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► **To cite this version:**

Yvette Grelet. Territories differentiated by socio-economic features. Shape the educational pathways. "Grand Ouest" days of "Grand Ouest" days of Territorial Intelligence IT-GO, ENTI, Mar 2010, Nantes-Rennes, France. 7p. halshs-00784809

HAL Id: halshs-00784809

<https://shs.hal.science/halshs-00784809>

Submitted on 4 Feb 2013

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Territories differentiated by socio-economic features
Shape the educational pathways

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Concerns about spatial disparities in training supply, outputs of the education system and school-to-work transition have for long been at the heart of French research on social inequalities. These issues have become even more crucial, since the decentralisation of public vocational training policies, and the devolution of their management to the regions 20 years ago. Cross-regional comparisons show dramatic discrepancies between the regional educative systems, on several dimensions such as: the educational participation rate, the share of vocational training in initial education, or the importance of apprenticeship. Local specificities exist in the educative system, as will be shown further: pathways within the educative system and transition from school to work unfold in a specific environment, which "shapes individual" choice and actions" (Allmendinger, 1989), all the more that they are less mobile. It is then worth taking account of "societal effects" observable at the local level.

A definition of local environment which reveals education and training discrepancies

To test the influence of the local context on educational career and choices of occupational curricula, we need appropriate categories, able to characterise young peoples' institutional and socioeconomic environment. These categories have to be less numerous and, above all, more homogeneous in terms of socioeconomic criteria, than administrative territories like regions or "départements". The usual distinction between rural and urban areas, too broad to give account of the full range of ecological patterns, is not satisfying. We have therefore built our own classification of local areas that categorises the French territory in six socioeconomic types. We conducted a cluster analysis of the 348 "employment zones" that supported the design of six types of local environments. The cluster analysis was performed on 21 indicators¹ such as: size of firms, share of each activity sector, share of skilled/unskilled workers, of the private/public sector, etc. This classification, based on socioeconomic cohesion, gathers geographically close employment zones (see the map). As will be shown, to each one of them corresponds a specific pattern of training supply and, as a consequence, of educative system outputs. Educational achievement of young people exiting the education system was measured on several scales: level, learning route, and specialisation.

¹ These indicators were mainly computed after the 1999 French census. Indicators dealing with the educational pathways were drawn from Céreq's "Génération 98" school leavers survey carried out in 2001. The analysis presented in this paper are now being updated, using fresh indicators computed after the new census of 2006, and the last school-leavers survey carried out by the Céreq in 2007.

- **Urban zones** (65 zones, 43% of school leavers)

Paris and its surroundings as well as large regional urban centres belong to this type. The importance of the service sector, a high rate of managerial jobs and a high level of qualification of the labour force are the distinctive characteristics of these urban zones. Cities provide the whole spectrum of training supply, up to the University.

Youngsters are more frequently enrolled in tertiary education: 54 percent of school leavers exit from the tertiary level. Preferences for the general and technological tracks are clear-cut. Even in vocational tracks, youngsters tend to stay longer in the education/training system. In big towns, students or apprentices give definitely the preference to services occupations: if training supply matches obviously the local labour market needs, it also echoes the lack of inclination for manual trades encountered in urban, more educated families.

- **Tertiary activity and small firms** (55 zones, 9% of school leavers)

These zones are in majority located in Southern France. The rates of employers and self-employed workers, as well as the proportion of small firms are at their maximum. Public sector services coexist with agriculture and craft industry.

Exits from education, occurring either at the tertiary level or at CAP-BEP² (lower secondary) level reflects this two-sided pattern. Orientations towards the general track are more frequent than in other types of areas. Among vocational specialisations, the service sector is represented more-than-average, and apprenticeship is frequent (it provides 41 percent of CAP-BEP leavers), probably thanks to the proximity of small firms.

- **Dynamic manufacturing industry** (47 zones, 11% of school leavers)

The buoyant activity of these zones benefits from the vicinity of Paris, or of the German and Swiss labour markets (near the eastern border). Here we find big companies, a high rate of employment in the private sector, and frequent use of temporary workers, which characterises the secondary sector. The unemployment rate is at its lowest, as well as the share of long-term unemployment.

The dynamism of the labour market does not favour long studies (more than elsewhere, young people exit school because they found a job). Besides, in manufacturing areas, there is a tradition of shorter studies and in vocational tracks, especially in the secondary sector. In eastern regions, due to historical reasons, apprenticeship holds an important place in the training of young people: 43 percent of CAP-BEP leavers are apprentices.

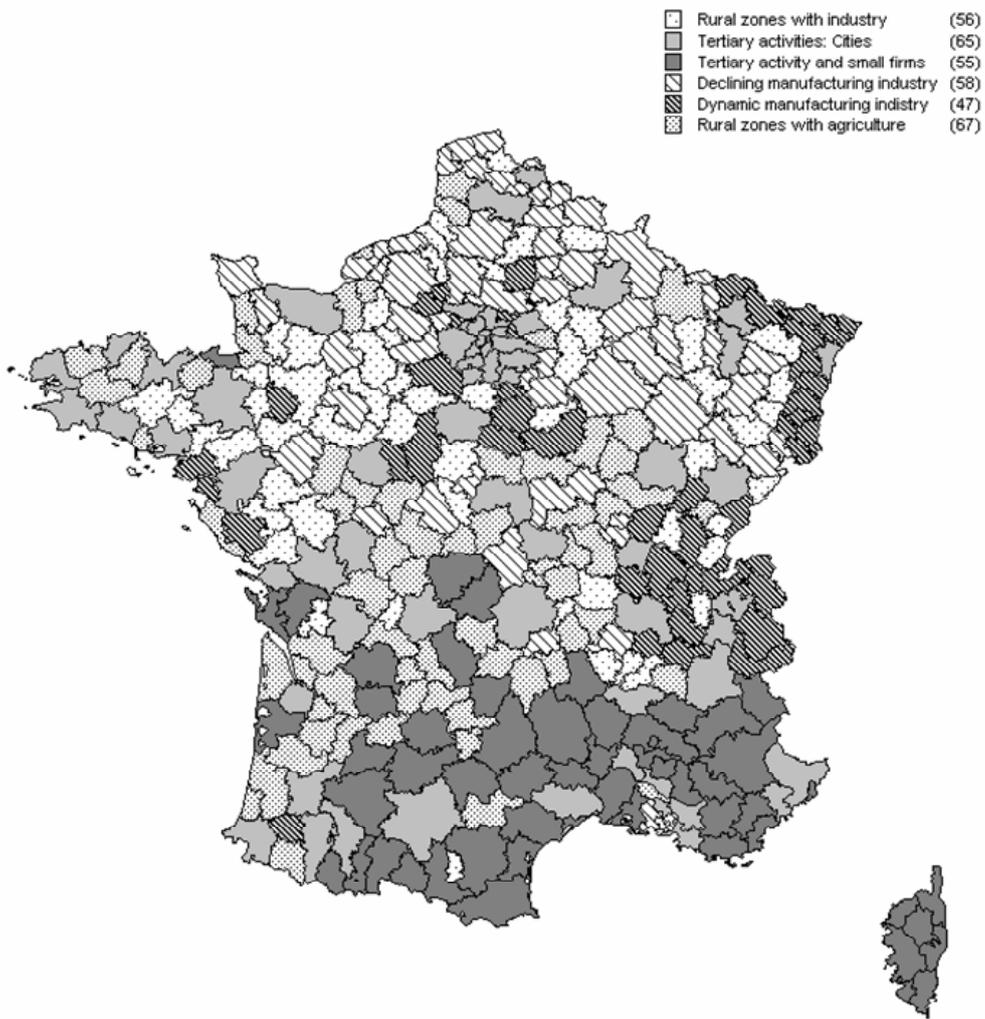
- **Declining manufacturing industry** (58 zones, 21% of school leavers)

Former mining areas like the Lorraine or the Northern regions belong to this type. These zones, where in the past manufacturing industry was predominant, have to cope with heavy employment difficulties, for which a high unemployment rate accounts for. As it is common in industrial areas, young people enter early in the labour market: there they are highly exposed to unemployment risk.

The choice of vocational pathways is still very frequent, and the industrial specialisations are highly represented. In contrast to the previous type, vocational training in the Northern regions has always been predominantly provided by vocational schools, and only 30 percent of CAP-BEP leavers come from the apprenticeship route. The proportion of people exiting school without any qualification is highly worrying.

² CAP or BEP (Certificat d'Aptitude Professionnelle or Brevet d'Etudes Professionnelles) are diplomas taken at the end of the first cycle of vocational secondary education. They are prepared either in a vocational secondary school, or in an apprenticeship centre.

Figure 1: Six types of socioeconomic environment



● **Rural zones with industry** (56 zones, 9% of school leavers)

This type is found in a majority of the northern half of the French territory. Agriculture coexists with manufacturing and craft industries. Low skilled manual jobs are predominant. More often than elsewhere, youngsters enrolled in vocational tracks chose to study towards manufacturing occupations. Less often do they stay on after a CAP-BEP towards a *baccalauréat* or higher, and educational aspirations are limited. Apprenticeship is very attractive.

● **Rural zones with agriculture** (67 zones, 7% of school leavers)

This type is scattered everywhere on the French territory. Agriculture is its distinctive feature, with a rate of 13 percent of the labour force employed in the primary sector. Manufacturing industries are also present. Small firms are predominant, and the labour force is low qualified. Even more than in the previous types, vocational students do reach only low levels of achievement. But in contrast, tertiary sector specialisations are more-than-average represented in the supply of secondary schools, and enrolment in higher education is more frequent than in the previous type.

Table 1: Type of zone and educational background of school-leavers

Type of zone	School leavers □ level of education					CAP-BEP leavers: % who trained	
	No qualif.	CAP-BEP	Baccalauréat (secondary)	Tertiary	All	For a manufacturing specialisation	As apprentices
Urban zones	8	22	16	54	100	49	32
Tertiary activity and small firms	7	27	17	49	100	55	41
Dynamic manufacturing industry	8	28	20	44	100	60	43
Declining manufacturing industry	9	27	18	46	100	55	30
Rural zones with industry	8	27	22	43	100	56	43
Rural zones with agriculture	8	27	20	45	100	59	40
All	8	25	18	49	100	54	36

Source: Céreq's □ Generation 98 □ survey: 55000 youngsters who left school (entered labour market) in 1998.

Diverse factors for a □ local effect □

Local specificities exist in the outputs of the educative system. Besides labour market qualification needs, other factors are less obvious but contribute noticeably to locally shape the training supply.

Some of them take their roots in the local history: for example, industrialisation of Northern France hindered the educational expansion □ basic vocational preparation, provided by school, was adapted to the workforce needs; meanwhile, in South of France, general diplomas became essential for accessing employment in the service sector - the only alternative to the decline of agriculture.

Geographical aspects are also to be taken into account. The range and amount of training supply are very heterogeneous, horizontally as well as vertically, even in a much centralised country like France. In cities, the whole range of opportunities provided by the educational system is largely available. By contrast, the training supply is much narrower in rural areas, where no general secondary school might be available in close vicinity, or even no facility for continuing education up to the vocational «Baccalauréat».

Lastly, the local educative system reacts to families' educational demand, and this latter may not be the same according to their own socio-occupational background. Caro and Hillau (1997) have shown that the local adjustment of vocational training to qualification needs operates through a 'filter of social reproduction'. Families' aspirations and strategies are strongly linked to their social status (Duru-Bellat, 2003). When asked which is the 'most useful diploma on the labour market', manual workers quote the CAP or BEP, while professionals quote University diplomas. Besides, the influence familial background and of territory do not overlap: social origin being equal, the credit attached to vocational diplomas varies conversely to the size of the place of residence. The norm according to which students choose their educative curriculum is not the same everywhere.

Social origin has not only a direct effect on educational achievement, but also an indirect effect through differentiated strategies and abilities to make pupils pass despite their educational shortcomings. Parents adapt their strategies and push them forward at the different moments in the educational pathway when the system asks for an orientation decision (Boudon, Cuin, Massot, 2000). Caille and Lemaire (2002) have shown that, their children's level of achievement being equal, high status parents are more ambitious and ask for an orientation towards the general track, much more often than manual workers do. As these discrepancies are not compensated by school boards' decisions, pupils from lower classes are all the more likely to follow a vocational training (Grelet, 2004).

Both families' and companies' educational demand are shaped by the socio-economic features of the local environment. Contextual factors weight all the more heavily that young people are less mobile.

Lack of mobility and distance to employment cramps the transition

The lower their level of achievement, the less mobile are young people: younger and less wealthy than their counterparts who achieved tertiary education, leavers at the CAP-BEP level are also more sedentary. Three years after exiting education, 84 percent of them still live in the 'employment zone' into which they entered after secondary education; 90 percent live in the same type of zone: they spent all their school years and their early working life in the same socioeconomic environment. Low rates of mobility do however vary according to the type of the zones: lowest in urban zones (6 percent), it raises up to 17 percent in rural areas (farmers' children being the most mobiles). For these youngsters attached to the place of their childhood, be it by choice or by constraint, distance and lack of transport means may hinder access to employment. Generation 98's school leavers have been asked about the major obstacles they had encountered during their job search. Distance to available jobs was mentioned by CAP-BEP leavers as the first reason to refuse a job (29 percent of cases, see table 2). This handicap is not evenly allocated on the French territory: it is most often mentioned in 'rural and industrial zones' (39 percent of refusal cases) and least often in cities (26 percent). Children of manual workers suffer more frequently from this obstacle, and children of managers, least.

Having found a job, it is still in 'rural and industrial zones' that young people experience most

of the constraints in their everyday mobility (from home to work □table 2): more than one out of three CAP-BEP leavers travels to work in a different employment zone from the one they live in.

Table 2: employment and mobility of young beginners at the CAP-BEP level

Type of zone of residence	Resident in this type of zone in 1998		Resident in this type of zone in 2001: % of those who reside in a zone and work in another
	% of times they refused a job because it was too far	% of beginners who moved from this type of zone between 1998 and 2001	
Urban zones	26%	5%	27%
Tertiary activity and small firms	32%	12%	19%
Declining manufacturing industry	30%	9%	27%
Dynamic manufacturing industry	28%	8%	31%
Rural with manufacturing industry	39%	12%	35%
Rural with agriculture	30%	14%	32%
All CAP-BEP leavers	29%	8%	28%

Source: □Generation 98□survey. Comment: Among young people who left school at the CAP-BEP level in an urban zone, if ever they refused a job, it was in 26% of cases because this job was too far. In 2001, 5% of these young beginners had moved from this type of zone to another. 27% of those who reside in urban zone in 2001 do not work in the employment zone where they live.

Conclusion

Territories are differentiated by socio-economic features which □make system□ They shape the educational and training pathways and beyond, the process of entry into working life. Therefore, this paper aims at underlining the interest of considering qualification needs in the global frame of societal change. If the new skills required by the development of economy may be identified, it is considerably more difficult to make the supply of qualifications meet the demand, because of sociological, historical and structural factors which have their own pace and inertia. Another point on which we would like to draw the attention, is the utility of taking into account the heterogeneity of a region, and to lead multifactorial analysis at a sub-regional level □even if the goal is to conduct regional policies.

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