republic France presents a particular interest with the conjunction of two phenomena: industrialization and mass primary schooling. The former creates differences between local markets while the latter may reduce the efficiency of investing in education, which seems to have been an important determinant of social mobility in the first half of the nineteenth century (Sewell, 1985).

If social mobility is often assumed to increase during economic development, especially as a result of transformations of the labor market, few empirical studies have so far been able to test such a relationship. Indeed, the uneven level of development between geographical areas during the industrialization may create opportunities for migrants to faster access different social positions. So far, the analysis was limited to monographic analysis of social mobility in a specific place, as in the reference study of Boston by Stephan Thernstrom (Thernstrom, 1973). In all cases, the sources make it difficult to follow occupations of individuals who change their place of residence, especially those who migrate frequently.

We combine the TRA survey with military records so as to overcome these limitations: we consider both migrant and stayers regardless of their places of residence and, at the same time, we analyze social mobility during the life cycle. Thus, this study addresses directly the relationship between migration, on the one side, and occupational mobility and wealth accumulation on the other side, through a triple comparison: migrants with stayers from the place of origin; migrants

with stayers from the place of destination; and within migrants, especially by taking into account their length of stay and the frequency of their mobility.

Geographic mobility and opportunity

Geographic mobility is usually seen as an investment: an individual chooses to migrate if the expected gains from migration exceed those staying at the same location, taking into account migration costs (Sjaastad, 1962; Borjas, 1994). Therefore, the decision to migrate depends to a large extent on employment opportunities available in different places (Topel, 1986). A strong heterogeneity of labor markets should be a factor encouraging migration, with workers having incentives to go to the labor market that offers them the highest expected income. Risk may also be an issue: individuals from the same family may want to work in labor markets where shocks are not correlated (Stark, 1991).

So far, the debate focused on different topics on the two side of the Atlantic: American studies concentrate on intragenerational mobility as part of the "American dream". They demonstrate that immigrants in the US were highly mobile (Ferrie, 1994). Internal migrants experienced a much higher social mobility and were more able to accumulate wealth (Herscovici, 1998). However, most of these results are linked to the availability of cheap land, as the most successful migrants become farmers. This is especially true for migration to the frontier (Stewart, 2009). And in fact, retirement choices in the early 20th century were made possible only by rising farm prices (Lee, 1999).

On the other side, European studies favor the study of intergenerational mobility (Bonneuil and Rosental, 1999). They focus on the working class experience over the course of industrialization and modernization (Miles, 1993; Baines and Johnson, 1999). And they demonstrate the existence of an intensely mobile group (Gribaudi, 1987): occupational mobility was frequent within the European working class. Blue collar jobs were not to be kept for life. Unskilled workers may later

switch to small businesses work –such as innkeeper or grocer– or, conversely, fall into low paid and lower status jobs (streetsweeper for instance). In the classic study by William Sewell in Marseille, wealth prevents downward mobility while education –especially speaking French and not southern dialects– promotes upward mobility (Sewell, 1985).

However, most studies of social mobility focus on one place. They observe migrants and compare them to natives. This clearly undermines their capacity to assess the extent of migrants' advantage or disadvantages with regards to social mobility. Few studies have considered migrants wherever they go (Herscovici, 1998; Long, 2005). And almost no study measures how social mobility evolves with time (for an exception, see Ferrie, 2005).

We will focus on France so as to offer an alternative to the US view. It has been demonstrated that social mobility was higher in the US in the middle of the 19th century but the two countries converge at the beginning of the 20th century (Bourdieu, Ferrie et al., 2009). However, why social mobility differs between the two countries is less well known. The US is somehow exceptional with a huge migrant inflow, an important farming sector, the frontier mechanism and cheap land availability. France, on the other side, experienced limited migration, both out and internal. This, in turn, means limited, if any, opportunities to obtain wealth from scratch. And from the second half of the 19th century, there is a large agricultural crisis which means that land was not a good investment. In most case, its value decreases. Industrialization is rather limited and concentrated in a few cities but this, in turn, creates relatively important labor market heterogeneity. Rural-urban migrations did exist but on a limited scale until after WWII, which is a particular feature compared with other European countries (Moch, 1992). Another key point is that education levels were very homogeneous, as almost everyone reached primary education by the end of the 19th century (Furet and Ozouf, 1977). Therefore, contrary to the early 19th century, education is not likely to promote social mobility. As a consequence, geographic mobility appears to be the only way to move socially. To explore how successful it may have been, we take advantage of a large longitudinal dataset built on military records.

Data

Analyzing social mobility during the life cycle ideally requires continuous monitoring of both occupations and places of residence. In this study we have only access to the latter through the use of military registers. Occupation, on the other side, is recorded at several key stages of the life cycle: twenty years old, marriage or death. Despite this limitation, we partly solve the dilemma of the interaction of both phenomena by considering the specific geographical mobility made between two moments of the life cycle where we record occupations. Thus, we can compare occupation before and after an eventual migration to assess the influence of the former on the latter.

To do so, we take advantage of the 3,000 families survey (or TRA survey). Initiated by Jacques Dupâquier this survey constitute a large historical database of all individuals whose surnames begin with the letters T, R and A, such as "Travers" or "Trabuchet" (Dupâquier and Kessler, 1992; Dupâquier, 2004). The essential drawbacks of this investigation lies in the difficulty to reconstruct the life cycle of a single individual (Bourdieu and Kesztenbaum, 2004). To solve this problem, we add to the core of the survey –marriage and fiscal records– military registers. They provide a continuous monitoring of changes of residence from the age of twenty years old.

After the defeat against Prussia, the Cissey Law (July 27th, 1872) reorganized the French army. It created a long service –twenty years then twenty-five after 1889– divided into active service (the military service itself) for four years (then three, then two) and reserve (Roynette, 2000; Farcy and Faure, 2003). This new organization involves a constant monitoring of all individuals during their reserve time, that is to say until their final release from military service (forty-six years old). Thus military registers provide information on all residential changes between twenty and forty-five years old (Corvisier, 1992).

Despite their accuracy, military registers do have some shortcomings. The first is selection. All women are excluded. And a small share of the male population is also lacking, those discharged from the army for medical reasons, around ten per cent of the male population aged twenty years

old[1]. The second drawback is early exit from the sample. Conscripts can either die or be discharged –for medical reasons only– at any time during their reserve period. We take into account the length of observation of each individual to reduce the negative effects of this problem.

We consider a sample of 15 "départements" (French administrative units of the size of a county). This sample was built so as to give a balanced view of France in the second part of the 19th century: in addition to Paris and its suburbs, we collected information from rural, urban as well as industrializing areas, from different part of the country[2]. For every ***département*** in the sample, we collected all TRA conscripts born between 1852 and 1900. For each conscript we have personal information, on occupation and education at 20 years old, health as well as every migration he made before 46 years old, or before being discharged of the army. Overall, we study 2900 conscripts, among which 2600 are observed at least one year and 1300 were matched with other sources[3]. We matched them with marriage, to get their occupation at that moment, and with fiscal records, which give us occupation and wealth at death for every deceased.

In brief, we use longitudinal data to track all migrations performed between twenty and forty-six years old. By adding marriage and fiscal records, we compare migrants and stayers based on their social status and wealth. To do so, we make an evaluation of this status according to occupation labels. We build a four-class hierarchy: we distinguish two groups of workers, unskilled on the one side, and semi-skilled and skilled on the other side, as well as two groups of high status occupation, farmers and white collar.

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[1] Other reasons for censured observations are negligible (for instance only 8 over 2900 conscripts are draft-dodger).

[2] The complete set of ***département*** is as follow: Charente (16), Côte d'Or (21), Creuse (23), Finistère (29), Loir-et-Cher (41), Loire (42), Mayenne (53), Pas-de-Calais (62), Haute-Pyrénnées (64), Seine (75), Seine-et-Marne (77), Seine-et-Oise (78), Tarn (81), Vaucluse (84) and Vosges (88).

[3] This poor rate of matching is mainly related to time discrepancy between the various sources: the last conscripts of our sample were born in 1900 but wedding and fiscal records have not been collected after, respectively, 1900 and 1940. So the second half of the military sample is poorly matched with other sources. We are trying to remedy this issue. The collect of Fiscal data for the period 1940-1960 has begun last year and is still in progress.

Measuring social and wealth mobility

Some studies try to measure income differences between migrant and stayers. They address the issue of migrant selection: those who choose to change the labor market are probably those who benefit the most from such mobility, because their skills are better used elsewhere or maybe because they enjoy a better match between the characteristics of the local labor market and their own skills. More generally, it is not possible to compare directly the market success of migrants and stayers as migrants are not a random sample of the population.

Even though it is possible to evaluate the benefit of migrants using cross-sectional data and a model taking into account selection, the use of income does introduce several problems for estimation. More often, instead of the permanent income, studies use only the information at one point in the cycle of life, at best a few points. To avoid this limitation, we choose to take advantage of the social status that is both more representative of the success of an individual on the labor market and less sensitive to idiosyncratic shocks. The second motivation to use occupational status rather than income lies in the difficulty to have a proper estimate of income for the nineteenth-century France, particularly at the individual level. To evaluate the effect of migration on individuals' trajectories we will measure the social status before and after a migration.

To do so, we construct a 4 classes occupational hierarchy. We consider two classes of workers, unskilled or skilled, and two upper classes, farmers and white collars. All these occupations were coded from the initial label in the original sources. We aimed at constituting a measure of social status as well as a proxy for permanent income. In particular, we try to take into account ambiguities between wage-earner and owner. And we also try to control for changes of titles that are not changes of occupation. Taking advantage of this scale we define social mobility between any of these groups, excluding only mobility that occurs between farmer and white collar.

On the other hand, we observe wealth but only at one point, at death (Bourdieu, Postel-Vinay et al., 2004). So we have information on each individual's assets but only at the end of the trajectory. We use it to evaluate accumulation choices, even though we cannot distinguish between decisions and opportunities. What we observe is only the outcome of accumulation behaviours, without being able to explain which part of it results from choice and which part results from constraint. However, we can add some controls as the value of assets is heavily dependant on the moment and the place of death. First, those who die young had less time to accumulate and will have, on average, smaller assets. Second, assets ownership is both easier and more rewarding in the countryside than in the city (for instance, during the whole period, buying a single flat was impossible in Paris, only buildings were sold). Therefore, in all cases, we control by age and type of place of residence at death. This minimizes the bias introduced by using wealth at death.

Finally, we try to get a more accurate definition of wealth. We consider the gross value of the asset –excluding debts– to insure comparability across time (before 1901, debts were not recorded by fiscal records). But we can distinguish three kinds of assets: personal wealth, real estate and financial assets. This is quite an important topic as these assets may differently influence migration likelihood. For instance, some wealth may be needed to migrate, or at least to make a long distance migration, but, on the other side, land ownership may deter migration.

In a nutshell, we first consider intragenerational social mobility. We compare the occupation of each conscript at the beginning –at 20 years old– with his occupation later, at death or at marriage. Second, we explore wealth accumulation over the life cycle by considering the final position of each conscript: the wealth they have accumulated on the day they died. In each case we contrast migrant and stayers and consider different definitions of migrants.

Social mobility

To start we compute social mobility depending on the geographic mobility between twenty and forty-six years old. Table 1 gives the share of individuals experiencing social mobility according to their migration status. Overall migrants are much more mobile but both downward and upward: there are 10% less individuals who stay in the same social status among migrants than among stayers. But it also depends on the type of migration. For instance, long distance migrations are much more often associated with social mobility, especially with downward mobility. On the other hand, migrants to the city are much more prone to experience upward social mobility. In both cases, it may result either from different selection process –migrants to the city are better trained for instance or better fit for urban labor market– or from direct gains from migrating –as labor markets in the city may provide more opportunities to move socially. It is likely to be a combination of the two. Later on, by accounting for the selection effect, we will try to disentangle these two effects.

Overall, there is no clear pattern associated with migration. Indeed, migration seems to be a way to take advantage of opportunities but it is also risky and migrants are not always as successful. Part of this result may come from migrants' own characteristics: skills and ability may differ between migrants and stayers as well as between migrants. At this point, it is also difficult to exclude reverse causality: those who stay in the same job are less prone to move geographically. In fact, we may imagine they have some opportunities to improve their lot within the same job, something we cannot observe here.

< Table 1 > *around here*

However, in a first attempt to take into account differences between migrants and stayers, we consider personal characteristics of both groups. We control by education at the age of twenty, type of military service, age at which the second occupation is observed, geographic origin

(rural/urban/Paris) and orphanage status at the age of twenty. In most cases, results are robust to these controls (Table 2). Yet, there is one clear difference between the descriptive statistics and the regression estimates: migrants to the city don't seem to experience a higher social mobility. The effect is weak and not significant even though they have a higher probability to move socially downward than to stay in the same social status.

< Table 2 > *around here*

If we take a closer look at the patterns of social mobility, we can see that they are changing depending both on the socio-economic status and the type of migration considered (Table 3). Again, in most cases, migrants are more socially mobile that stayers. Overall, migrants have a higher probability to end as unskilled workers wherever occupation they start. Conversely, they have a lower probability to end up as farmer. This is certainly to be linked with the fact that farmers are less prone to move. In fact, when excluding conscripts who started as farmers, there are no more differences between migrants and stayers. And in all cases, long distance migrants are more socially mobile than stayers or short distance migrants. The only exception is that migrants do not have any significant advantages for ending up as white collars.

The results are opposed when considering rural to urban migration: there are no significant differences between migrants and stayers for all occupations except one: white collars. This may be linked with the fact that white collar are mostly urban jobs. To that extent, some rural-urban migrants do experience a upward mobility as they have 5% more chances to become white collar all other things equal. This is not to be neglected even if it compares badly with the 45% higher chances for conscripts starting as white collars to end up white collars.

< Table 3 > *around here*

The most striking result is that migrants from a rural area to the city did not experience higher upward social mobility or only little more. This may be linked to the way we define our categories but also to heterogeneity among rural-urban migrants. Another explanation may be linked to unobserved heterogeneity not at the migrant level but at the city level. Rural-urban is a rough indicator and it may not capture adequately the heterogeneity among municipalities.

Wealth accumulation

Secondly, we compute wealth at death for both migrants and stayers. Results presented in Table 4 clearly show that migrants have less wealth than stayers. This may be linked to the high cost of migrating as well as to different strategies or tastes regarding assets accumulation. As partible inheritance was the only rule in France, this result cannot be explained by differential value of inheritance. But individuals may made different use of inherited wealth depending on their migration choice. Indeed, wealthier individuals may have more incentives to stay (for instance if they own a farm) which may partly explain these results.

< Table 4 > *around here*

Again, we must take into account conscripts' personal characteristics. We control by the same variables as in the previous section. We run two estimates. First, we estimate the probability of having some asset, the equivalent of half a minimum income –buffer stock savings or so. Second, we use a linear regression and estimate the log of wealth in an attempt to take into account outliers and the huge heterogeneity of wealth data. We compute log(wealth + 1) so as not to exclude those with no wealth at all[4]. Both estimations produce the same results. In all cases, it

[4] Using a Tobit model does not alter the results.

does confirm the lower assets value for migrants. Long distance migrants are significantly less wealthy than stayers.

< Table 5 > *around here*

< Table 6 > *around here*

Selection issues

Finally, in both cases (social mobility and wealth accumulation), there is an issue of migrants' selection. As we argue before, migrants are very likely to be selected, positively (Long, 2005) or negatively (Abramitzky, Boustan et al., 2009). And, indeed, it has been demonstrated that 19th century France migrants were positively selected according to distance, for instance by education (Heffernan, 1989) or wealth (Bourdieu, Postel-Vinay et al., 2000). Therefore, migration decision is endogenous: if the more skilled or dynamics individuals from the countryside move to the city, it is likely we observe them being more socially mobile even though in the case where labor markets in the city are not different from those in the country. In other words, would migrants have experienced social mobility had they not migrated?

We will use family characteristics –for instance father's geographic mobility before the birth of his children– to take into account migrants' selection. To control for the initial level of wealth we will use wealth of the father. This will allow us to measure wealth mobility for the conscripts and not only their wealth accumulation. This may also help to determine if the lower wealth level of migrants is related to their migration experience or to selection effect linked with the fact that wealthier individuals move less.

[work in progress].

Concluding remarks

At the end of the 19th century, France experienced at the same time high economic growth that creates spatial heterogeneity and standardization of education. Then we expect social mobility to be high. We show that, indeed, migrants are more socially mobile but they also have much less wealth than stayers. Surprisingly enough, migrants' higher social mobility doesn't seem to be related to cities.

This may be linked to the high cost of migrating as well as to different strategies or tastes regarding assets accumulation: wealth accumulation and migration seem to be to different and non-overlapping options. Again, at this point, it is not clear if migrants are less likely to accumulate wealth or wealthy individuals are less likely to migrate. But it seems than wealth accumulation is a local phenomenon.

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Tables

Table 1. Social mobility depending on geographic mobility

	Social mobility			
	Downward	None	Upward	KHI²
Different commune				
Migrants	22.9	62.0	15.1	17.8***
Stayers	15.6	72.8	11.6	
Different département				
Migrants	22.6	60.7	16.7	13.9***
Stayers	17.6	70.8	11.6	
Distance				
Long distance	27.8	57.4	14.8	
Short distance	17.2	68.4	14.4	27.4***
Stayers	15.2	74.3	10.4	
Rural to urban				
Migrants	23.1	62.6	14.3	3.7
Stayers	18.4	68.5	13.1	
Urban to rural				
Migrants	23.1	55.8	21.2	13.0***
Stayers	18.7	69.0	12.3	
Number of migrations				
None	15.6	72.8	11.6	
Between 0 and 2	21.5	62.5	16.0	23.84***
Between 2 and 5	26.6	56.6	16.8	
More than 5	23.7	67.7	8.6	

Note: Figures are the share of individuals experiencing different types of social mobility. Distance is maximum migration distance between twenty and forty-six years old. Social mobility is compared between 20 years old and either death or marriage.

Table 2. Effect of migration status on the probability of upward or downward mobility – multinomial logistic model

	Social mobility			
	Downward	Upward	N	Log likelihood
Different commune				
Migrants	0.692 ***	0.365 **	1146	-937.4
Stayers	ref.	ref.		
Distance				
Long distance	0.918 ***	0.369 *		
Short distance	0.358	0.361	1146	-934.0
Stayers	ref.	ref.		
Rural to urban				
Migrants	0.392 *	0.176	1146	-945.0
Stayers	ref.	ref.		

Note: Figures are the coefficients of the model. They give the additional chances of experiencing a downward mobility (respectively an upward mobility) rather than no social mobility at all (also rather than no social mobility).
All models include controls for education at the age of twenty, type of military service, age at which the second occupation is observed, geographic origin (rural/urban/Paris) and orphanage status at the age of twenty.

Table 3. Effect of migration status on the probability of ending up in a given occupational status – probit model (marginal effects)

	Unskilled		Skilled		Farmer		White	
Panel A: Different commune								
Initial occupation								
Unskilled	ref.		ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.
Skilled	-0.395 ***	0.034	0.444 ***		-0.043 *	-0.009	0.043 *	0.034 *
Farmer	-0.326 ***	0.098	-0.111 **	-0.041	0.356 ***		0.006	0.010
White collar	-0.291 ***	ref.	0.022	-0.022	0.041	0.008	0.454 ***	
Migrants	0.080 ***	0.113 ***	0.044	0.066 **	-0.072 ***	-0.004	0.015	0.022
Stayers	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.
Panel B: Migration distance								
Initial occupation								
Unskilled	ref.		ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.
Skilled	-0.400 ***	0.033	0.440 ***		-0.036	-0.008	0.044	0.034 *
Farmer	-0.326 ***	0.100	-0.113 **	-0.043	0.361 ***		0.006	0.010
White collar	-0.292 ***	ref.	0.020	-0.023	0.047	0.010	0.456 ***	
Long distance	0.122 ***	0.145 ***	0.074 *	0.106 ***	-0.088 ***	-0.007	0.011	0.026
Short distance	0.033	0.090 **	0.005	0.030	-0.023	0.001	0.020	0.023
Stayers	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.
Panel C: Rural to urban migration								
Initial occupation								
Unskilled	ref.		ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.
Skilled	-0.395 ***	0.037	0.443 ***		-0.038	-0.009	0.045 **	0.035 **
Farmer	-0.332 ***	0.087	-0.115 **	-0.047	0.373 ***		0.001	0.005
White collar	-0.292 ***	ref.	0.019	-0.025	0.044	0.008	0.452 ***	
Migrants	0.043	0.054	0.016	0.007	-0.041 **	0.0018	0.048 **	0.044 **
Stayers	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.

Note: In each case, we perform two regressions; one including all initial occupations, the other excluding those coming from the same initial occupation (so excluding unskilled at 20 when determining the probability to end up unskilled). It means we consider only those socially mobile. Figures are marginal effects. They give the increased chances to end up in a given occupational status.
All models include the same controls as in table 3.

Table 4. Average wealth at death depending on life-cycle migrations and place of residence

	Place of residence		
	Rural	**Urban**	**Paris**
Different commune			
Migrants	84.1	45.1	73.4
	3975	8075	6501
Stayers	90.1	49.2	84.8
	8882.299	27585.96	5893.255
Different département			
Migrants	81.2	45.1	73.4
	3595	8075	9159
Stayers	88.8	49.2	80.9
	7098.182	27585.96	4262.903
Distance			
Long distance	90.1	49.2	84.8
	3077	4226	2956
Short distance	87.5	41.2	73.7
	4932	11829	10977
Stayers	80.8	48.9	73.1
	8882	27586	5893

Note: Figures are average wealth at death (in constant francs, FF 1914) depending on the type of place of residence at death and geographic mobility before forty-six years old.

Table 5. Effect of migration status on the probability to have at least 250 francs – probit model (marginal effects)

	All sample	Excluding farmers	Urban only
Different commune			
Migrants	-0.160 ***	-0.145 **	-0.037
Stayers	ref.	ref.	ref.
Distance			
Long distance	-0.221 ***	-0.176 ***	-0.008
Short distance	-0.096	-0.097	-0.065
Stayers	ref.	ref.	ref.
Rural to urban			
Migrants	0.017	0.042	0.161
Stayers	ref.	ref.	ref.

Table 6. Effect of migration status on the value of assets at death (in logarithm) – OLS

	All sample	Excluding farmers	Urban only
Different commune			
Migrants	-1.236 ***	-1.086 **	-0.215
Stayers	ref.	ref.	ref.
Distance			
Long distance	-1.665 ***	-1.321 ***	-0.100
Short distance	-0.734	-0.779	-0.316
Stayers	ref.	ref.	ref.
Rural to urban			
Migrants	0.322	0.488	1.640 *
Stayers	ref.	ref.	ref.