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Literature on Job Mobility in Belgium

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III. Literature on Job Mobility in Belgium

1. Preamble

Belgium has no tradition in the study of mobility¹, as evidenced by the fact that it has carried out only one national survey on «mobility of households», in 1999, while neighbouring countries have recurrently developed studies of this kind since the sixties. What little information there is of national scope concerning the mobility of households is taken from ten-yearly censuses and does not cover country-wide commuting home/work travel. Such data are generally used in a «transport» perspective (behavioural medium) rather than from the viewpoint of «mobility» (behaviour). Consequently, most Belgian studies apparently to do with mobility are actually about transport, dealing essentially with structural availability and modelling aimed at developing traffic control or pollution monitoring tools associated with travel.

This being so, the question linking employment, mobility and family life has so far never been openly explored in Belgian scientific research even though a number of research elements do implicitly provide some information about it.

2. Job mobility and motility

From a quantitative standpoint, the Mobel survey (Hubert and Toint, 2002) is the only one to date to cover the mobility of households throughout the whole of Belgium. At present, together with ten-yearly census data², it is the sole ‘objectivizing’ national reference when it comes to mobility. The data collected in the course of this work have served to identify various underlying schools of thought relating specifically to the mobility of Belgians. They form the basis of numerous studies and debates of the “Research Group on Transport (RGT)” of the University Faculties of Notre Dame de la Paix in Namur.

Aside from outlining aspects of mobility in Belgium, this survey does include elements of interest for the purposes of our present study. In Belgium, day-to-day mobility can be said to decrease with age, although less so among persons of a «higher» level of

¹ For this state-of-the-art analysis, aside from looking to bibliographical sources, we contacted some 200 researchers throughout Belgian universities and administrative research centres.

² The census data relate only to “home/work.” The latest information currently available is still that from 1991.

education than the rest of the population. Moreover, women travel locally more than men. The latter travel less and generally farther (essentially for work purposes) than their partners.

This having been said, household mobility surveys relate little or nothing as to what underlies how families function and travel or spatial mobility for professional reasons having nothing to do with travel on a day-to-day basis. Apart from daily commuting, their synchronic approach is of little use for our present investigations.

From a more qualitative standpoint, some works do address issues of mobility, notably those conducted at the Facultés Universitaires Saint-Louis by B. Montulet and his colleagues. In his theoretical work, «Mobility: space-time in society and the world today» (Montulet, 1998, 2005a), B. Montulet sets out to identify various forms of mobility. His approach goes beyond the conception of mobility as a monologist variable changing only in terms of intensity (very mobile and not-so-mobile people). If one views mobility as how action is perceived in space and time, i.e. spatial and temporal forms, this approach serves to avoid adopting a technical point of view of the phenomena of mobility that would confine travel to a space and time perceived as “objective.” More fundamentally, the author seeks to look at the social construction of forms that lead one to perceive what is termed time and space and, from there, to identify the forms of mobility valued in contemporary society and their influences on global social dynamics. This theoretical approach sets out clear elements to help ascertain the cultural context in which enhanced mobility and the emergence of this issue socially have come about.

B. Montulet develops a space-time theory which defines two extremes of spatial-temporal tension. On the one hand, there is «form-limit», where ‘de-limited’ space invokes a concept of permanent time. On the other hand, we have «organizing-form», where time is conceived as change expressed only as ephemeral, thus preventing any institutionalization of spatial boundaries. In this case, space becomes “extent.”

On the basis of this spatial-temporal tension, the author defines four types of mobility linking time and space, that is to say, ephemerality and eternity (permanence) on the one hand, and delimited space and extent on the other hand:

1. “Sedentary mobility” combines delimited space and permanence. In other words, for any one person, it is the delimitation of (their) space that is the more meaningful. It is from within this space that he/she engages in activities characterised by their recurrence.

2. “Reconstituted mobility” (Montulet 2005b) combines delimited space and ephemerality (time perceived as change). Reconstituted mobility is thus that of those who are still strongly attached to delimited spaces, but have along their life path been confronted with forms of uprooting.

3. “Kinetic mobility” combines extent and ephemerality. Ready to respond to each and every new opportunity arising in time, the kinetically-mobile covers the space between one point and another, without any boundary or delimitation being meaningful for the action. Here, it is indeed the relationship to time conceived as change that appears to prevail in the spatially static. The notion is still ephemeral.

4 “Incursive mobility,” finally, combines extent and permanence. Incursive mobility is akin to the kinetic functioning within an extent, but looking to time within in. The incursively-mobile “takes the time.” What is important here is discovering spaces while retaining total freedom as to the volatility of rootedness. Incursions are made into it. Hence the incursive is enthusiastic about technology which can speedily convey one to new spaces perceived as an integral part of the opportunity, not as a medium for activity.

These space-time rationales identified by types of mobility can be applied to various metric theories of space and time according to the researcher’s analytical choices. They similarly apply to all concepts where «space» is used metaphorically. The author thus reveals the homology between types of mobility identified in physical space and of a typology specific to the sociology of professional mobility³. «Types of mobility can also serve as a basis for professional mobility studies. With this in mind, Driver⁴ establishes a typology of career choices whose homology with our formal construction of mobility types is striking.» (Montulet, 1998, 172).

³ This type of homology can also easily be made with the couple types of J. Kellerhals.

⁴ “This typology, which is the most validated among those relating to careers according to Mercure, also proposes four types of pathway. The first, «the transitional», which we associate with ‘kinetic mobility’, designates a path where a job or occupational field is never chosen permanently. A ‘transitional’ simply goes from job to job with no particular aim in mind. The second, «the homeostatic», which we associate with ‘sedentary mobility’, “applies to anyone choosing a job and sticking to it forever.” The third, «the linear», refers to a situation or occupational field that is chosen very early on in life, but where an upward mobility plan within the field is developed and implemented.” This type could correspond to ‘reconstituted mobility’ in that attachment to an occupational field is the first consideration, even though value is attached to change within the activity. Finally, the fourth, «the spiral», refers to medium-term integration in a given chosen occupational field, in a fairly cyclical fashion, through career re-orientation in another field of activity. » We logically associate it with ‘incursive mobility’. Extracts commented by Mercure (Mercure, D. (1995) *Les temporalités sociales*. Paris: L’Harmattan, pp.111-112.” In: Montulet, B., (1998). *Les enjeux*. Paris: L’Harmattan, p172.

“More pragmatically, the study of forms of mobility in space ‘qualified as material’ can, for example, help us to understand the norms of the more or less high value placed on technologies of displacement and communication in various social contexts. It can also shed light on the ‘social mobility’ of the actors. Grafmeyer thus observes the use of various forms of ‘material’ mobility by actors not having the same resources in order to ensure their professional upward mobility⁵ (Grafmeyer, 1992). Concretely, some actors will prefer to opt for «sedentary mobility» rather than «kinetic mobility» to ensure the stability of their social status or upward mobility». (Montulet, 1998, 172)

The space-time perspective also provides insight into the particularities of a society. It thus leads one to perceive how, from a society where spatial delimitation and permanence were predominant in collective organisation, contemporary western European society has come to value a space-time relationship favouring the perception of time as ephemeral and the perception of space as extent.

Here «kinetic mobility» is enhanced. Adopting such behaviour thus constitutes an added plus for the individual actor in terms of potential for acceding to better social standing (Montulet, Kaufmann, 2004). It enhances the individualisation of behaviours through the need to reduce rootedness (be it in terms of «property» in physical space, or of the couple and family in emotional space). In return, collectively, the development of this form of space-time relationship favours the setting up of a sociality no longer based on the definition of durable social spaces as valued by the Nation-State in its structures, but on the construction of social networks favouring access to exclusivities for those knowing how to connect to them while excluding those not having the resources to do so. The corollary of this is that forms of mobility open up perspectives for studying norms of mobility according to social contexts. In this sense, forms of mobility can be viewed as resources for the actors in their various social games, whether it be in the «professional space», «emotional space» or «physical space».

Actors in whose interest it is to enhance kinetic space-time can be recognised by their ability to take advantage of opportunities, that is to say, by their aptitude to speculate on contingent changes and to take risks in relation to their present situation. This is mainly to do with their aptitude for mobility or for *mobilizing resources*. However, although this rests on risk-taking, it presupposes taking part in a game where the outcome may be negative. For the

⁵ See also the examples of spatial logic among banking executives, with or without titles, developed by Grafmeyer (Grafmeyer, 1992)

prudent player, this therefore means having a stable enough guarantee so as not to be part of the ante (what is actually at stake). Herein lies the paradox: where the not-so-foolhardy opt for the kinetic, they do so only through the assurance of stable guarantees elsewhere. These “reserves,” or *mobilizable* resources are, by definition, set in a duration and thus appear to be spatialised.

So it is that in a society where flow is organised, the balance of equity tips in favour of ‘resourceful’ actors because they have the potential to develop new connections at a lesser risk. Yet, given that the environment is ever-changing, the greater the number of connections, the lesser the risk of being excluded from the dynamics, even though all of these connections are not equally determinant. Space and time are indissociable, hence it is for the sociologist to uncover where the one is situated when the other is in the forefront.

“With talk everywhere of liberalisation and the opening up of the markets for goods and communications, it is interesting to note, *a contrario*, what is happening in immigration control. While mobility is being promoted, «de-localisation» outside the reference framework of the labour market or family is discouraged. Looking into the spatial-temporal workings would certainly shed light on the lines of reasoning underlying the construction/deconstruction of the European political space/area” (Montulet, 1998, 190-191).

On the basis of this theory, Camille Thiry (Thiry, 2004) examines the relationship between the «physical» mobility of the young (what is termed ‘actual mobility’), their «virtual» mobility via the Internet, and their projective identity (oneiric or ‘dreamlike’ space).

She demonstrates first of all just how restricting a norm of «mobility» can be in the process of building one’s identity. «We at times noted the same tension between actual and virtual mobility of the identity on the one hand, and projective mobility on the other hand. Some form-limit youngsters perceive leaving school as a break-up, a time when they must start «to live up to what is expected of them». They consequently believe they have to leave their parents, to «get moving», to open up to ‘otherness’, and to explore the outside world. This tension seems to depend on the degree of integration of the societal norm enhancing the organizing-form morphology. These young people have in fact deeply integrated the injunction (as conveyed by the media, peers, and the education system) that they «have to get a move on», but this deeply impacts their very nature. They find themselves torn between the dominant referent and their current lifestyle, and are thus filled with apprehension about their future which appears vague and abstract». (Thiry, 2004, 133)

She further shows that there is no determinism between virtual mobility and spatial mobility. The relationship between these two forms of mobility therefore continues being “hyped-up” by the system of perception, of representation, and by the life plan of each individual. There is consequently no determination of any virtual technology usage on spatial practices.

In the study entitled «Temporalités urbaines et organisation des transports», B. Montulet, M. Hubert and Ph. Huynen, delve deeper into the relationships between the organisation of time and mobility. For their research purposes, they conducted interviews in Brussels of the parents of children under the age of 12, empirically identifying five types of «temporal attitudes» (Montulet, 2005c):

- The «regular-as-clockwork», for whom the relationship to time is passive, where activities just happen with no planning required. The activities merely occur at given and regular times and never overrun the time frames allocated to them. “Run-of-the-mill” kind of people are usually either inactive or hold subordinate jobs.

- The «strict planner» wants to control time and therefore strictly organises and plans forthcoming activities. This is often associated with poor if any adaptability to change and unforeseen events. There is some degree of improvisation, but within previously defined time frames.

- The «flexible planner» seeks to control time. Regularity is appreciated, but all the while defying routine. Although activity planning continues to provide structure, novelty and change still remain a possibility.

- The «reactive improviser» constantly responds to a changing environment that presents new opportunities for activities. Mastering time means constantly having the capacity to meet all demands. Planning is therefore not something restricting/limiting/overly-structuring, but a possible scenario of dealing with constraints in time.

- The «impulsive improviser» rejects all time constraints that would stand in the way of what one wants to do when one wants to do it. All forms of programming/scheduling are therefore perceived as restrictive. Controlling time thus merges into improvisation as in the sense of being able to choose what is happening when it happens.

These five types of attitude towards time can be observed in both professional

situations and in family life. Any one individual's attitude here is frequently influenced by his/her activities. For example, planning (flexible or strict) is often associated with family life management, while reactive improvisation is frequently referred to, by those in professional executive positions, as an appropriate response to time in the realm of working life. Inversely, a person's generic temporal attitude may have them preferring or avoiding such or such an activity. The authors moreover show that, although a good many of those interviewed have a homogeneous temporal attitude (which may or not be due to the quest for coherence in the interviewing process), some do adopt a variety of attitudes to time depending on the sphere of life (work, family, leisure) being referred to.

For instance, one of the cases examined is that of a divorcee having custody of the children every other week. She explains that during the week that the children are with her, everything is programmed (strict planning) so that everybody's needs can be met; during the other week, she does not have to keep an eye on the time and is better able to address constraints at work, i.e. working late or going off to attend a meeting abroad (reactive improviser). Childcare planning thus becomes a structuring factor for professional mobility outside the space of the day-to-day.

Another case is that of a multi-national executive who gives up endless travelling throughout Europe to spend more time with the family. In order not to lose too much in the way of salary or socio-professional status, this person currently combines long hours of commuting with days of tele- (or remote-) working.

This research also reveals that all of the parents of children aged under twelve speak of how the child's arrival restricted their mobility, either because of the need to have to adjust to its pace of life or the difficulty of transporting all the 'paraphernalia' needed for its wellbeing.

The study similarly shows how combining work and childcare responsibilities calls for time (temporal) strategies. This may involve opting for part-time working, or the job itself can become the "adjustment variable" for family needs in the case of a worker free to organise his/her own working time. Tele- or distance-working is a way for some to continue doing a full-time job while not always being "at/in the office." As this particular study demonstrates, it is perfectly possible for a father to be at home during the day while engaging in a self-employed activity where some business can be conducted during evening hours.

This need for time strategies is often linked to «quality of life» so that there is more

time for family and less time spent/lost on day-to-day travel. This is in keeping with the wishes of men wanting to be “more active on the home front, especially as parents” (Fusulier and al., 2005, 224).

This line of enquiry moreover also highlights “time gender/ing.” A recurrent theme in almost all of the interviews with parents of children under 12 years of age is that the female is “in charge of domestic time-keeping,” whether or not she also has a job outside the home. She therefore has to manage recurrent daily events (meals, general childcare, laundry, etc...) not easily reconciled with rationales of improvisation - (see also Montulet 2005d, pp.3-24), as well as planning collective time (get-togethers with friends and family, and so on). So, what we see here is that, in addition to “doing double time,” women have to adopt extremely diverse attitudes to time between the realm of work and home, while the man can “make up time” at work while resting on his partner’s time management.

Positioning within the life cycle is clearly important in understanding attitudes to time. Most of the interviews concerned parents with very young children who were roughly at the same stage in their life cycle. The «impulsive» logic, present at the age of 20, can be identified among some parents who see themselves freed of professional and household obligations. The «impulsive» logic involving improvisation does not sit well with run-of-the-mill activities and responsibilities of caring for young children. Yet such responsibility is just one of the stages of a life cycle.

There are two further elements to be taken into consideration at this particular point for the purposes of our study. On the one hand, we can observe that the future spatial autonomisation of teenage children is anticipated when it comes to the choice of location of a new family home. On the other hand, for some, there is the importance of being able to have children when they come out of school being cared for at the parents’ place of work until they can travel home together.

Finally, the links between attitudes to time and the use of means of transport were also tested quantitatively within the scope of this research. From an exploratory investigative standpoint, the authors manage to demonstrate not only significant statistical links between temporal attitudes and choice of means of transport, but also between temporal attitudes and the value and expectations placed on means of transport.

Other more specific research works also provide interesting input for our study. Serge

Schmitz (Schmitz, S., 2001, 2004), for example, has looked at the last remaining rural municipalities in Belgium. In his research, he observes a demographical renewal stemming from daily mobility possibilities as well as pre-existing local relations allowing for property and/or land to be inherited or acquired at low cost.

He moreover notes that «when they decided to live in the countryside beyond peri-urban spaces, most inhabitants living in national or international life spaces invest part of their capital in local relations». (Schmitz, S., 2004, 65).

He further observes that «residential mobility and change of work places are not directly a handicap for integrating local social networks unless they translate a precariousness (loss of security) that does not allow the person to integrate local social networks for relatively long periods of time. Nevertheless, the influence of residential mobility is marked via its effects on daily mobility. Choices between the local social networks of former places of residence and the new place of residence are made according to the strategies and aspirations of the inhabitants». (Schmitz, S., 2004, 66)

Through his study of the genesis of urban transport management engineering in the USA in the 1920-1930s, Pierre Lannoy (Lannoy, 2004)⁶, demonstrates that the notion of flow is a social construction imposed by a corporation of engineers in their quest for legitimacy. His research shows how the acceptance of traffic management norms and instruments making it possible (traffic lights, semaphore signalling...) was difficult to achieve. By default, he thus shows both the importance of learning specific traffic-related skills and the authoritarian nature of imposing behaviours which to us today appear perfectly normal.

Lastly, in his study concerning the city of Charleroi, Sébastien Nahon (Nahon, 2001) stresses the value(s) placed on mobility and flexibility by the inhabitants who do not want to see their personal identity associated with this city.

«Others, inversely, refuse the past, defining themselves as opposed to their region, and willingly adopt a disdainful attitude to their fellow citizens, their anti-modernism, their passiveness. How they look to portray themselves is then telling first and foremost of the cultural break with the region, exaggerating their flexibility, their capacity to be mobile, to

⁶ Lannoy, P., (2004), La mécanique des flux: l'ingénierie du trafic routier comme politique d'intégration. In Montulet, B., Kaufmann, V. Mobilités, fluidités,... libertés ? Bruxelles: Publication des Facultés Saint-Louis, pp.99-119.

live and adapt positively in all cities of the world. The regions they elect to live in are exclusively substitutable. Under the cover of a proud perception of themselves, and indeed sometimes a veneer of how heroic they have been, such actors flee from a world, refusing to return to their origins, as if in spite of themselves they had changed their identity in an intense confusion». (Nahon, 2001, 71)

3. Family functioning, family structure, family development

As regards family-related data, Belgium has an interesting bank of information thanks to the «Panel Survey on Belgian Households» (Doutrelepoint and al., 2004). It relates to eleven waves of surveys conducted between 1992 and 2002 on a sampling of 3000 households. Although no mobility study has been compiled on the basis of this data, a number of research works based on the findings of this panel are of interest to us in this present study as regards « Job market » and «Quality of life».

There are no studies as such linking evolutions in family life and questions of mobility in Belgium. Three research works do, however, address issues closely relating to our present theme.

One such work, entitled «L'évolution contemporaine de la parentalité», by Marquet and al. Marquet and al. (2005) looks at the evolution of family structures in Belgium. What is original in their approach is that it is essentially from a male standpoint. Parentality (or parenthood) is viewed, on the one hand symbolically, in an attempt to analyze how the legal framework has evolved as regards the formation, functioning and break-up of the family. On the other hand, more practically, by seeking to elucidate the concrete means deployed by individuals at grips with what is at stake in the re-composed or re-constituted family realm, it places the emphasis on emergent forms of life (or lifestyle) and the problems encountered day-to-day.

While also working in cooperation with the above, B. Fusulier (Fusulier, 2003, 2005 a, b) (Fusulier and al. 2005) has developed his own line of enquiry into the conjunction of working life and home/family life. His research seeks to identify and compare, at an international scale, various models of working life and home life balancing models, by looking at the same time at the gender factor in the equation and the national social welfare or work organisation structures tipping the balance one way or the other.

Fusulier thus identifies four theoretical models linking work and family (Fusulier, forthcoming):

A. The cumulative non-gendered model: men and women engage on equal terms in the professional and domestic sphere;

B. The gendered cumulative model: one or other of the genders invests massively in the sphere of activity traditionally reserved for the other gender, with the latter doing little in the second sphere (e.g. women have as much of a professional career as men, but they also look after the family and run the home);

C. The alternative non-gendered model: the investment in one or other sphere is independent of gender (e.g. a man is just as likely to be at home as a woman);

D. The alternative gendered-model: each gender invests in a sphere not invested in by the other (e.g. men at work, women at home).

Unfortunately for our research purposes, although the author is particularly sensitive to the question of professional flexibility, the issue of mobility is not addressed.

Finally, the studies of F.Degrave (Degrave and al., 2002) provide input as to the institutional context of family help and childcare.

4. Job market

Here again, although surveys concerning the job market do exist in Belgium, none of them actually directly link working life, family and mobility. Works have of course been conducted on commuting long distance mobility, but the questioning in this case concerns organisational aspects or economic impact. Furthermore, commuting long distance mobility (type 1) is generally considered as an epiphenomenon and its effects on the family are thus not examined.

A workshop on professional mobility was organised as part of the «Women and Mobility» conference held in Liège in August 2005, but the transcripts are not yet available. Some elements should, however, be of interest to us (Cornet, 2005).

A number of other works are also to be mentioned at this juncture. L. Thomsin (Thomsin, 2002) looks at the system of tele-working introduced by the company IBM when

moving to a site that is almost only accessible by car. This system applies only to a population of highly-qualified workers.

This researcher reports a saving in time as regards both work and family life and, according to the people questioned, this makes for a better balance between the two. As for mobility, she does indeed note a reduced mobility of workers at “rush hours,” but a significant increase in travel outside normal office hours.

Claire Gavray (Gavray, 2004a, b, 2005) (Broze and al., 2002) develops her research around the issue of gender as regards access to the labour market. “Our findings confirm that the process of job market integration is no longer either immediate or automatic among the younger generation. Moreover, the data show that getting started on a career path is gender-related.” Our research similarly revealed a progressive linking of socio-cultural, family, professional and human capital dimensions in the construction of life paths. Gender and relations between the sexes in society today can also be seen to impact in terms of employment. Our study findings show this to be so as regards the job market from the very outset of working life. Getting started in a job thus continues to be difficult for women because of family considerations, and initial professional opportunities tend to heighten or alleviate this factor. On the whole and in time, the gap in terms of positioning and resources widens not only between men and women, but also between women and social groups owing mainly to the persistence of the phenomenon of social homogamy within couples. A ‘high-flying’ career often continues to rest on one of a lower calibre. Here, the structuring and sharing of time reveal themselves to be major issues, both within couples and on the job market. While having diplomas can play a crucial role in getting a job, this is by no means as emancipating for women. One can observe that while a man is establishing his career, the woman usually barely manages to hold down a job - assuming she can - given the major hurdles facing women with no qualifications.

More highly-qualified women, and especially young mothers, like less-qualified young men, feel the greatest frustration and suffer most from lack of recognition. In reaction to this, but sometimes also proactively, they deploy certain “protective” demographic strategies in a bid to achieve autonomy and satisfy their aspirations for freedom of action. Such strategies confirm women in their position of social actor and somewhat compensate for the problems of family and job market ‘negotiations’. Both groups are in some ways penalised because of the persistence of gender-related expectations and traditional balances of

powers between men and women on the one hand, and between the masculine and feminine on the other. Work and job market organisation is still largely the domain of men maintaining a clear separation between personal and social integration. While it is acceptable in certain respects for women aspiring to a career to have children, men do tend to delegate and offload their "care" duties as quickly as they can. Moreover, corporate employers do not always look favourably upon male employees, colleagues or partners, especially those in executive positions, sharing the responsibilities of fatherhood, let alone enjoying or finding an identity in this role. This can sometimes lead to competition between the different spheres and tension in relations between the sexes. This impacts evolution of the concept of 'family' and 'the couple' and the problems they face. Promoting an alternative model of the diversification of male/female commitments is all the more arduous in a context that exacerbates competitiveness, and where dictates of mobility and flexibility at all levels are omnipresent and not up for discussion. This remains true even in a context where men are gaining awareness of the illusions of the power of gratification of a job and where young people of both sexes are starting off with the desire to 'get the most' out of life, to have time to themselves, and to explore the many facets of self-fulfilment.» (Gavray, 2004a, 317-319)

Studies by D. Mortelmans (Mortelmans and al., 2006; Buyens and al., 2008; Heylen and al., 2006; Heylen and al., 2005; Soens and al., 2005; Kuppens and al., 2004; Mortelmans and al. 2006) on career development can also be of interest to us in that they help to identify the proportions of "job nomads" (Type 9), as well as bring to light the diversity of career rationales.

Type of professional occupation noted during the PSBH (1992-2002)⁷

	N	%
1. Stable occupation	778	50.36
2. Job succession	355	22.98
3. Form succession (combination of part-time and full-time)	246	15.92
4. Combination of 2 and 3	146	9.45
5. Others (hyper-transitional)	20	1.29
Total	1545	100%

⁷ Doutrelepon R, Mortelmans D, Casman MT, (2004), Onze ans de vie en Belgium [Eleven years of life in Belgium], Gent: Académia Press, p. 347.

Furthermore, D. Mortelmans generally remains attentive to the dimension of gender in his analyses. One good example of these works is given in the “Panel Survey on Belgian Households.” Among the workers who pursued their activity during the nine years of the study (N=1545, namely 36.3% of the PSBH sample), D. Mortelmans and A. Kuppens distinguish “stable career paths” and less linear paths. Among the latter, they differentiate:

- *Succession of jobs: full-time occupations.* While frequently changing jobs is fashionable today, this is also telling of a labour market reality. This category is characterised by the transition to new full-time employment. Such transitions occur mainly in full-time occupations and remain relatively rare among part-time workers. There exists a distinction between individuals who change jobs once only and “out-and-out nomads” who had several different ones during the nine-year period. Professional nomadism is not always a personal choice. In a number of cases, there is a period of unemployment preceding the start of a new job. There is also a pattern of “new job-unemployment,” where the period of joblessness occurs after the professional transition, showing that a career path of this kind is not always to do with a personal strategy of “forging a career.” This category also includes workers forced to change jobs regularly for reasons other than personal choice. In such cases, this is not “professional nomadism” in the strict sense of the term. Other types of status sometimes intertwined here are unpaid work and inactivity due to a handicap of some kind. These are therefore transitional trajectories with a rapid succession of different statuses.

- *Succession of work regimes: alternation of full-time and part-time working.* The alternation of full-time and part-time employment is also a frequent pattern. This succession of work regimes usually occurs within the same function and leads to a succession of periods of full-time and part-time employment within the scope of a fixed/stable/permanent job. It is interesting to note the temporary nature of part-time working. A period of several years of part-time working succeeds a full-time occupation, after which the worker resumes a full-time activity. This pattern can be repeated many times throughout a career. Part-time work therefore represents a temporary strategy implemented along the career path and rarely constitutes a permanent form of work. Successions of different regimes can sometimes include periods of unpaid work. Often this status is combined with others. Among a number of the people questioned, the transition to part-time working corresponds to a handicap. The part-time job is then preceded or followed by a period of inactivity. This same inference can apply to periods of unemployment. In this case, the choice of a part-time job is not necessarily the result of a carefully thought out personal strategy. It can also happen that temporary part-

time work is not a matter of personal choice, but a solution dictated by a given set of circumstances.

- *Combination: alternation of different occupations and part-time working.* A small group of workers (3.4 %) combines changes of jobs and work regimes. They thus move simultaneously or successively from one job and work regime to another. In some cases, the transition to a new occupation is combined with a change of work regime. In other cases, the worker first changes jobs, then switches to another work regime the following year. These are highly transitional trajectories involving a great many transitions.

- *Hypertransitionally active.* Not all professional paths can be characterised by a clearly identifiable pattern. Such non-coherent professional types are classed under the category “hypertransitional paths.” During the course of their career, some of those questioned come to have all kinds of professional status and undertake as many transitions as possible to and from the job market. Here trajectories have no clear pattern or main status. Inactivity can be due to a handicap, unemployment, unpaid work, full-time work, part-time work, the interim period between jobs: this category combines all possible kinds of status. Retirement is not however taken into account. Our analysis groups together these hypertransitional trajectories in a single category. This group is to be regarded as a heterogeneous one covering the scenarios not easy to categorise.” (Kuppens, Mortelmans, 2004, 350-352).

Other works to be mentioned are those of M. Alaluf (Alaluf, 2004) and his team on immigration and employment which can be of interest for our study. Similarly akin to our studies are those of T. Périlleux (Périlleux, 2001) on the flexibilisation of labour, and those of P. Vendramin (Vendramin, 2004) or I. Glorieux (Glorieux, Vandeweyer, 2002a, b) on working time and time-budgets, even though they do not address mobility issues as such. Finally, the «grey» literature (For example: Dries, 2005, Petitjean, 2001) also refers to studies very close to ours.

5. Social integration, social capital

In the collective work «Mobilité, Fluidité... Libertés?» (Montulet, Kaufmann, 2004), V. Kaufmann and B. Montulet et al. investigate the links between spatial mobility and social fluidity. They show how mobility has come to be enhanced, among others, through the confusion between social mobility and spatial mobility, and how mobility has consequently

become fundamental in social structuring.

«Since its origins, industrial society has enhanced social mobility, for it serves to found collective development dynamics on individuals' desire to improve their personal socio-economic standing. People strive to be productive in the hope of improving their living conditions and social status based on merit. This presupposes two principles. The first asserts individual freedom in the definition and achievement of one's plan for a better station in life. The second appeals to the equality in principle of individuals so that a prescribed original status can no longer hinder the desired social ascent. Paradoxically, this is an egalitarian discourse in the competition for what are in principle inegalitarian statuses. The paradox is generally lifted through the implementation of procedures aimed at ensuring an initial equality for the various actors. Critical sociology has often highlighted the inadequacies of such procedures.

The contemporary value placed on spatial mobility is part of this. Spatial mobility today embodies the idea of freedom. Through it, the individual would be free to establish the desired contacts unhindered by spatial or temporal considerations. This discourse also provides for an interpretation in terms of social mobility, where it is implied that the individuals most likely to occupy enviable social positions are also those ready to merge into a rationale of unfettered mobility. So it is that the contemporary ideology of spatial mobility confounds spatial mobility and social fluidity; in other words, it surmises through a shift in meaning that mobility in space necessarily makes for the fair distribution of individuals in the social scale. All it would then take is to promote accessibility to promote a level playing field socially. Through this confusion between physical space and social space, liberal industrial dynamics garner a twofold advantage.

The first is that it allows liberal economic ideology to develop by refuting all collective constraints seeing that, in this concept of reticulated material space, the individual would be free to be spatially and therefore socially mobile. Promoting physical mobility would thus be tantamount to enhancing individual promotion. On the one hand, this concept perceives mobility as a socially neutral process, which motility studies have denounced. On the other hand, this ideological concept refutes the social constraints and demands which *de facto* render such mobility non-egalitarian. Refusing to be spatially mobile – or being prevented from it – is in this concept likened to refusing to promote oneself as an individual, or dropping out of the social-climbing race. He who is immobile is a *loser*.

The second advantage garnered by the ideological dynamics thus has to do with the moral pressure that leads the actors into actually being more mobile. Individual mobility becomes an assertion of individuality. Mobility as a demand is consequently in itself continually reinforced, thereby fuelling the demands of flexibility expected by economic developments. The pressure of physical mobility complained about by the «highly mobile» is internalised through the individual claim to status-related aspirations. The tension between these aspirations and the ‘hassle’ of undesired mobility is particularly perceptible in the call for a “right to mobility.” This is often merely the expression of a desire to preserve the potentiality of mobility of the individual actor. In other words, it is about «keeping doors open» in a social context one has no control over in order to assert one’s individual freedom in regard to future potential, or to assert one’s freedom to access the desired mobility. This interpretation sheds light on the apparent paradox of people who express their suffering at being too mobile on the one hand, while clamouring for a “right to mobility” on the other hand. The ideological trap closes, however, when the call for a “right to mobility” sees itself interpreted not as a guarantee in the face of an uncertain future, but as a desire to be more mobile. Under this ideological interpretation, the right to mobility will rapidly translate as new demands to be more mobile.

The contemporary development of mobility continues having responsibility for his/her destiny rest on the individual, all the while refuting the fact that social structures also come into play in mobility behaviours, that there are social constraints to mobility, and that the opportunities to evolve in terms of socio-economic status which the individual responds to through physical mobility are just as much the fulfilment of desired opportunities as choices by default. Mobility as the embodiment of freedom consequently loses substance.

Far from an ideological development, contemporary mobility is just as much the result of ever more improbable socio-spatial mainstays that impose undesired mobility as the freeing of mainstays to fulfil desired individual plans. They are as much factors of inequality as of equality seeing as they constitute a resource that is unequally distributed socially, while promoting access to resources unequally distributed in space. They are part of the processes of social hierarchical organisation and of social reproduction phenomena». (Montulet, Kaufmann, 2004, 291-293)

The most assiduous users of the potential for speed provided by technical systems are frequently people whose daily life is locked into multiple constraints associated with the

professional sphere. Their mobility is often a more or less direct response to the flexibility employers demand of their personnel. Their mobility seems more of a submission to the system than a desired way out.

It therefore appears that high-speed mobility, often regarded in literature as an indicator of the growth of individual freedom in our societies, are on the contrary essential for social and professional integration. These forms of mobility are in fact increasingly necessary for linking up the various spheres of life in society. They make it possible to combine a maximum of activities more and more disseminated in space (taking the children to school, doing the shopping, keeping up with friends and family,...), while coordinating work, school or relational timetables». (Montulet, Kaufmann, 2004, 288)

Technical transport and telecommunication systems, although saving time, do not free one from the social constraints specific to each sphere of life. They merely facilitate the development of «remote» relations, which are just a new form of spatial and temporal coordination establishing social links.

Furthermore, the development of remote relations, since the start of modernity, has helped to separate the various spheres of life (work, family, leisure...) and gradually effaced the social controls stemming from one sphere of life over another, which for a long time was seen to be a source of individuation and freedom from constraints. However, this distancing of various spheres of life does nothing in providing insight into constraints brought to bear by one sphere of life over another. This poses few problems for the individual when each sphere of life operates in a partitioned space-time, with the range of demands and of control being specific to each space-time (the demands and controls of factory-working during work hours for example). However, when personal communication technologies provoke the porosity of spaces-times specific to activities, the individual is forced to combine the demands of each sphere without there for as much being any spatial superimposition. Yet, the less awareness the spheres have of one another, the less these demands are taken account of. Consequently, although social control has lost some of its totalizing nature with modernity, the demands of spheres of life are, for their part, maintained. The individual confronted with delocalised demands often has to recourse to his/her own spatial mobility in order to respond to them». (Montulet, Kaufmann, 2004, 289)