SOME OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE FRENCH MIGRATION TO CANADA AND QUEBEC SINCE 2000

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This paper presents a knowledge review of the concepts and experiences enabling a better understanding of contemporary migration of French citizens to Canada. It is interwoven with our current research on the contemporary mobility of the French and on the characteristics of these populations in Canada since the early 2000s. In a modern context, France has developed a stance and mechanisms that are in favor of mobility abroad, especially within the framework of the European Union, such as the Erasmus program for the mobility of students and young qualified professionals living in neighboring countries (Great Britain, Germany, Switzerland). It is also interesting to study French migration for reasons specific to the economic and social context in France, which may explain why more French nationals are leaving France. Other elements worth considering are the Canadian and Quebec governments' strategies for promoting and attracting the French market. Based on an analysis of documentary sources, we present some observations on the new generation of French migration in the 2000s.

THE IMPORTANCE OF HISTORY

As historian Nancy Green noted, France does not fit into the great tradition of European mass migration of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Green, 2005). France was a society that was dependent on its labor force, and which did not experience the "economic cataclysms" that encouraged large-scale migration to the Americas (e.g., famine in Ireland, impoverishment of Italian peasants in the south). A generation of emigration, albeit fewer than the aforementioned population movements, however, occurred towards the colonies (North and Sub-Saharan Africa), as well as certain countries, including Canada (Linteau, Frenette, and Lejeune). This initial French migratory movement to Canada remained a limited phenomenon prior to 1870, before taking on a wider scope at the beginning of the 20th century. In 1871, a little less than 3000 people born in France were living in Canada. By 1921, 19,247 people settled in Canada, mainly in Quebec and in the West. The case of France can be considered

a case study similar to other European migrations to Canada, for example, British and German.[1]

NORTH-NORTH MIGRATION

This French migration is a portion of the North-North migrations, which remains a little explored subject: "Academically, little is known about why Europeans leave the continent, how they choose their destination and how they experience their migrant life" (Suter and Akesson, 2020, p. 1). There is extensive historical literature on mass migration from Europe to the Americas in the late 19th century. In Europe, another well-documented migration movement is the one related to labor processes and to the presence of temporary workers (e.g. Italians and Portuguese in Switzerland, Germany, and France). More recently, the mobility of Europeans to extra-European destinations is beginning to receive scholarly attention (Fabbiano, Paraldi, Poli and Terrazzoni, 2019). Some works focus on migration schemes between the North and South; migrations from North to South are quite trivialized, as they are perceived as the mobility of privileged people. One can think, for example, of French, German, and British nationals, mostly retirees, settling in southern Europe and the Maghreb (Fabbiano, Paraldi, Poli and Terrazzoni, 2019). The landscape of emigration outside Europe, however, is more complex because it consists of a diversity of backgrounds (e.g., dual nationals). It is interesting to compare the situation of European countries: Great Britain, Spain, Portugal, Belgium, Italy, and France. On the one hand, one must consider the particularity of the colonial link pertaining to these new migrations: France, Great Britain, Spain, Portugal, Netherlands, Belgium, and to a lesser extent Germany and Italy. There are distinctions between countries that have a relationship with former colonies: Brazil, Cape Verde, Angola, and Mozambique (e.g. Spain and Portugal). On the other hand, the 2008 economic crisis often comes up in the works that present it as a catalyst for migratory flows. The "European Crisis" is expressed in the form of economic insecurity, which encourages certain populations to consider emigration (Allou et al. 2020). We have also come up with a diagnosis of Europe's identity malaise that is built around a chronology of tragic events since the early 2000s: terrorist attacks, hate crimes, and anti-Muslim attitudes exploited by the populist radical right (Silverstein, 2018).

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PROFILE AND TRAJECTORY DIVERSIFICATION

Research on the new North-North migration reflects the diversity of displacement experiences (Suter and Akesson, 2020). French immigration to Canada from the 2000s onwards is not as uniform and homogeneous as its previous generations. During the 20th century, the French migrant was white, Catholic, and professional (Linteau, Frenette, Le Jeune, 2017). Today, the literature presents a more complex profile of the North-North migrant. To begin with, it is important for us to address the semantics in the way we regard this migrant.

Emigration from Northern countries is often referred to by those who promote it and by the people who are themselves on the move as "expatriation" rather than immigration; especially, when it comes to professionals and skilled people (Kunz 2016, Weiner and Klekowski Van Koppenfels, 2019). The literature highlights that expatriation is embedded in hyper-skilled forms of mobility for individuals with high levels of human capital. In the context of settlement to Southern countries, expatriation takes on a privileged status (whiteness) linked to daily life in separate and secure spaces: homes, stores, work, schools, and places of leisure. The expat lives in a closed space, detached from local society. In the context of North-North migration, the expatriate is a migrant who is sought after for his or her professional skills in advanced economic sectors, for example, advanced technology.

The *Lifestyle migrant* is another category that we use to describe North-North migrations. This concept is used to depict a person in search of an ideal quality of life that is geographical and psychological: wide open spaces, tranquility, but also a sense of well-being and identity. This is the case in a study of British immigrants to New Zealand who are looking for an alternative lifestyle to the hectic pace of European societies. These migrants are drawn to the opportunities and benefits of "making a new life elsewhere" (Higgins, 2017; Benson and O'Reily 2016). French migration is structured

1 Consult the series *Studies in Immigration and Culture* des Presses de l'Université du Manitoba, especially books by Alexander Freund, dir., *Being German Canadian. History, Memory, Generations*, Winnipeg, University of Manitoba Press, 2021 and Marlyn Barber et Murray Watson, *Invisible Immigrants. The English in Canada since 1945*, Winnipeg, University of Manitoba Press, 2015.

around branding, the manner of how to sell a destination such as Quebec and Francophone minority communities. Destinations are represented by advertising strategies that aim to attract a diverse European migration, including youth, families, and professionals.

CONTRASTING SOCIOLOGICAL REALITIES

The consulted literature interestingly notes that the mobility of French nationals is portrayed as privileged when compared to the experiences of people from other regions of the world. However, the experiences and trajectories of French nationals who are on the move are far from homogeneous. Research has identified feelings of exclusion, based on racialization and religion in French society, as triggers for the migration process for some people. Jérémy Mandin and Jaafar Alloul (2017 and 2020, Alloul 2020) focus on the journey of young Maghrebi youth in France and Belgium. In recent years, this population has experienced challenges in its economic and social integration. In his research, Jérémy Mandin refers to the expression of "stuckness", the feeling of being denied the opportunity to socially ascend. On top of this, many people have decided to leave France because they have no prospects or hope for economic mobility. Young graduates and professionals have difficulty finding employment and feel as if they are being discriminated against. This feeling of economic stagnancy, of not being able to get ahead, and of "experiencing hardship" encourages people to leave France for destinations that seem more welcoming to them; countries where these people would no longer be subjected to "micro-aggressions of everyday racism", and countries and cities that value multicultural diversity (Canada and a city like Montreal). Muslim and cosmopolitan countries (the Gulf countries) are attractive to these young Muslim graduates in the West (Alloul, 2020; *Le Renard* 2016). A recent book focuses on this issue: *L'épreuve des discriminations dans les quartiers populaires* (PUF, 2021). The authors, Jérémy Talpin and Anaïke Purenne, address issues of racism and discrimination in several working-class neighborhoods in France and examine the types of minority skills that allow racialized populations to act through different strategies, one of which is emigration. Canada can be part of the solution, a country dreamed of and depicted as a destination in the French market. This aspect is very present in events such as immigration fairs and recruitment missions in France (Belkhodja and Deshaye, 2021).

THE FRENCH PRESENCE IN MONTREAL SPACE

Beyond knowing how French nationals maintain their bonds to their country of origin, particularly through their registration with the consular services or their right to vote, it is interesting to study the way in which the French experience their presence in a new environment. In a context of greater mobility and diversification of migratory flows, how do immigrant communities establish themselves and experience life in the city? (Désilets, 2019) It is evident that Montreal stands out as the preferred destination for French migration to Canada. There is still the image of a French community centered around certain institutions and present in specific neighborhoods of the city, especially the Plateau Mont-Royal with its French bakeries. However, the French presence is noticeable beyond the traditional July 14th celebration or the rather formal meetings of the Union française. It is diversifying. We carry out observations in several places such as a café, an evening meeting of pvtists in a bar, a "soccer" pitch, fast food restaurants (the famous French Taco), and French shops. An example is the Top Discount store, a French grocery store that opened in 2019 on Mont-Royal Avenue. This business sells French brands of non-refrigerated food, such as cookies, jams, and Mouslin powdered puree. The store has a plan to expand to four branches in Montreal in order to meet the demand. On its Facebook page, Top Discount presents itself as one of the international ethnic grocery stores in Montreal!

In conclusion, French immigration has always been present in Canada, but today it seems to be more dynamic and more complex due to the policies and strategies in place, the diversity of backgrounds, and the choice of destinations. In both Canada and Quebec, French immigrants are in a privileged category and are visible in the many initiatives undertaken by the federal government and by the provinces to promote and recruit for the French market. Moving to Canada has become a reality for many French nationals who aspire to something different in their professional or personal life.

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