

Immigrants' location in France

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Immigration and internal mobility have often been closely related in France. At the end of the 19th century, the creation of locations' register systems was the result of a growing political concern about immigrant workers (Noiriel 1988). Even if the nature of concerns have changed, international, internal and social mobilities are still a burning issue. Indeed the 2005 civil unrest in France led to a lengthy discussion about their high proportion in poor housing projects and the concentration of problems in those specific suburbs. Such a link between international mobility and location in the destination country is not specific to France. Control of internal mobility of immigrants is still a component of immigration policies in some countries while others plan to develop it (Héran 2007).

In the same time, the development of the European common market has led to facilitate internal mobility at the continental scale. Thus internal mobility of immigrants appears as an opportunity for the destination country. Some studies conducted in the United States underlines the potential individual and collective benefits of immigrants' higher propensity to move (Borjas 2001). As they have already once decided to move, immigrants are supposed be less reluctant to search for the best jobs opportunities. The hypothesis is that they are more efficient in responding to job location changes whereas natives only move if the differential is high enough to compensate their higher moving costs. Thus immigrants can play an important role in the good allocation of resources : their own interests may "grease the wheels" of the receiving country labor market.

Issues at stake in the location of immigrants and their descendants in their destination country are numerous. On a demographic point of view, it is an opportunity to join two scales of mobility often separately studied. The mobility of immigrants does not stop just after the boarder of their destination country and they might have specific internal mobility patterns relatively to natives. Their trajectories deserves to be analyzed. As children opportunities could be a component of the international mobility project, the trajectories of the descendants of immigrants should also be studied. Their situations could be compared with their parents' housing conditions but they have also to be compared with the other natives trajectories. That is why residential mobility and housing conditions could help to reveal potential discriminations faced by immigrants and their descendants.

Maps regularly drawn to show the geographical distribution of foreigners (Wisniewski 1974, Desplanques 1991, 1996, Noiriel 2002) suggest the specific location of immigrants in France. Different indicators have been proposed to analyze their concentration at different levels (Desplanques 1996, Safi 2007). They give a broad view of the distribution of immigrants at a national level but few information about its dynamics at a micro level. Indeed such cross sectional approaches ignore individual trajectories whereas similar patterns at a macro level can be lead by very different growth flows or composition effects (white flight or avoidance, local ethnic network, population turn-over...). And those micro level dynamics determine the situation of areas and immigrants in France.

Using data from censuses and civil-registration records, the INSEE's Permanent Demographic Sample (EDP) gives the opportunity to study 900 000 trajectories of people who reside or have resided in metropolitan France since 1968. This panel data is representative at any given moment in time and gives the rare opportunity to analyze in France the situation of a very high number of immigrants. Immigrants and their descendants are hardly studied at a national level in France because of the lack of direct information about country and nationality at birth of people and their parents. However some administrative data contain this information. Instead of restricting oneself to working with statistics based on the current nationality of people, this administrative data should be used. The combination of civil registers and the census provide the panel survey EDP with a sufficient number of observations to develop detailed analysis. The study of the location and housing conditions for long periods of time will give a broader view of the living conditions of immigrants and their descendants. We will focus on neighborhood characteristics and housing conditions. But social mobility will also be part of this study.

Paying attention to the spatial dimension of immigration can lead to new evaluations of its effect on the receiving country. First the location of immigrants might play an important role in the perception people have about immigration. Moreover we already mentioned Borjas work about immigrants' internal mobility in the receiving country : the returns of immigration tend to increase if the specific internal mobility of immigrants is taken into account. By changing the results of economic evaluations, it could influence public policies. In the perspective of future migrations driven, for example, by climate change, the spatial dimension of immigration in the receiving country deserves to be study.