

Individualism: withdrawing to safe havens or opening up to like-minded people

The many reasons why people move to peri-urban areas

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Peri-urban areas are considered to exhibit certain characteristics of urban life but not of city life. They are seen as places where the vulnerable middle classes seek refuge among their own kind, behind a few rows of hedges. Images such as these should be abandoned in favour of a less uniform vision of the peri-urban area, seen through the prism of the social mechanisms that underpin its development.

Discussions about urban sprawl often refer to the peri-urban area as a residential “annex” where the city has spilled over into empty space. This blinkered view overlooks the fact that peri-urbanisation is, geographically speaking, a two-way process. To prove this point, I will draw on a survey conducted in the peri-urban area around the city of Dijon, during which I interviewed not only urban dwellers who had come to look for a house in the surrounding countryside, but also people from rural areas who had found jobs and services in the neighbouring town¹. This analysis focuses on a social category which, though specific, represents a majority in peri-urban areas: the commuter. The study of this category provides an interesting approach to the development of urban life in a context where mobility is a key factor (Bourdin, 1998) in that it is both generalised and socially promoted by individualism as a means to independence and fulfilment (Rémy, 1998). Mobility, however, assumes that resources are available to control access to it and to control its consequences, as shown by Montulet and Kaufmann (2004) with their concept of a new type of capital that they refer to as “motility”. I have therefore endeavoured to provide an account of how commuters relate to mobility and the spaces they frequent. This relationship varies according to origin and the social groups or categories to which these people belong. This approach leads me to challenge the presupposed existence of a one-to-one link between spatial form and social life.

By examining the personal journeys of ten households, I was able to see how these people lived and organised their daily journeys around geographical locations and social ties. Social networks are the key to reconstructing this dual journey and understanding these households in terms of space and social life.

The respondents were interviewed at home in four peri-urban *communes*, selected for their proximity to Dijon, their size and demographic development. Questions concerned the people’s personal journey, their everyday life and their social network, seen from an egocentric angle (Gribaudo, 1998) and taking into account all the household’s activities and social relations. The ten households match the “average” profile typical of commuters according to Le Jeannic (1997). Five are in middle professions, four are workers and only one is an executive. Eight households are couples with children and two others are single-parent families.

Analysis of the interviews revealed some points in common in the households’ lifestyles, which are often emphasised. The peri-urban lifestyle is part of a history and a broader setting. In this respect, the respondents are no different from the households living in single-family houses in the 1970s when home ownership became more widely accessible (Madoré, 1998). As Jean-Pierre Orfeuil (2001) observed, the desire to live in the outskirts of the city, but more often than not, it is because they cannot find housing near their place of work. Furthermore, although peri-urbanisation and the mobile lifestyle that goes with it is a life-cycle-related phase (becoming parents, settling down into a career, buying a house), it is nonetheless highly significant, as it implies a certain amount of change to the households’ social lives. First of all, it redefines relations with the city, in a limitative way (Sencebé, 2006); activities are centred more on the edges of the city (for example, patronising

1. This research work received funding from the Ministry of Ecology, Energy, Sustainable Development and Town and Country Planning as part of the survey on mobility and urban areas, see Hilal M., Sencebé Y. (coord.), 2002, “*Analyse des processus d’ancrage et des formes de territorialité des populations marquées par l’éclatement de leur lieu de travail et de résidence dans les communes à la périphérie des pôles urbains*”, final report, Dijon, INRA-ENESAD.



Pierre Bernard

Patrice et Lou's, garden, deeply rooted in Vauréal, Paris region

suburban shopping centres in the Dijon agglomeration) and there is a withdrawal into a more domestic environment (the home becomes the place where most leisure time and money is spent).

If that were the whole picture, then failure to curb urban sprawl would give rise to a three-tier city (Donzelot, 2004) composed of the upper-class centre, insecure suburbs and a peri-urban area where the middle classes seek refuge. The drawback to this view – which reflects major trends – is that it overlooks the diversity and complexity of the peri-urban area.

Personal journeys and decisions to move to a peri-urban area

Life in peri-urban areas and the multi-location context (working and living in different places) were common to all respondents at the time of the survey but varied with geographical origin.

The residential itinerary of native respondents (i.e. those who were born, or whose parents were born, in the same *commune* as where they now live) forms a loop, with periods of migration or multi-location related to life cycles. Like the Turin workers' itineraries described by Gribaudi (1987), the deployment of the family fabric of native households over the Dijon labour market area determines the possibilities in terms of mutual assistance, marriage and residential and professional itineraries. Thus, despite the residential and professional

detours taken and the element of chance in the choice of residence, everything brings the native back to his or her roots. Casual jobs can be picked up through acquaintances and civil service competitive exams for technical and office jobs find more than enough applicants in the city or even local labour market. People take what comes. And what comes is just next door. Whatever happens, they are brought back to where they started out, there are tied to their roots.

In this respect, the case of Simon is quite revealing². Simon had not planned to return to his home village, which he had left in his teens to take up technical studies in a school in Dijon. But it was here that he found his first job as a technician for France Télécom, through a local acquaintance who told him there was a vacancy. He met his future wife at a dance in a village near his home. Following an unsettled period where they changed home several times, moving into larger accommodation for their growing family in social housing on the outskirts of Dijon, the couple decided to have a house built. But, unable to afford the prices of the Dijon property market, they were forced to search farther and farther out. In the end, they decided that since they had to move out of Dijon, they might as well move to a place they knew, namely, back home.

Settling in one's home town is not the guarantee of an independent household – for the family circle remains close at hand – but it does make it possible to acquire a home in the

2. See respondent profiles in the appendix.

physical sense, either by inheriting a house or plot of land to build on, or by asking acquaintances if they know of any property available locally. The notion of “proximity” does not only play a role in professional integration. It also seems to be at work in forming couples. The native finds his or her spouse locally: the spouse is a native of the *commune* or *canton*, or has relatives there, or the couple have mutual acquaintances in the area.

For those born outside the area, the residential itinerary progresses in stages leading up to home ownership. These stages coincide with professional and family events, integration into the labour market and job changes, for example, in the first case, or living as a couple or becoming parents in the second. Moving to the peri-urban area marks the end of a period of integration and mobility and the beginning of the couple’s independence from parents and parents-in-law. It is as if becoming a house owner outside the city represented a milestone in the couple’s life, generally associated with the birth of a second child and a redefinition of the couple’s priorities. The financial sacrifice made to become a home owner and the decision to settle outside the city in the long term reverses the relationship between professional flexibility and residential mobility. Before acquiring a home, residential mobility is primarily dependent on family and professional events. Once the couple moves into their own home, however, and have to pay off a mortgage for several decades, the home becomes the hub around which their professional and family lives are now organised. Professional paths are also marked by a high degree of mobility, sometimes associated with a certain lack of job security, and by the significance of private employment. This reversal of polarity can be illustrated by two examples. In one case, career advancement is reflected in home ownership and in the other, the transition to home ownership seems to lead to job insecurity.

Pierre had a house built in the outskirts a year after he obtained a job as an accountancy department manager in a company in the Dijon agglomeration. Moving into his own home was the tangible result of a promotion obtained at the end of a career based on a strategy of professional mobility (he had changed company and place of work five times). The decision to settle down in this home redefined the way he managed his career. Everything tied him to this place: the house, which had become the focal point of his social network, associations and leisure activities, his children, who went to school there and had made friends, and passing time, which made another career move more risky.

Before moving into her house in the outskirts, Patricia had been through a period of professional integration characterised by some degree of professional mobility, but with no experience of unemployment. After having her house built, however, the new context of proximity and putting down roots led to a period of job insecurity. Following her maternity leave after her move, she only worked part-time (as an accountant 3 km from home) in order to save on childminding costs. She then lost her job and remained unemployed for a year before

obtaining a government-sponsored work contract (*contrat emploi solidarité*) in her *commune*. She had to wait four years after moving into the area before finding a replacement job as an accountant in an association in Dijon.

Daily journeys and forms of belonging

Although geographic origins play a role in residential itineraries and the reasons behind the decision to settle down in a place, they do not wholly explain people’s social lives, which have an impact on their daily movements. The interviews show that there are two ways of experiencing everyday life in peri-urban areas and two ways of occupying space in both geographical and social terms.

From this data, I discerned two forms of belonging: “attachment” and “anchorage”. These forms are more broadly defined with reference to the concepts of configuration and interdependent relations developed by Norbert Elias (1993). All individuals are at the centre of a configuration of social ties and places. The important thing is to understand the meaning of the relationship: is it a relationship of unreciprocated dependency on the places and social ties in the configuration to which they belong or, on the contrary, is it one of interdependency? The control of places and ties is not a matter of mobility or settling; it is about distancing. It is possible to be attached to uncontrolled mobility – wandering is a form of attachment – or to opt for anchorage – which is a controlled form of settling (Bourdin, 1996).

Attachment, which concerns Simon, Laure, Anna and Patricia, means spatial withdrawal (in social and geographical terms), and the home is the place of withdrawal. This place is not only central, but also necessary in a manner of speaking, because it is the focal point of most, if not all, relations. Plans for the future are also made with reference to the home, which is seen as the only safe place in an environment characterised by uncontrolled mobility and a degree of insecurity.

Almost all the persons concerned here (three out of four) had been through difficult times in their careers (job insecurity, unemployment) and two of them (Laure and Anna) had been separated from their spouses, which considerably limited their social networks. These people’s accounts are a reflection of what they could do, rather than what they wanted to do. The choices made in life – especially the choice of where to live – are a matter of spatial determinism: geography of prices, the availability of amenities, etc.

“Was your choice based on your family roots?”

“That was partly to do with it, though the cost of land was also a factor, because prices were very high in and around Dijon fifteen years ago and we couldn’t move too near. It’s true that having the family here did influence our choice. My brother lives next door and my sister lives over there. We’ve all come back. Also there was train service at the time – there still is.” (Simon – native).



Chez Lou et Patrice, Vauréal, Val d'Oise

Relations are kept up with people who are nearby. They do not survive the “geographical dispersal” of people encountered at various stages of life (childhood, national service, student days) or the vagaries of life (change of address, change of job, divorce or separation, etc.). These people, whose social life has developed among mutual acquaintances and relatives (working-class housing estates, small villages) are unable to build up relationships on any basis other than closeness (family-related or geographical).

Attachment reflects insecurity in itineraries in time and space, centred on a relationship of unreciprocated dependency with places and social ties in the original configuration. The respondents’ personal journeys show how fragile they are with respect to external events. Their social lives have developed in a world characterised by family stability and social uniformity, leaving them ill-prepared for change. Getting divorced or losing their job forces them to reappraise a situation that they had always taken for granted and this is a genuinely traumatic experience.

In response to the vagaries of existence and the blows life has dealt them, they have developed protective reflexes, especially regarding their children, and withdrawn to their only safe haven in life – their home. Although their life in the outskirts has some things in common with that of all the other households in the survey, they do not see it or appropriate it in the same way. They are, first and foremost, rural dwellers, sheltered from the city.

Attached people see the city as a dangerous place, characterised by crime and insecurity. They are familiar with it because they have lived there. For Simon, it was a place of exile, when he left the family home for his studies and found

his first job at France Télécom. For Laure, it is synonymous with her troubled adolescent years, when she mixed with the wrong sort of people, dropped out of school and married at a young age, only to get divorced later. Even when the city holds some appeal, it is inaccessible for people like Patricia. She spent her childhood in a small village and only got to know Dijon on rare family visits. She later went to live in a quiet district of the city with her husband before having to move out again to buy a property.

The notion of security and refuge, often quoted as a key element in peri-urbanisation strategies, is particularly significant here. Withdrawal to a safe place shows the move away from the city in a favourable light and justifies all the sacrifices made to stay there (debts, job insecurity, travelling cost and time). This sacrifice is made all the more willingly in that it is the only way these households have to protect their children and prepare their future. They have chosen to move well away from the city to bring up their children in an environment where people all know each other (neighbours, family members).

“The surprising thing is that you’ve stayed on here, even though you’re quite isolated really now that your family has left ...”

“I stay here for the children. They like to come here and I want them to be happy. [...] I mean, if the children end up in prison or get into drugs or stuff like that, there’s no point, I’d rather stay here and make sure they have a decent life,” (Laure, native).

Residential attachment, the result of the individual’s personal journey, makes a strong mark on daily journeys. As shown in other studies (Juan, 1997, p. 115), withdrawal into the home comes hand in hand with a radial pattern of movements. In other words, the home is always the point of departure and arrival. There are very few journeys outside this pattern, a) because everyday routines are organised to reduce the amount of time spent outside the home and b) because journeys outside this focal point are seen not as opportunities for meeting people or for dialogue, but rather as a source of both-ersome and unforeseeable events.

Social space (social networks) and geographical space are occupied in a rather routine way, alternating between two sequences: weekdays are organised around compulsory travel between the home and place of work, with a limited social space, restricted to home life, while weekends offer an opportunity for social space to fan out from the home. On the one hand, we find the uncertainties of the weekday with an imposed pattern of occupation, on the other, the weekend, where activities are refocused on the family-related and domestic activities of the home, in a looser timeframe.

Leisure activities are predominantly domestic (visits to and from the family, watching TV, doing odd jobs around the house), with certain rural overtones reflected in their “usefulness” (walking the dog, hunting, fruit-picking) and a very low cultural content (no going to the cinema in particular). Trips to the city are reserved for the weekly shopping which is done at the weekend in big shopping centres. Quick visits are also paid to smaller shops during the week on the way home from

work – this represents the only form of multi-functional travel.

The “anchored” respondents (Prune, Bénédicte, Christophe, Pierre, Benoit and Clément) have greater control over their relationship to time and space. Notwithstanding inherited forms of belonging (in the case of the “natives”) and the financial pressures that restrict their potential, the home is an anchoring point from and beyond which it is possible to project. The people concerned here do not project themselves – at least not exclusively – onto their present home. They plan their residential situation according to the various anticipated stages of the household’s life course (children leaving home, retirement) and their own expectations.

“Do you plan to leave Genlis in the future?”

“It’s all about needs really, when we reach the point when we don’t need Genlis anymore for the children’s activities. By the time Valentin grows up or reaches his teens, we won’t be far off retirement, and I can’t see myself retiring here.”

“Not even considering the friends you’ve made here?”

“At the moment, we’re mobile enough to visit friends out of Genlis, so there’s nothing to stop us from doing the reverse if we move to the Jura or Doubs later. We’ll still be able to see our friends in Genlis if we feel like it. It’s really not a problem, we’re doing it the other way round at the moment.” (Prune – native)

Although life hasn’t spared these people their share of knocks and bruises, past experience has certainly not prevented them from grasping opportunities. Unlike the previous respondents, their social experience has been acquired in a world of change (divorce, death of a parent, regional migration, moving house) and in a heterogeneous social environment. This may have made them more adaptable. Their childhoods were characterised by strong family figures (grandmother, aunt) who broadened their horizons and their social references. All these factors can partly explain the resilience of these people, who are able to get back on their feet and treat the vicissitudes of life as opportunities.

Accustomed to change and movement, they do not feel threatened by the urban world and make fewer references to the notion of the peri-urban area as a safe refuge than the previous category of respondents. Unlike the “attached” persons, they consider that they live in the countryside near the city.

The itineraries and views of Pierre and Bénédicte are quite significant in this respect. These two people, whom we met in the same *commune* and who had different residential itineraries, had definitely opted for somewhere “between the city and countryside” in going to live there. Bénédicte, who works as a cleaning woman in Dijon, moved out of the “real-city” and the cramped flat she lived in with her spouse and three children to live in a detached house. Pierre arrived from a small market town where he had had to live for a few years for his first job, before coming back “to the city”. Both wished to combine the advantages of city and country life in pursuit of an ideal of family fulfilment and children’s education.

The home is not the only possible or desirable option. It is more of a base from which they “operate” and an anchor-

ing point which is always seen as conditional (it is easier for them to weigh anchor than it is for the “attached” people to break free of their ties). Life is less polarised on the home, with greater investment in the professional sphere.

The home base is also at the centre of much wider and more diversified social networks, as relationships can be kept up and built without the constraints of closeness. New friendships are forged alongside the family and neighbours. Ties with the place of origin are also maintained and often associated with various activities (skiing, hunting, joint visits to friends and relatives, tourism, camping, etc.). Relationships can also evolve more as life goes on. A colleague can become a friend, a friend can become a neighbour and a neighbour can become an employer. Here, the web of social relations is a real strategic resource.

The difference between anchorage and attachment can be seen particularly clearly in the corresponding types of social life: attachment is characterised by relations with neighbours (based on spatial proximity), while anchorage is characterised by keeping up friendships (social proximity). Networked relationships (cumulative) are also typical of this anchorage. Social space is not built from what is given (the family) or within reach (the neighbours) but from what is chosen.

These personal journeys also have an impact on daily journeys. Looped daily itineraries contrast with the radial movements mentioned previously. Movements are far less polarised on the place of residence and other types of journey can be observed. These are seen more as opportunities for dialogue and meeting others. More importantly, the rhythm at which social and geographical space is occupied is quite different from that mentioned earlier. Although two time sequences can still be distinguished, weekdays are far less routine and the weekend far more planned and, in both sequences, space is occupied more broadly and intensely than in the previous case. Weekdays are hectic, cramming in all the routine and necessary household activities (work, shopping, children’s activities, appointments) to keep weekends free. The household’s life thus extends beyond the professional and residential spheres. Weekends are planned well in advance and represent the second moment when the household reaches out to other places and connections. More weekends are spent away than at home. And when the family does stay at home, it is to have guests from outside the immediate vicinity, such as friends and relatives who have travelled a long way.

The social lives of peri-urban residents define different urban territories

What the respondents have in common at first glance is an “average” lifestyle and standard of living: a socio-geographical space, the “middle-class” peri-urban area, which is broad enough to encompass all categories that are neither at the extremes of the social scale nor in the top or bottom places.



Follacci, Herwéu, Letner, Tae-Hoon Yoon, architectes

Periurban anchored atmosphere. European 8th project - The Loop in Lille

Here, the average is due to a statistical effect that masks the diversity of its various components, something that I have attempted to reflect by taking into consideration places of origin and the forms of belonging of the households taking part in the survey.

The case of “native” households shows that the production of an urban environment, in its extension, also contains elements of anchorage, nativeness and rurality. Peri-urban *communes* are not just a mere outgrowth from the city. They also include villages that have been home to families for generations, the most recent of which have shown a new facet of the rural exodus – commuting and multi-location – while maintaining their roots in the local environment. A number of planning concepts aimed at redensifying the city could be challenged by the itineraries of rural dwellers who have found work in the nearby city. Rather than attempting to combat what appears to be a basic trend – changes in lifestyle and the desire of families to live in an individual home in a less densely built-up environment – by moving the population nearer to work, which is still concentrated in the urban centres, why not encourage employers to follow the population? (El Mouhoub, 2006)

The respondents are spread across various levels of the middle class. The presence of those situated at the lower end, closer to the working classes, raises two questions. How coherent is this sociological hotchpotch and what will become of it? Some respondents are home owners but are in debt. Others have a job but no job security. Others form a family, although there is only one parent. All these peri-urban residents at one moment or another have narrowly escaped a drop in social status. In a world where personal journeys no longer follow a path on the ballistic model made possible by the rise and growth of

the middle classes, but tend to follow a sinuous path related to less secure social situations (professional and/or family), social capital has grown in value and sets apart those who get by despite the difficulties from those who do not and are dragged down. Personal journeys are, of course, affected by social background, but they really have more to do with the extension of social networks and the acquisition of social know-how.

The two types of social network seen here, the local social network for “attached” respondents and the broader network for the “anchored” respondents, help define different urban territories. Withdrawal into the home is not observed in all peri-urban residents. It only concerns those who have failed to acquire the networking know-how needed to maintain and adapt networks and daily itineraries during a personal journey characterised by residential and professional mobility and family changes. The relationship with space and the type of social network are closely interlinked and expressed in both forms of belonging discussed here. “Attachment”, which reduces the relationship with geographical and social space, severely restricts available sources of mutual assistance, thereby exposing people with scant resources to the risks of instability and withdrawal. “Anchorage”, where socio-geographical space can fan out from a hub of stability (the family home used as a base for relations and mobility) makes up for sometimes modest resources by broadening the range of opportunities (in terms of relations and mutual assistance). Although these two categories share a common pool of individualistic values in the quest for fulfilment in home ownership, the social reasons behind these values are not the same. Peri-urbanisation can be seen as a twofold exclusion from the city by those in the “attached” category, who cannot afford to move to or go on living in the city and seek to avoid or leave the working-class sub-

urbs. The move to a peri-urban area is therefore imposed as a necessary preference and is the last or only way in which they differ from those who are in an even more precarious situation. In this respect, we can speak of individualism expressed in withdrawal to a safe refuge. It reflects an increasingly insecure social context and the failure of collective institutions (schools, trade unions and political structures) to support a social environment that is unsuited to the networked society, which sets great store by independence and openness. Peri-urbanisation can, however, also be experienced as a choice between life in the city and life in the countryside by people, like those in the anchored category, who have relatively good control over their socio-geographical space. In this case, their individualism is expressed more as an opening up to like-minded people. In this situation, the peri-urban area serves as a base from which to reach places and maintain or build social ties chosen from an extended range of possibilities which offer an ideal context in which to seek personal and family fulfilment. Any approach to peri-urban issues that overlooks these two paradigms risks adding to the number of one-sided urbanistic solutions that are built upon the assumption that space is everything, and failing to address the social issue of secure trajectories – in terms of the right to “anchorage” as well as mobility – at a time when increasingly selective and deregulated property and employment markets are driving the “middle classes” out to the peripheries in growing numbers.

APPENDIX: RESPONDENT PROFILES

Bénédicte – native to the area - anchored

Bénédicte is 34 years old and works as a cleaning woman in Dijon. She lives in S. (12 km from Dijon), which is the home village of her husband, a technician, whom she met through a cousin. She moved into a small flat with him in the centre of Dijon, where she found a secretarial job in a local consultancy firm. The birth of her first daughter in 1991 marked the beginning of a period of joblessness, then job insecurity (temping). A year later, the couple moved to S where they rented a council flat and where their second daughter was born. In order to gain greater job security, she accepted a less skilled job (cleaner at the university) to move to the public sector in 1996. Her part-time job allows her to look after her three children (3rd child born in 2001). She is highly selective about building up relations in the village, favouring connections with a network of her husband's childhood friends. Social life is characterised by domestic exclusiveness (friends invite each other for meals at home) and a certain gender-based division of activities (DIY and music for the men, meals and shopping for the women).

Christophe – native to the area – anchored

Christophe is 42 years old and comes from G (11 km from Dijon). After obtaining a vocational training certificate (CAP) in electromechanical engineering, he obtained a job as a semi-skilled worker in G through a temping agency, before follow-

ing in his father's footsteps and joining EDF (in 1982). From 1982 to 2002, he pursued his career in G, before taking up a new position (social action manager) in Dijon. His residential itinerary reflects perfect stability. After leaving home late, he moved into a flat in G in a social housing complex and later bought his grandparents' home. He met his wife in G in 1984. She had started out her career as a nursing auxiliary but subsequently chose to stay at home to look after the family and became a child minder. She has her own car. Her husband negotiated a company car in exchange for his transfer to Dijon. Their social life is centred on the family, activities in local associations and trips to the Alps, where the couple plans to retire.

Laure – native to the area – attached

Laure is a banker's daughter who went through a troubled period (juvenile delinquency) during her adolescent years, which ended in academic failure and early marriage. Thirty-year-old Laure was born in Dijon. She lived in Chenôve in a flat adjoining that of her parents. In 1989, she and her husband had a house built in P where she had connections (grandparents' home village and family plot). Since her arrival in P, however, all these connections have moved to Beaune, which offers better shopping and amenities. Mother of five and divorced since 1993, she decided to stay in the house to give her children a life away from the city. Laure is a semi-skilled worker in Chenôve but is currently on maternity leave. She plans to return to her job and move back to Chenôve when her youngest son starts secondary school (the older children go to school in Dijon). Her social life is limited to her parents and brothers and a few neighbours. Her activities are centred on home life and her children's education.

Prune – native to the area – anchored

Prune is 37 years old and manages a real-estate agency in Saint-Jean-de-Losnes (a rural centre) while her husband works as an electromechanical technician in Chenôve, in the Dijon agglomeration. He comes from G. He did not take over the running of the family farm but made his home there in the farm buildings he shares with an aunt and uncle. Prune's youth was spent on a social housing estate in Dijon with her divorced mother, then in a village with her grandmother. Before she even took her school-leaving exams (in 1982), she had found a job in a building firm in the Dijon agglomeration, where she worked for 10 years as a personal assistant. After an initial period characterised by marital and residential instability, she met her current husband. The reasons behind her mobility were then reversed. Finally settling down in the family house and the birth of her first child in 1989 marked the beginning of a period of professional instability and she finally gave up work completely until 2001. At this point, the three children (aged 4, 7 and 13) she had wanted were at school in G, so she set about actively looking for a job and obtained her present position. Since then, she has worked at a hectic pace, rolling three days into one, but still makes sure to plan weekends, which are considered as a safety valve.

Simon – native to the area – attached

Simon is 45 years old and has been working as a technician for France Télécom in Dijon since 1977. He has been transferred to an area outside the agglomeration. He is deputy-mayor of P (53 km from Dijon), his place of birth, where he lives with his wife and three children (aged 23, 21 and 14). The eldest is a worker and still lives at home, while the two younger children are still at school. His wife drives the two younger children to school and organises her time between one part-time job as a medical secretary in Seurre (a nearby rural centre), another part-time job at the ADMR (a community care organisation) and voluntary work for a social integration association. They moved out of their flat in a social housing estate in the Dijon suburbs to their home in P when their second son was born. At first, they had tried to have a house built near Dijon, before settling in P, Simon's birthplace, in 1986, which was more within their price range.

Anna – from outside the area – attached

Anna is a 53-year-old divorcee who lives in G. with her 27-year-old son. She obtained a job for him at the company where she works, through a *contrat de qualification* (short-term employment contract for young people with some on-the-job training). Her 23-year-old daughter lives with them half the time, spending time at her father's too. Anna's mother left her birthplace in Meuse in eastern France three years ago to join her and now lives in a house nearby. These three people make up Anna's social world, with everyday routines being divided up between work, housework and waiting for the children. She spent her youth in a working-class estate in Meuse (her father was a worker) and married in 1969 at the age of 20. She then gave up her job as an accounting secretary to follow her husband, a gendarme, when he was transferred to Dijon, where the couple lived in the "gendarmes' barracks". This marked the beginning of a period of professional instability (69-85) and a period out of work (75 to 83) coinciding with the arrival of the two children. In 1985, she found a job with responsibilities (accountant) to which she devoted a great deal of time and energy, before divorcing two years later. Following the divorce, she moved into a flat in the same neighbourhood so that the children didn't have to change school and in the vain hope of keeping in touch with her neighbours. After some time searching, she finally found what she was looking for in 1989 in G: a semi-detached house (so that she wouldn't be isolated) that she could afford and that was near Dijon.

Benoit – from outside the area – anchored

Benoit is 39 and works as a cook at the teaching hospital, where his wife is a nurse. They only see each other at home, though quite often all the same, because his wife has opted to do part-time night work because she gets a lot of time off in exchange. Following a period of residential mobility (related to the birth of their three children), they had a house built in S in 1994, where all three children (aged 10, 8 and 5) go to school. Benoit is from the Châtillonnais area – an isolated

rural area in Côte-d'Or – where he has ties and the more masculine side to his life (hunting, visiting his family and seeing his childhood friends). The home is more feminine due to his wife's social life, which is built around her nursing colleagues.

Clément – from outside the area – anchored

Clément drives a goods train at night (based in Dijon). He is away 48 hours at a time, with a work schedule planned six months in advance. The couple are from Jura and got together in 1979. They moved to the centre of Dijon where Clément was transferred. They moved out of their small flat when their second child was born in 1989 and had a house built in G. In addition to being within their price range, this *commune* has the advantage of being located on the Jura road, which is where the couple organise their weekend leisure activities and visits to their respective families. His wife works at home as a child minder and takes the children to school (high school in Auxonne and secondary school in G). She organises her schedule around activities in local associations and keeping up the couple's social relations (fitting invitations in with her husband's work schedule).

Patricia – from outside the area – attached

Patricia is 44 years old. She was born in Dijon and spent her childhood not far from there in a small village in Côte-d'Or with her father, a worker, and her mother, a cleaning woman. After obtaining her high-school diploma ("bac G" - geared to office work) and a difficult time leaving home, she and her husband moved into a flat together (after being together for five years) in an outlying district of Dijon. Her husband had just found a job as a lorry driver that we would keep until 1999. Patricia, however, went through a long period of job insecurity (government-sponsored contract, fixed-term contract) interspersed with two pregnancies followed by maternity leave. In 1987, the couple had a house built in V and hung on to it in spite of Patricia's ensuing period of unemployment and job insecurity (CES government-sponsored work contract). Patricia finally found a stable job as an accountant for a Dijon association. The couple's social network is restricted to the family and neighbours.

Pierre – from outside the area – anchored

Pierre is 45 years old and comes from Dijon. He works as an accountant in a company in the Dijon suburbs. His wife is a nursing auxiliary in Dijon and is on duty some weekends, which means that she and her husband lead parallel lives. Their 17-year-old daughter and 20-year-old son are at high school in Dijon. The household has two cars. They moved to V (7 km from Dijon) in 1986 after being "exiled to the country" (in Semur-en-Auxois) and a period of professional mobility related to Pierre's career. The focus of the couple's social life has gradually shifted back to the home. In addition to local community activities and sports, the couple have their relatives and the wife's colleagues to the house, whereas ties with friends from the past are not so strong as before.

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