

~~~~~  
**501: Unions, familles et ménages**

**Convener: Julieta QUILODRAN (Chili) , El Colegio de México**  
~~~~~

Intergenerational social mobility Cameroon main cities: the impact of socioeconomic and demographic factors on the family of origin.
~~~~~

Samuel NOUETAGNI<sup>1</sup> and Mathias KUEPIE<sup>2</sup>  
~~~~~

The concept and the scope of social mobility

In any society, individuals can be classified on a scale of social stratification according to their positions. The strata are arranged following the degree of prestige, from the most prestigious to the least prestigious. Therefore, social mobility can be defined as a phenomenon of the shifting of individuals on a social scale of prestige (Pitrim Sorokin). Particularly, intergenerational mobility put in relationship the individual own social position and that of his family of origin. If the majority of people only reproduce the position of their parents, then there will be social immobility and thus the tendency of the reproduction of initial social inequalities. In developed countries, most especially in France, a lot of studies have been done on social mobility. These studies have proven that after the Second World War and during the glorious thirties, social mobility and more precisely ascending mobility, was very high, but has slowed down since the 1980s. In African countries, studies on social mobility are relatively scarce whereas, the country is facing a lot of changes : high rate of urbanisation and deep socioeconomic upheavals. In this context, analysing social mobility is very important because if it is high, it can be a factor of social cohesion equity; and if it is low it's a sign of the reproduction of inequalities due to the positions of origin.

The articulation between demographic behaviours and social mobility: social capillarity

If social mobility depends on macro factors such as the social and economic organisation, economical and social policies, individual strategies can also play a significant role. One of these strategies is the demographic behaviour and particularly the fertility behaviours of families from one generation to another. In fact, a family with numerous descendants through a thinning down of economic resources and assets, can reduce the chances of intergenerational mobility, especially in the context of economic difficulties. On the contrary, a family with small descendant, through the concentration of economic resource and heritage on few persons, may increase the chances of the offspring social mobility. This is by the way the thesis of social capillarity of Arsene Dumont defined as follows : *“just as a liquid column has to be fine to rise in capillary, also a family has to be less numerous in order to rise on the social scale”*.

The objective of this study is first of all to describe the social mobility of two generations: The one that was witnessed by the pivot generation and that witnessed by the children of the later. We will test the hypothesis of social capillarity, that is the impact of the sibling size on the two successive motilities.

¹ Professor and Researcher at IFORD (Yaoundé, Cameroun): nouetagni@yahoo.fr

² Researcher at CEPS/INSTEAD (Luxembourg) and DIAL (Paris) email: kuepie@dial;prd.fr

Original data

In order to realise this study, we will use a original micro-data : the fertility-nuptiality survey done in 2001 on a sample of about 1967 women on the two main towns of Cameroon (Yaounde and Douala). This survey is original in the sense that in addition to the classical information on the matrimonial and fertility lives of these women as well as their choices in terms of the patterns of marriages, of sexuality and fecundity they want for their offspring, it also brings out socioeconomic and demographic conditions during childhood: level of education and profession of parents (or guardian), number of brothers and sister. This survey was, at the same time, coupled with a national survey on households living conditions. This survey had, amongst others, households' members' employment and the education modules, and the household expenditures and assets modules. Thus our data make it possible to measure the impact of sibling size on the relative socioeconomic positions of mothers (pivot generation) as compare to that of their parents. In each household, the educational trend of all the children are known, making it possible to analysis the beginning of their social mobility (through their academic performances) in relations to their mother's fertility and socioeconomic status.