The Experience of Mobility

An anthropological analysis of tenants' displacements in Montreal

Jean-Sébastien Marcoux
University College London
Ph.D. Dissertation in Anthropology
February 2001
This work is dedicated to all the places in which I have lived in the past and to the people who shared those places with me...
All of them except the apartment on Wolfe St., the one with shower in the living room closet.
Abstract

This thesis explores the experience of mobility through the process of house moving in Montreal. It is a study grounded in an ethnographic fieldwork that took place between September 1997 and July 1999. Data were collected through participant observation, by accompanying people throughout the process of their move, and assisting them in their move. It examines a range of anthropological issues such as the distribution of power in relation to residential groups, the constitution of subjectivity in motion, the relations coming into existence on the move as well as the role of material culture. It also looks at the construction of ageing brought about by mobility. The experience of mobility is situated in its broader context. The political and economic conditions which make it possible are analysed as well as the social categories in the light of which the experience takes on its meanings. As such, the thesis challenges major Western ideological and philosophical preconceptions regarding stability. It demonstrates how stability has progressively been normalised in the Western world against the threat that the moving crisis represents; how, in other words, remaining in place has become a norm of domestic life as well as its condition. The ethnographic evidence recognises that moving in Montreal is often apprehended as a crisis, not to say dreaded. It shows how moving is considered to be a crisis. It also reveals, however, that it is a crisis that is often taken to be worth going through. The thesis thus explores how people use mobility and how they cope with it. In that sense, it acknowledges the role played by objects; those objects with which people move and which are at the heart of the creation and the re-creation of a sense of place. One contribution of this thesis is to emphasises how people in Montreal, tenants in particular, use space and movement across space to construct themselves as subjects. Far from resulting from a lack of attachment to place, moving appears to be understandable as a dwelling practice, not to say rational in the Montreal context. It becomes a means to take advantage of the renting system. At least, it is a attempt to make the best of it.
Contents

Abstract................................................................................................................... i
List of figures........................................................................................................ iii
Acknowledgements.............................................................................................. iv
Prologue.................................................................................................................. v
1. Why shouldn't people move?....................................................................... 1
2. The mythification of stability and the moving crisis................................. 34
3. The moving question....................................................................................... 58
4. Should I stay or should I go?................................................................. 82
5. Being civil in a mobile society............................................................... 106
6. The strength to move................................................................................ 129
7. Things that move......................................................................................... 154
8. The 'casser maison' ritual........................................................................... 176
9. Just a matter of time.................................................................................... 202
References ............................................................................................................ 220
Appendices.......................................................................................................... 237
List of figures

1. Map of the Montreal Urban Community’s municipalities......................... 11
2. Map of the City of Montreal’s neighbourhoods......................................... 15
3. Map of house moves of informants in Montreal during the fieldwork...... 33
4. People moving themselves in Montreal..................................................... 128
5. Self-movers in Montreal........................................................................... 132
I wish to thank, first of all, Professor Daniel Miller, my supervisor, for his continuing support, his great availability, his enthusiasm, his challenging criticism and his overwhelming intellectual generosity. Daniel Miller always claimed that the greatest gift that academics could make to each other were genuine and perspicacious criticism. He showed me how rewarding this exercise could be. I also wish to thank Professor Mike Rowlands, my second supervisor, for his help and the very stimulating exchanges that we had. I would also like to thank Professor Rowlands for giving me the opportunity to work with him during the writing up period of my thesis, together with Dr Leonie Kellaher from the University of North London and Dr Julian Hanson from the Bartlett School of Architecture on From Domesticity to Caring, a research project on elderly people’s home in Britain funded by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC). This research project which was in straight line with my own work in Montreal greatly helped me. The discussions that I had with Professor Rowlands and Dr Kellaher in particular extended my understanding of the problematic at issue in elderly people’s mobility. In fact, my reflection on the issue have immensely evolved through my collaboration to this research. I wish to thank Dr Barbara Bender from the Department of Anthropology at UCL for her help in the early stages of my research as well as Daniel Miller’s students for their stimulating interactions. I also wish to thank specially Dr Victor Buchli as well for his comments on a preliminary version of this thesis and for his intellectual influence.

My fieldwork in Montreal has offered me with the opportunity to meet and to work with Professor David Howes from Concordia University in Montreal. Professor Howes has supported me during the period of the research. He provided me with very generous advice and comments on the preliminary version of some Chapters. Besides, Professor Howes allowed me to work with him on the research project titled Culture and Consumption funded by the Social
Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) during my fieldwork which provided me with a strong understanding of the issue of things' mobility: an issue central to my work. I also wish to thank the Professor Claude Thomasset from the Department of Legal Studies of l'Université du Québec à Montréal for her help regarding the issues on housing in the province of Quebec. Professor Thomasset guided me in the maze of the Law. She also introduced me to other people who have been of very great help as well. I wish to thank her for her generosity and her communicative enthusiasm as well for her comments on the preliminary versions of some Chapters. I wish to thank Me. Sylvie Tremblay as well for her advice on legal issues.

My research also benefited from the help of organisations and individuals, particularly with regard to the recruitment of informants. I wish to thank the personnel of the Centre local des services sociaux Côte-des-Neiges in Montreal for helping concretely in the conduct of this research, in the recruitment of elderly informants. I wish to thank more particularly Mrs Suzanne Walsh, Directrice des services professionnels, Mrs Nicole Hunot as well as the numerous social workers who introduced me to informants. Unfortunately, I can't name these workers without threatening the anonymity of my informants because of the strong association between them. I am grateful to these people for their help and for the openness that they have shown to my work and my approach. I also wish to thank Danielle Picard for introducing me to the world of real estate. Mrs Picard allowed me to accompany her in the course of work. She helped me to recruit many informants. And she has been a very good informant herself. In the same vein, I wish to underline the contribution of Julie Bourassa and Marie Carrière for helping me recruiting informants. I also wish to thank the Direction of the library of l'Université du Québec à Montréal for granting me with a full access to the resources of the library during the whole period of my work. I wish to thank, more particularly, the Governmental publications librarians for their frequent help. I also want to thank Mrs Denise Paquet, librarian at the Bibliothèque nationale du Québec in Montreal who helped me in my work on the National Archives. I wish to thank Isabelle Tremblay from Bell Canada for communicating me the results of a survey undertaken by the corporation.

Preliminary versions of some Chapters of my thesis were presented in different workshops and conferences. An earlier version of Chapter 2 was presented to the Consumption Study Group of the British Sociological Association in Manchester in January 2000; an earlier version of Chapter 5 was presented at the Home Geographies Conference of the Royal Geographical Society and the Institute of British Geographers in London in November 2000; an earlier version of Chapter 7 was presented at the Material Culture Seminars of the Department of Anthropology at UCL in January 2001; and earlier versions of the Chapter 8 were presented at the 5th International Conference on the Social Context of Death, Dying and Disposal in London in September 2000, and at the British sociological association in Keele in October 2000. I also wish to
thank the participants of these workshops and conferences for their insightful comments and suggestions.

This research has benefited from the financial contribution of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) which granted me a Doctoral research scholarship from 1996 to 1998. I have also received the financial help of the research project Culture and Consumption in 1998, that of the Royal Anthropological Institute in 2000, of the UCL Graduate society and of the Department of Anthropology.

On a personal level, I wish to thank Pascal Froissart and Julie Bouchard for the very stimulating discussions that we had over the years, and for their comments on a preliminary version of my thesis. I wish to thank Patrick Laviolette for his criticisms, his inspiring academic ‘habitus’ and his perspicacious reading. I also wish to thank Lucy Norris for her numerous suggestions, and her reading of the last version of the thesis. My parents, my parents-in-law and my family deserve special thanks for their continual help, their encouragement and their support. Above all, I wish to thank Hélène Buzelin, my wife, for supporting me and encouraging me during all the years that my research lasted; for reading the numerous drafts of the chapters, correcting them, advising me; for helping me to go though the process as well. Without her incommensurable help and patience, this research would never have reached completion.

My special thanks go, however, to my informants, to these people who accepted me in their life and their things; those persons who accepted that I accompany them during their move, often some difficult moments. I would like to thank them for their availability, for the confidence they granted me, for the time that we have spent together and the coffees that we had. Some of them probably benefited from my help. All of them helped me, however, far more than I could ever give back. They greatly contributed to make this experience a very enriching one.
Prologue

Summer 1998. During my fieldwork, a team from the BBC is in Montreal to shoot a documentary on 1st July moving day to be presented in the television series *Under the Sun*. In an interview, the chief editor of the television team declares: "Some (of the academics, government officials, journalists and politicians interviewed in the course of the preparation of the documentary) have told us that it was Québécois' nature to be unstable and mobile... Others have told us that these moves were the fruit of the illusion that one can always find something better somewhere else, an illusion that everybody cultivates here. Others have highlighted the fact that never being satisfied was part of Montrealers' nature... The explanation that reaches a consensus, however, is more related to the history and personality of the Québécois. Over here, uncertainty has always been part of people's life. It prevails at the political level. People seem to be used to considering their condition to be transitory. Québécois, by definition, are not sedentary people" (*Le Devoir*, 2nd July 1998).
Chapter 1

Why shouldn’t people move?

A primacy of stasis over change or mobility and displacement is notable for pervading the Western ways of understanding dwelling. This primacy of stasis over displacement proclaims the priority of the permanence of Being over the transitoriness of becoming (Harvey, 1989). This is at least what emerges from Heidegger’s assertion that, “Only if we are capable of dwelling, only then can we build” (Heidegger, 1972, 160). This is also what underlies Bachelard’s (1957) phenomenological quest of the ‘essence’ of dwelling in the poetic exploration of the house, and the representation of the house as a body of images providing ‘man’ (sic) with reasons or illusions of stability. And it comes out more strongly in Tuan’s (1977) idea that a place is where ‘we’ get attached to, that place is a ‘pause’ whereas space is movement, whereas each pause makes it possible for a location to be transformed into place and to become a centre of value. Pushed to its extreme, Augé (1992) conceives as ‘non places’ the corridors, airport terminals, and so forth that people cross without stopping; those transitory spaces defined negatively as places which are not invested with meanings or values. In fact, the primacy of stasis over displacement relates to the ontological primacy of place over space (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Casey, 1996; Tilley, 1994). It reasserts the Antique Archytian Axiom which holds that place “is the first of all things, since all existing things are either in place or not without place” (Casey, 1996, 47). As such, it reverses
the Kantian view that general knowledge, associated with space, precedes local or particular knowledge associated with place.

If we were going further, if we were to adopt Soja's (1989) position, we would say that underneath the ontological primacy of place over space and the opposition between stability and movement that this ontology conveys, social sciences display a general philosophical bias in favour of historicism. Its logic is the rational reduction of meaning and action to the temporal constitution and experience of social being. In other words, such a preeminence of historicism considers change as disruptive in opposition to tradition. It considers equilibrium in the fact of remaining in place, whereas movement is seen as a disruption, at best a search for equilibrium. Since the works of the Chicago School and its application of evolutionist theories to the understanding of the city (Kuklick, 1984), residential mobility in North America has predominantly been understood as such, as a quest of equilibrium. In Talcott Parson’s (1943) Functionalist sociology, the driving force of movement resides in the conditions of productivity, the change of residence becoming a mode of adaptation of the nuclear family to the requirements of industrial society. In Rossi’s (1955, 1980) classical work, moving becomes a mode of adjustment. Indeed, families move to adjust to changing housing needs generated by shifts in their composition that accompany life cycle changes such as births, deaths, marriages, divorces, and so forth (Rossi and Shlay, 1982). As families change in composition, their housing needs are taken to expand or contract, which in turn leads to a move. The transformations of housing needs are then related, if not ‘conditioned’, by endogenous household changes. In the line of Rossi’s view, Wolpert’s (1966) ecological model takes migration as an adjustment to environmental stress. As for Brown and Moore’s (1970) environmental perception model, it conceives the decision to move to be the result of a mismatch between the household environment and its needs at a particular time or from the perception of other alternatives as more attractive. In any case, Rossi’s line of thought and that of
his followers clearly implies a primacy of stasis over mobility inasmuch as it is fundamentally driven by the following question: 'Why do people move?'.

When, however, we consider Simmel's (Frisby, 1992) claim, that under the impulse of the modern economy, a social organisation increasingly detached from space would develop, namely that social forms would progressively be emancipated from space, the question of why people move loses its usefulness, even its well-foundedness. In the same line of thought, Harvey (1989) argues that space and time are historically increasingly tending towards compression. He goes on to suggest that a relationship exists between the growth of postmodern forms, the emergence of flexible modes of accumulation and a new compression of space and time in the organisation of capitalism. Going further, Giddens (1990) holds that social activities in Western societies tend towards disembodiment from time and space, towards a certain de-localisation, not to say a quasi de-territorialisation. In other words, if we follow Simmel, Harvey and Giddens, the question is not so much why people move, but why shouldn't they do so? This is the question that I will be concerned with.

Reconsidering dwelling through moving

The study of mobility forces us to reconsider the very meaning of dwelling. More importantly, it challenges major ideological and philosophical preconceptions regarding stability in Western societies. When looking at the works of Burnham (1979), Gulliver (1975), Ingold (1986), Rapoport (1995, 1978), Rodman (1985) or Woodburn (1968, 1972) on pastoralism, shifting cultivation societies and hunters and gatherers' social formations, constant moving appears to be as much a form of habitat as staying put. In fact, anthropologists have traditionally challenged the primacy of stasis over mobility, the opposition between dwelling and movement and the very idea that movement undermines the creation and sustaining of a notion of home in
any absolute terms as Heidegger's philosophy of dwelling holds. According to Harvey (1993), Heidegger's philosophy contends that there is a deep sense of homelessness in the Modern world. It claims that many people have 'lost their roots' or their 'connection to homeland'. The problem, for Heidegger, is therefore to recover a viable 'homeland' and 'autochthony' in which meaningful roots can be established and dwelling made possible. Place construction, in this respect, should be about the 'recovery of roots' and the recovery of the 'art of dwelling' (Harvey, 1996). For Harvey, Heidegger's philosophy is in fact propelled by a fear of the destruction of place under the impetus of market penetration. It is nourished by the 'terror' of the threat of changing space relations among things; of losing 'our' roots and of finding 'ourselves' cut off from all sources of spiritual nourishment. This becomes clear when we consider how Heidegger uses Johan Peter Hebel's poem for investigating whether the flourishing of any work depends upon its roots in a 'native' soil. He quotes Hebel for whom

We are plants which — whether we like to admit it to ourselves or not — must with our roots rise out of earth in order to bloom in the ether and to bear fruit (Heidegger, 1966, 47)

Recent works in anthropology have challenged this essentialist emphasis on 'rootedness' and 'homeland' which also tinges Bachelard's (1957) view of the native house. They reconsider the Western notion of the physical stable home which is implied here. They question the very idea of being at home when 'environmentally fixed', of

situating the world around oneself in an unmoving centre, with contour lines of relevance in the form of symbolic categories emanating from a magisterial point of perception (Rapport and Dawson, 1998).

Clifford (1997), for instance, suggests that human location may be constituted by displacement as much as by remaining in place, that dwelling can take place in travel. Rapport and Dawson (1998) for their part call for a 'more
mobile conception of home' by challenging the relationship between identity and fixity and by recognising as ways of dwelling the moves of homes as well as the moves between homes. Rapport and Dawson argue that one may be at home in movement, but also that movement can be one's very home. A clear example is to be found among West Indians migrants from Nevis island living in Britain described by Fog Olwig. For these migrants, obtaining and sustaining a 'proper home' has often depended on "willingness to travel from their native island and to stay for prolonged periods of time in far-away destinations" (Fog Olwig, 1999, 73). By emphasising how these people come to feel at home in several places, by moving frequently between several homes, Fog Olwig reconsiders the idea that the physical separation from what has been defined as home may lead to a condition of homelessness. In other words, her work challenges the idea that change may undermine the idea of home. In another context, Tomas and Dittmar (1995) have studied the condition of homeless women in Britain. They too challenge a common assumption: the assumption that homelessness is a problem, and housing a solution. They go as far as suggesting that the opposite may be more appropriate. In brief, these views give way to a conception of dwelling which integrates the idea of movement (Urry, 2000). They open up a conception of home which leaves space for movement.

Problematising the mobility of people and things

The role of possessions in the understanding of change of place deserves to be acknowledged here. In fact, the mundane experience of change of place in an urban context like a North American city, that of inner city change, the change which takes place over a short distance, usually involves the displacement of people across places as well as that of things. The idea that house moving involves things as much as people is so obvious that when a household flees from a place by abandoning its possessions, a deep feeling of loss emanates
from it (Buchli and Lucas, 2001). Indeed, following Desjeux, Monjaret and Taponnier (1998), house moving as a form of mobility concerns objects as much as things. Since Bourdieu’s (1972, 1979) analysis of the embodiment and of the ‘body hexis’, that of the culture becoming nature as a result of the ‘incorporation’ of a material structure in which a subject exists, it is acknowledged that bodily activities ‘make’ and are ‘made by’ the space of their enactment; the body being continuously invested with the cultural meanings of the space such as the domestic space; a space which is made up of objects and artefacts. In this regard, possessions are integral to the creation of a sense of home as emphasised by Csikzentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981), Sèze (1994) and more recently Chevalier (1993, 1994, 1998). They provide the structure in which the subject exists as subject (Miller, 1987; Buchli and Lucas, 2000; Rubenstein, 1989). Going further, numerous works have revealed how people personalise a house or an apartment after moving in by deploying familiar possessions; how they turn a house into a home and reconstruct the self in a new environment through those possessions that move with them (Belk, Wallendorf and Sherry, 1989; Mehta and Belk, 1991; Bih, 1992; Joy and Dholakia, 1991; McCollum, 1990). They have shown how people recreate their sense of home through their objects with the moves (Rautenberg, 1989); how they re-objectify themselves into a new place as Parkin (1999) would put it. If we were to paraphrase Buchli and Lucas (2001), we could say that people attempt to ‘take the home out of the house’ and move with it.

The question that will orient my discussion is: how can we understand dwelling practices in a context where most people do not produce their accommodation themselves? Where people move into houses or apartments which already exist? Where moving is, in other words, a matter of change? I will contend that in Montreal, a context where moving is common, this can be achieved by problematising people’s mobility in relation to that of things. In this respect, I will suggest that people in Montreal inhabit their possessions as
much as the place; that possessions are used in the creation and the re-creation of a sense of place throughout displacements; and that things provide people with a certain sense of stability. The people met in Montreal did not simply change place, however. They also transformed themselves through the moves. Households are formed, they transform themselves and they disappear along their displacements. People die or separate on the occasion of the moves. And these transformations are reflected among the things. Things are also the locus of social transformations. They provide, in themselves, matter for change. They reflect the desire to 'create a void', to 'change skin' or to sort out one's life, 'de faire le ménage', which manifests itself in deciding what to take and what to leave behind when moving. They also become the site of transformations of the self. In that respect, the following pages will try to better understand the nexus of place, possessions and movement.

The line of my argument goes as follows. I will contend that the experience of mobility can only be approached against the Western mythification or the invention of stability as a normal, not to say a natural state of equilibrium. Chapter 2 discusses the historical roots of the myth of stability. It argues that such a myth goes along with the creation of the idea of home and that it is driven by the idea of home. In that sense, stability has become a norm, not to say a condition of domestic life. Since the 1960-70s, under the impulse of a medical discourse, moving has been constructed as a crisis; and remaining in place has been considered as the best means, not to say the only means, of preventing this crisis. The chapter also explores the ideology which underpins the myth of stability; an ideology which asserts itself in the binary opposition of stability and mobility. This ideology stigmatises tenants as a residential class on the basis of their lack of attachment and their lack of concern; in short, their 'lack of stability'. In practice, however, as will appear in the further chapters of the thesis, people in Montreal do not operate within such categories. They do not valorise or privilege mobility in any simple sense. Nor do they reject the idea or the ideal of a stable life. In practice, they often try to
create a sense of stability through change and displacements. Chapter 3 examines the moving question in the Province of Quebec, the normalisation and the legalisation of stability since the 1960-70s and the adoption of the 'stability policy': a legislation aimed at protecting tenants' residential stability. It is argued that such a legalisation was made possible by the therapeutic discourse on the moving crisis which imposed itself at the same period. Provided, however, that remaining in place is institutionalised as a tenant's right and that the legal system in force favours residential stability, I will contend that moving is constructed, in Bourdieusian terms, as a structured set of preferences which is particularly prominent among tenants who count among the least advantaged groups (Bourdieu, 1979). It is not a preference for moving in any simple sense which is in question here. Moving is often apprehended as a crisis. But it is also a crisis that is often taken to be worth going through. In other words, there are discrepancies between the elite's construction of mobility as a threat and a crisis and the popular practice of moving in Montreal. Chapter 4 moves from the discourse to the practices. It examines how dwelling practices in Montreal integrate mobility and how people try to cope with the move. It analyses the contexts and the circumstances in which people move, and how they do so, most of the time, over short distances. Going further, Chapter 5 analyses how people use the resources of the housing market in a landscape such as that of Montreal which is socially segmented and segregated. It is segmented in the sense that it is divided. And it is segregated in the sense understood by Brun (1993), inasmuch as these divisions reveal and aggravate inequalities. An examination of the Montreal housing market and of the legislation concerning the rented sector of housing shows that moving is usually far from being irrational or luxurious, that on the contrary it is an understandable, if not a rational practice, especially for the tenants. Against the stereotype of the 'unstable' tenant, I argue that moving may become a means for not to say an attempt by tenants, among them the disadvantaged and disenfranchised people, to try to take advantage of renting in order to improve their condition.
As I have mentioned above, in attempting to understand the experience of mobility we need to consider people's mobility in relation to that of their things. Chapter 6 examines the more concrete aspect of the experience of mobility, namely how people move their home and their belongings. A particularity of the Montreal context is that most of the people move themselves, that is with the help of kin, family or friends. The moving day becomes, in this respect, an occasion on which real or fictive kinship takes form through the circulation of bodily help. What is provided on the occasion of a move is not only physical help, however. It is also a form of moral support which helps people cope with the moving crisis. As such, the chapter shows that it is not so much the kinship which is in the service of the move, but the move which is in the service of the relationship; the help provided becoming a means for strengthening the relation. Chapter 7 analyses for its part how the things with which people move are central to the understanding of the experience of mobility. It demonstrates that people do not simply move with their belongings. They also sort out those belongings when moving, which in turn becomes an occasion to sort out their lives. It allows them to initiate changes in the material environment in which they exist as subjects. My argument, which supports the idea that moving is potentially socially constitutive, is that in sorting out their belongings on the occasion of the move, people sort out their relations and memories as well. Through the sorting out of things, moving becomes a means for bringing relations and memories into consciousness and to reconsider the relevance and the meanings of these relations and memories. As such, moving provides the opportunity to understand the fluid possibilities of relations in terms of choice. Chapter 8 discusses a particular case of mobility: that of the change from a domestic to a care home among the elderly people; a move into a smaller place and a smaller set of things. It explores in depth how elderly people divest a place, and how they attempt to do so in a ritualised way by transforming what is a priori a compulsion to divest one place into a constitutive event for the self.
The thesis concludes with a discussion on the temporality of the moves. It shows that people often use the changes of place to objectify themselves as part of their relations. Places are often conceived in relation to relations; the changes of relations being often accompanied, marked and emphasised by a change of place. The changes of place become, as such, a means for objectifying duration and for giving it a concrete aspect and a materiality. Thus, the changes of place are far from opposed to a sense of continuity and a feeling of permanence. Permanence is rather achieved through change. In fact, most of the people that I have met knew that this move would not be their last. They know that moving is probably just a matter of time.

Moving in Montreal

My research takes place in the City of Montreal (1,016,375 inhabitants in 1996) which is located on the island of the same name which counts 27 other municipalities (see fig. 1). The City of Montreal possesses its own government within the provincial government of Quebec and the federal government of Ottawa as well as its own housing regulation. Its main revenues come from property taxes.

The City of Montreal was incorporated as a municipality in 1931. It has historically expanded out of annexing suburbs (Linteau, 1992). Usually those were working class suburbs and in-debt suburbs. According to Sancton (1988), 'bourgeois suburbs' like Outremont, Westmount and Ville Mount-Royal were able to successfully resist such attempts at annexation. In 1921,

---

1 The Montreal Urban Community includes 1,775,860 inhabitants. It represents 25% of the population of the Province which counts 7,389,137 inhabitant in 1996 (Statistics Canada, 1996 Census).
3 Which is obtained by applying a taxation rate on every $100 of land assessment. In 1999, this taxation rate was $1.99 (Ville de Montréal, 1999).
the provincial legislation established Canada’s first metropolitan government, the Montreal Metropolitan Commission whose main object was “to halt virtually all annexation activity by having solvent municipalities participate in assisting defaulting ones with their debt repayment” (Sancton, 1988, 13; 2000). Sancton reports that in the early 1960s, Montreal’s Mayor Jean
Drapeau launched a campaign to push integration further and merge the 27 municipalities of the island into a single city. The project was called 'Une île, une ville', namely 'One island, one city'. Instead, the Urban Community of Montreal was created in 1970. It consists of a regional government in charge of public services like police, public transit, food inspection, water quality control and land valuation. The project of merging the 28 municipalities of the island into a single city has resurfaced in 1999, during my fieldwork, under the impulse of the Montreal Mayor Pierre Bourque. At the end of 1999, Bill 170 was proposed by the Quebec provincial government led by Lucien Bouchard and the Parti Québécois. The Bill designed to force the merger of Montreal island's municipalities is to become effective on January the 1st 2002. This project is to be situated within the broader context of the municipal structure reorganisation suggested by the Commission Bédard on National finances and local taxation; a restructuration undertaken at the level of the Province in favour of a reduction in the number of municipalities combined with an increase in their responsibilities. The new City of Montreal would be divided into 29 boroughs grouping some 1.8 millions of people. It is argued that such a merger would allow for a better share of the fiscal expenses, a greater fiscal equity, a reduction in regional disparities, and a tax reduction for most citizens. The project is highly contested, however, especially among the suburban population. Its opponents fear the loss of local democracy, tax increases, the extension of the costly collective labour agreement prevailing in the City of Montreal to the whole new structure, the loss of service quality regarding libraries, garbage, snow removal, firefighting and so forth. Perhaps what is also feared is the loss of identity that the expression 'erasing one's municipality from the map' expresses well. It is also reported that among the

---

6 It has been alleged that such a tax reduction would benefit 86% of the citizens of the new municipality (La Presse, 17th November 2000).
7 Some mayors of the municipalities concerned in the merger have gathered under the Front commun des Maires pour la démocratie locale (La Presse, 22nd November 2000). See also http://www.democratique.org, December 2000.
8 Montrealgazette.com, 30th November 2000.
Anglophone community mainly concentrated in the West island, people fear losing their right to 'live in English'. The Bill 170 has been received with wrath and protest. One also noticed angry letters in the readers columns. Mr Renaud from Montréal Nord talks about the loss of the citizen's freedom of choice that the Bill entails. Mr or Mrs Goldman from Ville St-Laurent talks about the loss of diversity that small municipalities offer, which he or she says appeals to every taste and lifestyle, whereas Mr Bissonette who does not specify where he lives declares that

The citizens who made the choice to build their home in Lasalle, Anjou, Outremont, Westmount, Boucherville or Saint-Bruno have done it because a house responded to their tastes and their needs. But also because of the quality of life that the municipal government offered them... the choice of a municipality is the fundamental choice of each individual to belong to a community which resemble him or her...

These fears are not without foundation when we consider that for some of the advocates of the merger, "a better integration of the communities of the [Montreal] territory is a sign of progress and would contribute to a better social cohesion". As the Montreal Mayor Pierre Bourque put it, "We're all Montrealers". In fact, the project of the merger is clearly political. The debate has taken a particular constitutional turn on the occasion of the Canadian federal election held in November 2000. On this occasion, Jean Charest, the liberal party leader in the Province of Quebec called the people opposed to the merger to signal their opposition by voting against the Bloc Québécois, the nationalist party on the federal scene; the rationale being that this party is akin to the Parti Québécois. The forced merger is also compared by its opponents like Guy Bertrand, a defender of the Anglophone community's

---

10 La Presse, 25th November 2000.
12 La Presse, 17th November 2000.
13 La Presse, 5th February 2000.
14 See Synopsis of a speech by the Mayor of Montreal to a luncheon meeting of the Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal, 19th September 2000.
rights, to some form of ‘assimilation’. Going further, for advocates of the Partition right (that is of the right for some municipalities to break apart and to remain within Canada in the case of the Province’s accession to independence) like Mr Bertrand, the merger would be conducive of the loss of the right to remain in Canada. It is recognised that the Quebec Province’s population has dropped since the first Referendum on sovereignty held by the Parti Québécois of René Lévesque in 1980. At least, the PQ’s election accelerated the displacement of economic activity towards Toronto which had already begun (Bone, 2000; Levine, 1990; Linteau, 1992). On the eve of the second Referendum, held this time by the Parti Québécois of Lucien Bouchard in 1995, Preston Manning, the leader of the Reform party, declared that the federal government should work at protecting the rights of the ‘No’ supporters. Mr Manning declared that it would be possible to adopt an agreement guarantying the protection of those people’s rights in an independent Quebec. He added, “and I guess that it would also be possible to ease the move in Canada for those who may wish to do so”. Indeed, moving is often associated among the Anglophone community with expulsion from the city, as well as from the Province.

This debate over the forced merger is relevant for the purpose of my discussion inasmuch as it reminds us that the City of Montreal cannot be considered in isolation. It reveals that the backdrop of people’s displacements is a socially, economically and linguistically (Murdie and Teixeira, 2000) segmented and segregated landscape. It probably also indicates that what is feared with the merger is the loss of a diversity and of the possibility of choice that this diversity is taken to provide. The City of Montreal itself, which comprises 17 neighbourhoods, is heterogeneous (see fig. 2). The city has

---

15 *La Presse*, 17th November 2000.
16 Ibid. E3.
17 The 1995 referendum comprised the ‘Yes’ camp, the people in favour of independence, separation or sovereignty and the ‘No’ camp, those against.
18 Remarks reported in *La Presse*, 18th October 1995.
traditionally been represented as symbolically divided along the St-Laurent Boulevard between the ‘East’ and the ‘West’, that is the ‘French part’ and the ‘English part’, what the author MacLennan has called the ‘Two Solitudes’ (quoted by Nader, 1976, 117). As Levine (1990) puts it, even though the notion of linguistic territories has been exaggerated, it has been an enduring aspect of the City’s landscape since the middle of the 19th Century. Let us
just mention that for 59% of the Montreal population the mother tongue is French. English is the mother tongue of 11%. More importantly, in eastern neighbourhoods like Pointe-aux-trembles, French is the mother tongue of 92.8% of the population. In Hochelaga-Maisonneuve, another eastern neighbourhood, this proportion is 87.4%, whereas in the Notre-Dame-de-Grâce neighbourhood English is the mother tongue of 56% of the population. This division between the East and the West is not only misleading, however, it purely and simply tends to omit the presence of immigrant populations whose mother tongue may be neither French nor English as if no recognition could be possible without a proper space; those who are often called the 'allophones' and who represent 29% of the population. In Parc Extension, for instance, for 62.5% of the population the mother tongue is either Greek (21.4%), Spanish (2.6%), Creole, and so forth. These linguistic divisions also hide economic ones. The Pointe-aux-trembles neighbourhood is the wealthiest with an annual average income of $45,347. On the opposite, Hochelaga-Maisonneuve is the second poorest with an annual average income of $26,107 and a rate of unemployment of 18.5%, whereas Parc Extension is the poorest neighbourhood with an annual average income of $23,007 and a rate of unemployment of 30%. In any case, what is relevant for the purpose of the following analysis of mobility is that Montreal’s landscape is one in which geography, language and taxation or wealth are intertwined, often vaguely, sometimes ambiguously. In the line of Materialist geographers like Lefebvre (1974) and Soja (1989) and phenomenologists like Tilley (1994) who reject the Newtonian conception of spatiality as a neutral homogeneous container to thoughts and actions, I will contend that mobility is problematically intertwined in politics, power and ideology; and that such a mobility is intimately related to the exercise of citizenship.

19 See Table 5.
The Montrealers' national sport

According to the 1996 Statistics Canada census, 33.8% of the Montreal population aged over 5 were not living at the same address that they lived at five years before. Thirteen point six percent of the Montreal population aged over 1 year were not living at the same address that they lived at the year before. These data show an important rate of change. This rate is far from exceptional, however, when compared to that of some North American cities. It is true that these data do not inform us of the number of changes of residence during the 5 year period between the two census. As such, they do not translate the impression of Montreal's 'massive moves' spread by newspapers: "One tenant out of four in Montreal changes address every year", "20 to 25% of Montrealers move every year", "It is estimated that 170,000 Montreal families will move around the 1st of July", "200,000 changes of address in Montreal at the end of June", and so forth.

What is important here is that moving is part of the Montrealer's life. From time to time, moving is characterised as a 'hobby' or a part of the 'usual razzmatazz'. It is compared — sometimes sarcastically, other times humorously — to the Montrealers' 'national sport'. It even seems plausible to suggest that moving is part of a certain idea of what it is to be Montrealer, of many Montrealers' identity. Indeed, moving house in Montreal has inspired singers and writers. In her famous novel Bonheur d'occasion, Gabrielle Roy...
(1945) depicted the condition of the French Canadian working class families living in Montreal during the second World War who moved house frequently because of economic constraints. Year after year, the Montreal newspapers, the consumer association magazines, the home decoration journals and so forth provide people with pieces of advice regarding packing, the changes of address, tips on "how to make moving day less of an ordeal", how to choose a moving company, how to rent a truck, how to fill it as well as how to handle boxes. They advise people on precautions to take, rules to respect and steps to follow when moving: when to start to prepare the move, what to do a few weeks before the move, what to do in the last days preceding the move, on the eve of the move and on the moving day. Moreover, local organisations like Tourisme Hochelaga-Maisonneuve in collaboration with the Collectif en aménagement urbain Hochelaga-Maisonneuve organised the Déménageurs en fête event at the end of June in 1997 and in 1998. The event was officially aimed at welcoming newcomers to the neighbourhood by helping them to move. It was also used to attract media in the hope of changing public negative perception of the area, and attract new inhabitants. Moving is also used by global organisations. During the summers of 1998 and 1999, Wall-Mart attempted to position itself as the store where one could find all that is necessary for settling after a move; everything, it was suggested, with a wink, including a pizza cutter as pizza is recognised as the 'the movers' national meal'.

33 La Presse, 22nd June 1991.
34 Rénovation bricolage, July/August 1995.
35 La Presse, 24th May 1986.
37 Journal de Montréal, 30th June 1999.
During my fieldwork, I often had the impression that Montrealers liked to think of themselves, without exaggeration, as the biggest movers of the world. At the same time, however, I felt that moving was often devoid of any importance, not to say denigrated. People were often surprised when hearing about my research that somebody could devote his time to such a mundane, common and basic activity. The discrepancy, not to say contradiction, between the popularity of the practice and its lack of recognition is striking. For me, this is exactly why moving is so interesting and important in Montreal, why it is so relevant from an anthropological perspective: because the mundane, what is taken for granted, what is obvious, often reveals deeper levels of meanings, sometimes the more important ones (Journal of Material Culture, Editorial, 1996). In this regard, I will contend that moving does not only have an anecdotal appeal or a folk character. The study of mobility sheds a new light on the evolution of Quebec society in general and the City of Montreal in particular in the last forty years. It reveals that this North American society, often described as one of the most mobile ones — a belief to which people often proudly subscribe — is in fact extremely preoccupied by stability, or at least by a different kind of stability.

Moving altogether

I will argue that the particularity of Montreal’s mobility does not so much relate to the alleged greater number of people moving, but to the fact that most of them do so at the same time. One must say that Montreal has historically been a city of tenants and that moving is mostly a tenant phenomenon. In 1996, for instance, 76% of the dwellings in the City of Montreal were rented.

38 I was invited by the media on three occasions as an anthropologist to talk about the moving day and my research on moving in Montreal (Radio-Canada, Johanne Prince’s program, 1st of July 1998, 30th June 1999; TVA en direct (29th June 2000). On every occasion, the same question arose: Are we the biggest movers?

39 Although elsewhere in Canada there is no comparable lease system as the one of the Province of Quebec, one quarter of the moves occur during the Summer period, during the months of June and July (Che-Alford, 1992).

40 See Table 3.
This is quite important when we consider that in Montreal most of the leases are fixed term leases of a 12 month period that ranges from July the 1st to the 30 of June of the following year. Indeed, the duration of annual leases and their fixed expiration date rule people’s displacements in Montreal. Together, they give emphasis to these displacements, they beat time. An understanding of the phenomenon of mobility requires, in this respect, that we consider the evolution of the mode of tenure as well as that of the lease system which regulates the renting and which frames the displacements. In attempting to do so, I will go back to the end of the 19th Century, to the beginning of Montreal’s industrial revolution. Montreal became, at that time, a city of tenants; moving became for its part a tenant phenomenon.

A city of tenants, a city on the move

In 1867, the British North American Act was adopted giving way to the Confederation, a federal union under the Crown of Great Britain: the foundation of modern Canada (McNaught, 1988). The adoption of the Confederation opened up the interior market and Western Canada’s potential to Montreal. Montreal emerged as one of the great industrial centres of Canada (Linteau, 1992). In fact, from 1847, the date of the beginning of the hydraulic exploitation of the Lachine canal, to 1881, the proportion of dwellings held by tenants in Montreal rose from 68.4 to 85.3%. Montreal became, in Hertzog’s words, a ‘city of tenants’ (Hertzog, 1985; Hertzog and Lewis, 1986).

Many problems characterised working class’ housing at the end of the 19th Century: problems of dilapidation, health, shortage and precariousness. Hertzog (1985) reports that in 1881 half of Montreal families moved every year, most of them from one neighbourhood to another. In a study published in

41 The Confederation gave way to the Union of the Upper Canada (Ontario), the Lower Canada (Quebec), Nova Scotia and New Brunswick (Bumsted, 1992). Manitoba joined the Confederation 1870, British Columbia in 1871, Prince Edward island in 1873 and New Foundland in 1949.
1897, Ames revealed that among 436 poor families selected among the French Canadians, Irish Canadians and English Canadians, 10.5% had left 'their former adobes' within two months,

drawing attention to one of the sad features of poverty's lot, viz., the constant necessity to move on because of inability to satisfy the claims of the landlord (Ames, 1972, 74-75).

For his part, Lauzon recounts that

among the 109 tenants of the south-west of the village [St-Augustin] that were registered into the roll of valuation, 53 were not at the same address one year later, that is: nearly 50%. In a small control group of tenants identified in 1875, only one remained in the same house until 1881, 7 disappeared from the neighbourhood... 5 moved once, 16 have moved twice or more... (Lauzon, 1992, 138)

As Choko (1987) notes, Montreal's industrial structure from the mid to the end of the 19th Century was based upon seasonal work. Its economy was characterised by precarious job conditions. When combined with the working class' financial problems, this resulted in frequent moves, moves that could occur more than once a year. People moved because they were unable to pay the rent. Sometimes they moved without paying it at all, by night, without a trace, 'à la cloche the bois' as the saying goes on. The adoption of the Lower Canada Civil Code in 1866 in the pace of foundation of the Confederation had a direct impact on the renting system (Dickinson and Young, 1995). Indeed, the Lower Canada Civil Code stipulates that leases end on the 1st of May of every year. It indicates that when no time is specified for its duration, the

42 There is no agreement on the origin of the 1 May as a termination date prior to the 1866 Codification. One explanation suggested by the historian Graham Decary and taken up again by the BBC associates the termination date of 1 May to a custom called 'flitting' introduced into Montreal by Scottish immigrants (Le Devoir, 2 July 1998). Another explanation suggested by the Montreal Owners League in 1969 in the course of the consultations of the Civil Code Revision Office is discussed in Chapter 3. The Owners League holds that the agricultural cycle underlies the lease termination on 1 May. As such, nearly at the beginning of the colony, the expiration date of the leases would have been set on 1 May to allow people to move before the seed period. By implicitly referring to the working class' subsistence culture, the authors of the memo remind us that at that time the back house courtyards, nowadays used as warehouses, garages and sometimes dumps, were used as kitchen and flower gardens.
lease of hire of a house or part of a house "is held to be annual, terminating on the first day of May of each year".\textsuperscript{43} In this context of instability and insecurity, this lease system which asserts as a lease termination date 1 May became a genuine obstacle to the workers' displacements. For Choko (1980), mobility was, in an Engelian spirit, a worker's condition of productivity. One understands why then Montreal Trade Unions like the Parti ouvrier in 1899 and the Mouvement ouvrier between 1914 and 1929 called for the abolishment of this lease system. At the end of the 19th Century, mobility was not necessarily desired. It was not for all that constrained, however.\textsuperscript{44} Above all, it was often necessary.

With the improvement in living conditions, the Province's entry into the consumer society (Linteau, Durocher, Robert and Ricard, 1989) and the rise of the middle classes, different concerns arose during the 20th Century. Not only was the lease system maintained at the very request of the unions, it was reinforced by the introduction of the standard-lease in 1973-74 in the scope of Civil Code reform. On that occasion, the moving date was changed in favour of 1 July.\textsuperscript{45} That is the situation which prevails nowadays. The peak of the moving season is 1 July which also corresponds to Canada Day. For some observers, this confers on Montreal the character of a genuine curiosity.\textsuperscript{46} For others, it gives way to 'unusual parades' in which "lamps lead the way like majorettes, followed by mattresses and sofas, while refrigerators jaywalk across intersections".\textsuperscript{47} While "the rest of the country is taking the day off, tending a barbecue or nursing a patriotic beer, Montrealers are heaving boxes and fuming in frustration".\textsuperscript{48} More seriously, a common belief among the Anglophone community is that 1 July has been voluntarily chosen by the

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{sec1642} Sec. 1642 C.c.B.C. of 1866 (Crépeau and Brierley, 1981).
\bibitem{hereIrely} Here I rely on the works of Gilles Lauzon (1989, 1992) and Lauzon and Greenlaw (1991) who emphasised how moving could become an economic strategy. I will explore Lauzon's argument more deeply in Chapter 5.
\bibitem{seechapter3} See Chapter 3.
\bibitem{thegazette} The Gazette, 27th May, 1998.
\bibitem{satnight} Saturday Night, 1996, 52.
\bibitem{canadangraphic} Canadian Geographic, 1996, 48.
\end{thebibliography}
Quebec government to shadow Canada Day, that such a choice responded, in fact, to an anti-federalist policy: the best way to shadow the Canada Day parade being to make the movers occupy the streets. Despite the fact that the government in power at the time of the 1973-74 reform was Robert Bourassa’s Liberal government (1970-76), a ‘firmly federalist’ government (Linteau et al., 1989, 706), it is difficult to deny such a belief any ground. However, it is beyond the scope of this work to determine whether or not moving can in fact be related to larger narratives of nationalism. I will simply reiterate a point that I have made earlier, that mobility is problematically intertwined in politics, ideology and power. It shows how moving can be a sensitive issue.

Methodology in motion

For Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) the social world has a double existence: an existence in the ‘first order objectivity’ through the distribution of material resources, of the means of appropriation and of the socially rare values; and an existence in the ‘second order objectivity’ through the mental and bodily schemes which work as symbolic matrixes for the practices, the thoughts and the feelings of the subjects. The double existence of the social world justifies, for Bourdieu, a double reading; a reading which will account for society’s social physics by considering it objectively from the outside; and a reading which will consider what he calls society’s social phenomenology. This double reading is important because the subjects who construct reality do not construct by themselves the categories of that reality. In other words, we need not ignore the fundamental historical values, meanings and politics of a form of experience such as that of mobility. Bourdieu’s approach is highly relevant here. It helps to understand what we could call the moving ‘habitus’ prevailing in Montreal, namely a predisposition, a structured preference for mobility, especially among the popular classes, since the 19th Century. I will contend that the structure is not relevant in any deterministic
way, however, but as the condition of possibility for that experience. Here, I distance myself from Bourdieu's determinist inclination (Schorske, 1995). This is what justifies my interest in the experiential level of mobility and, in turn, my decision to adopt an ethnographic approach.

At the beginning of my research, at the end of Summer 1997, few ethnographic works on moving house were available. Rodman's (1985) analysis of residence pattern mobility in Longana, Vanuatu, was of little help from a methodological point of view because of the important contextual differences. I wish to say, however, that her work appeared to be highly relevant for the analysis in the later stage. Rautenberg's (1989) work published in Terrain on domestic culture and house moving in Lyon, France, provided an interesting starting point because of the parallel that I suspected existed from a logistical point of view with Montreal. Rautenberg's analysis was the more relevant because it explicitly focused on objects. It was instructive, also, because it pointed to gaps between the original ambitions of its author and the actual realisation. As the author explained, the research was originally intended to analyse the re-composition of the domestic landscape. It aimed at addressing the permanencies and the transformations arising between the period preceding and following the move, inasmuch as moving may lead to the consumption of new objects and household equipment and allow for the disclosure of the organisation of the lived space. Moreover, the research project was originally aimed at discussing moving in itself as a meaningful event, an event that may reveal some values and usage of domestic life. Rautenberg's original intention was then to conduct oral and photographic inquiries as well as inventories of objects and settings of the houses. In doing so, he expected to get access to people who moved on the occasion of the renovation of an apartment building in Lyon. Unfortunately, certain problems arose that led to a reorientation of the research: a year passed before a tenants' relocation occurred and when it happened, the inventory of objects — most of which were

---

49 Desjeux et al. ethnographic analysis of house moving in France was only published in 1998.
already packed into boxes — involved a heavy task, as Rautenberg explains, that created discomfort. This compelled him to reorient the analysis from an ethnography of objects to a domestic analysis of the relationships between the dwellers and their environment and to collect discursive data on the history of objects and the rooms of the houses. The flaws of Rautenberg’s approach are not only methodological. Above all, they relate to a misconception of moving to what he calls a ‘moment’. Such a conception underestimates how moving is in fact a process. It neglects the latent threat or the fear of moving as well as the hope of moving that may never be achieved. In attempting to overcome Rautenberg’s problem, it appeared important for me to approach the move in the long duration and to get involved in the process in its early stages. Moreover, I wished to understand the practices as much as the meanings of mobility. In this regard, I decided to accompany people in the physical and metaphorical journey of the move: from the moment they decided to move, to the settlement, through the move per se. I wanted to get access to the important decisions such as those regarding the move itself, and the choice of a location, as well as small gestures such as the sorting out of things which have, however, major implications. My approach is simple. I tried to attend the people’s move and to assist them in their move. I have helped people move in the most concrete sense. I have accompanied them in the search for accommodation, in the preparation of the move, in the sorting and the packing. I have also helped people clean, paint and decorate the old and the new accommodation. Sometimes I have helped them to shop for the home. More importantly, in most of the cases, I have helped them move per se.

I first conducted a pilot study during a period of 3 months, from September to November 1997. Basically, this pilot study consisted in identifying potential means of recruiting informants. This pilot study also entailed interviews with people in order to identify the range of issues to be discussed and observed later on. I decided to examine first, the residential history of the household in relation to the life history of its members: where do people come from? Where
did they stay in the past? With whom? etc. Second, the composition and the functions of the household: what is the profile of the household members in terms of age, gender, occupation, education level and health condition when relevant? Who inhabits the place and in which quality (as a family member, kin, co-tenant)? Who moves? What kinds of transformations underlie or accompany the move or result from it? Third, the context, the circumstances and reasons of the move. Fourth, the dwelling and its localisation before and after the move: type, description, size, cost, mode of occupation; the ways in which it is used; the transformations brought about by the move. Fifth, the possessions: what do people bring with them when moving in their new habitat? What objects and pieces of furniture are they attached to? What is the history, meanings and biography of these objects? What are the objects that people do not talk about, those that are taken for granted? What do they donate, sell or discard? Why? How do they sort out their belongings? How do they move their belongings? How do they prepare and handle them? How do the uses, meanings and associations of the objects change in the new context after the move? And sixth, the move per se: who prepares the move? Who takes part in it? Who does what? What are the human and material resources mobilised on that occasion?

My fieldwork took place between January 1998 and July 1999. During that period, I conducted research in the library and at the National Archives. I gathered material like magazines, advertising, and cultural products dealing with the issue of house moving. I also met people who could advise me on issues of importance: Claude Thomasset from the Department of Legal Studies of l’Université du Québec à Montreal to discuss legal issues; Marc Choko from the INRS Urbanisation, Jacques Trudel from the Société d’habitation du Québec and Gilles Lauzon from the City of Montreal to discuss housing issues; Josée Fournier from the Comité logement Rosemont, Janick Desforges from Option consommateurs, the representatives of the Regroupement des comités logement et association de locataires du Québec and Guillaume Postaler from Entraide logement
Hochelaga-Maisonneuve to discuss issues relating to tenants defence; Danièle Picard, an aggregate representative from Re/Max Montreal to discuss issues of real estate market; Louise Hébert from the Office municipal d’habitation to discuss social housing; Claude Paré from the Centre Visavie, Robert Chagnon from the Association des résidences pour retraités du Québec and Lise Raymond, Director of the Association des centres d’accueil privés autofinancés on private sector elderly housing; Nicole Hunot from the CLSC Côte-des-Neiges and J.P. Lavoie from the Direction de la santé publique on health care at home and the public provision of elderly housing; and Diane Panneton from the Clan Panneton and Lise Valiquette from Arsenault transport on moving trade.

My data collection mainly relied, however, upon participant observation. The empirical material was gathered through informal interviews and discussions with people moving as well as with the other people involved in the move: the family members, the friends, the health care professionals, and so forth. Visual material was also collected through photographs. I wished to be able to analyse the composition of the material environment and make comparisons before and after the move on the arrangements of objects, the organisation of the rooms, etc. In all cases, I met people minimally before and after the move. The extent of the follow up depended upon the relationship that I was able to develop with my informants, their willingness to be accompanied and my respect of their privacy. As an example, I followed the Lambert family from the early stages of the process, approximately 3 months before the move, and throughout the year following the move. I followed Mr Richer during the 6 months before his move, and for the 3 months following it. One must say that the ethnographic approach often takes place within a gift-giving relationship between the researcher and their informants. Some of the people who agreed to take part in the research were obviously happy to receive some help. I am thinking here of elderly people.

50 In order to protect the anonymity of the respondents, the names have been changed.
Informants were recruited through various means. Elderly people were mainly recruited via the health care workers of the CLSC Côte-des-Neiges, a health centre providing health care at home as well as assistance to elderly people in their search for a residence. I must say that health care services provided in the scope of the stay-put policy are under the supervision of CLSC professional workers. These workers knew who would move, who wished to, needed to move or was considering moving. They put me in touch with those people. My choice of the CLSC Côte-des-Neiges for its part was informed by the CLSC’s interest in the research on ageing due to its link with the academic milieu. Through the CLSC, I was able to meet elderly people moving into residential care. I also tried to reach elderly people through the means of advertising gratuitously provided to me by the magazine *Le Bel Âge* without success, however. I met other informants through a real estate agent who let me follow her in her visits, meetings and negotiations with clients, which I did for a month. She introduced me to some of her clients involved in the process of a move. I also met people through the *Office municipal de l’habitation* of Montreal, a non-profit organisation providing low-rental houses to people with the lowest income in Montreal. I also attended meetings for new tenants, on which occasion I presented my work and offered my help to those interested. Other informants were recruited through personal contact: through friends, acquaintances, friends of informants, and through an advertising agency for which I did consultation work during my fieldwork. I should say that the mode of recruitment used was territorially biased: the CLSC covers the territory of the Côte-des-Neiges neighbourhood and of the Outremont municipality, the real-estate agent met was based in Ahuntsic, the Council estate meeting that I attended took place in Ahuntsic as well, whereas many of my personal contacts were located in Hochelaga-Maisonneuve. As a result, a large number of the people encountered either came from or moved into the Hochelaga-Maisonneuve neighbourhood, the Plateau Mont-Royal, Côte-des-Neiges,
Ahuntsic and Petite-Patrie (see fig. 3): central neighbourhoods which often have a higher proportion of tenants.\(^{51}\)

Sample

During my fieldwork, I met some 30 adult informants.\(^{52}\) Twenty-one of these were women, 9 were men. This bias can probably be explained by the fact that moving is above all a woman’s issue, as we will see in the next chapter. Women are more involved in the preparation of the move. They are also more inclined to talk about it. As a result, the male experience of mobility is less well accounted for.

Most of the sample are French speaking people. In 4 cases, French was the second language. Although the language issue did not explicitly appear as a determinant of people’s choice of a localisation during the fieldwork, its importance should not be underestimated. Research that covered the whole territory of the Island of Montreal might reveal the significance of language as an influencing factor. These people belonged to the following ethnic groups (using Statistics Canada categories): Canadians, French, English, Chilean, Salvadorian and Serb. They were distributed as follows across age groups: 2 persons under 20, 8 persons in their twenties; 4 persons in their thirties; 7 persons in their forties, 3 persons in their sixties, 3 persons in their seventies and 3 persons over 80. The people aged over 65 were over-represented in the sample in comparison to the City’s population where this group of people accounts for 14.75% of the population in 1996. This group accounted for 9% of

\(^{51}\) See Table 4.

\(^{52}\) Table 1 for a presentation of the sample. I should say that I lost track of some informants between the pilot study and the fieldwork. In some cases I could not trace them or they stopped returning my phone calls, as was the case with the Rivera family, a refugee family. Also, an elderly woman who started to meet me stopped under what appeared to me to be the pressure of her children. Another elderly woman was going through a difficult move while her husband was hospitalised. I felt that I should not call her again.
the population in 1971. It is expected to reach 22.3% by 2026.\(^5\) In fact, people aged over 60 tend to settle more in the City of Montreal than in the other municipalities of the Greater Region of Montreal.\(^4\)

Before the move, 12 households were made of a single person. Most of these were elderly people: Mr Legrand, Mme Debray, Mme Baptiste, Mr Ricard, Mr Trenet, Mme Cabot, Mr Richer, Mme Hébert and Mme Bolduc. The others were Julie T., Régine Mercier and Gigi Tremblay. The great representation of single people, nearly one third of the sample, is proportionate with that of the City of Montreal. Between 1991 and 1996, the number of households in Montreal increased by 1.9%. This increase is attributed to that of single person households which rose from 21% of the total of the households in 1971 to 38% in 1991, and to 41% in 1996.\(^5\) The proportion of single person households is as high as 60% in some central or downtown neighbourhoods like Ville-Marie, and 50% on the Plateau Mont-Royal.\(^6\) This proportion is 29% for the rest of the Montreal Urban Community, and 23% for the rest of the Greater Montreal region. In fact, single person households tend to concentrate in the City of Montreal.\(^7\) In 9 cases, those of Kim G., Marie-Sol T., Charlotte D., Eduardo, Caroline P., Gabriel T., Anne R., Rupert R. and Marjo S., people were living in co-tenancy with friends or acquaintances. These people were aged under 30. In 3 other cases, those of the Lambert Family, the Rivera family and Béatrice Forgues, people were living in couples with children under the age of 18. Three other cases were those of single mothers with children: Mira Filipovic, Sandra Parent, Lisa Blackburn. It is in the City of Montreal in comparison with the greater region of Montreal that we find the greatest proportion of single parent families: 36% of the Montreal families with children are single parent families.\(^8\)

\(^{5}\) La Presse, 28 January 2000.
\(^{54}\) People aged over 65 account for 10.83% of Greater Montreal’s population in 1996 (Ville de Montréal, 1999).
\(^{55}\) Statistics Canada. Census data.
\(^{56}\) Ibid.
\(^{57}\) Ville de Montréal (1999).
\(^{58}\) Ibid.
Families with children are in fact mostly found in the periphery. The move I observed were often accompanied by transformations, however: 2 couples, Charlotte and Eduardo, Marjo and Rupert, originally living in different places moved together. In 3 other cases, those of Kim G., Marie-Sol T. and Caroline P., people changed co-tenants. Another informant, Béatrice Forgues, moved on the occasion of a separation, whereas another one, Céline P., left her parents’ home to take an apartment in co-tenancy.

The informants’ occupations were very diverse. Using Bernard and Boisjoly’s (1992) classification, 13 of them could be considered to be part of the middle classes. Seven were non manual workers with university qualifications: Mira Filipovic worked as an engineer, Régine Mercier worked as a chief nurse assistant, Gabriel T. and Julie T. worked as social workers, Béatrice Forgues and Lisa Blackburn worked as teachers and Anne R. worked as a researcher. These persons all had a university degree and a regular source of income. Six other persons were manual workers: Gérard Lambert worked as an electrician, Sandrine Lambert worked part-time in the sales sector, Rupert R. worked in the blue collar sector, Caroline P. and Marjo S. worked in the agriculture sector as horticulturists, whereas Eduardo worked in the transportation sector. These manual workers often had little job stability. Caroline P., for instance, changed job twice in less than one year, Marjo S. worked under a limited duration contract whereas Eduardo lost his job during my fieldwork. Four other informants, Kim G., Marie-Sol T., Céline P. and Charlotte D., were students. All of them worked part time. Five other informants can be considered as ‘non-working’. They were either jobless like Sandra Parent and the two adults of the Rivera family, or receiving social assistance as in the cases of Mr Legrand and Gigi Tremblay. Finally, 8 informants were retired: Mme Debray, Mme Baptiste, Mr Ricard, Mr Trenet, Mme Cabot, Mr Richer, Mme Hébert and Mme Bolduc.

---

59 Ibid.
I must add that most of the people met moved within the same tenure mode. When I first met them, only 3 were already owner-occupiers. In 4 cases, the move gave way to a change of tenure: Mira Filipovic, Gabriel T. and the Lambert family all acceded to ownership. Mr Ricard, a owner-occupier, sold his house and moved into a residence for retired people. His case is far from exceptional. As we will see later, the Montreal elderly people's housing market is a tenants' market. In any case, it could be argued that this work is mainly oriented towards an analysis of tenants' experience of mobility.
fig. 3 House moves of informants in Montreal during the fieldwork

N.M. Milewicz’s move does not appear here. She moved from Ville-Ste-Laurier to Pointe-Claire. See fig. 1
Chapter 2

The mythification of stability and the moving crisis

In 1972, in *A Nation of Strangers*, an analysis of residential mobility in the American Society, Vance Packard asserted that mobility begets instability, which is in turn responsible for social fragmentation. Packard’s remarks were pervaded by a certain nostalgia, especially when he compared the mobility of the ‘pioneers’, which he saw as a charming source of vitality, to that of his contemporaries which he considered to be alarming. More importantly, his view relies upon a place-based identity which becomes “one of the most pervasive bases for both progressive political mobilisation and reactionary exclusionary politics” when conflated with race, ethnic, social classes differences. (Harvey, 1993). Indeed, remarks such as Packard’s bear in themselves the stigmata of ‘otherness’ and ‘difference’. They embody all the commonplace ideas of a xenophobic discourse: the idea that mobile individuals, those he called ‘the unstables’, could breach the community and that they could be responsible for increasing troubles within such a community, the idea that instability could beget indifference to local problems, lessen the sense of responsibility, lead to depersonalised relationships and so on. In the same vein, Stokols, Shumaker and Martinez (1983) suggest an association between a ‘high mobility’ and a lesser sense of community whereas Saunders (1990), more recently, argues that geographical mobility is likely to undermine strong commitments to specific places. The representation of community life
depicted here relies on a contained idea of identity which is threatened by ‘erosion’ or, in this case, by mobility. As such, Packard, just as much as Stokols et al. (1983) and Saunders’ (1990) view recall in many respects Tönnies’ (1955) *Gemeinschaft* and the nostalgic depiction of warm community life. Packard’s idea that mobility could be the result of some normlessness was not a new one. It had pervaded the works of urban sociologists led by the Chicago School throughout the 1920-30s (Rossi and Shlay, 1982; Grafmeyer and Joseph, 1984). This idea has been challenged by Rossi’s (1955) work which emphasises how mobility is to the least normal, how it is part of the housing market. Deleuze’s work can also be seen as a criticism of this ‘conservative’ conception (Vergely, 1993). Packard’s remarks deserve our attention, however, because they settle residential stability in a mythical fashion, as Fischer and Stueve (1976) have noted, inasmuch as they assume that ‘in the past’ people lived and died in a single place. And yet, to take up the example of Montreal, at the peak period of the industrial period, at the end of the 19th Century, moving was frequent among working class families. In fact, if we were to paraphrase Fischer and Stueve, we could say that in the case of Montreal it is not so much mobility that has increased but those who move that have changed. If at the end of the 19th Century and until the 1960-70s moving was widely thought of as a popular practice, if movers came mostly from the poorest classes, nowadays they also come from the middle and upper classes. Despite such a gentrification of moving practices, the myth of stability is still pervasive. This is the topic of this chapter. In the line of modern material culture studies, which reveal how materiality is often embedded in moral and social representations (Latour, 1996), how the house is an artefact that materialises and prescribes ideals, not to say norms of domestic and family relations (Birdwell-Pheasant and Lawrence-Zuniga, 1999; Chapman and Hockey, 1999; Buchli, 1999), I will argue that in the North-American context this myth of stability goes along with the creation of the idea of home and that is driven by the idea of home. In attempting to understand the mythification, or

---

1 See Chapter 1.
the 'invention' of stability, we need to consider what Husserl (quoted by Casey, 1996) calls the 'natural attitude', namely the ideas which come to be taken for granted under the influence of modern science; in this case, the natural attitude regarding stability. For the myth of stability is nourished by a medical discourse on the moving crisis and on the threat that moving entails. This is a discourse which considers remaining in place as the best, if not the only means, of preventing the crisis.

The ideal of stability

Today, in many Western societies, home is taken to be a constitutive element in the presentation of the self. It is also taken to be a backstage region (Goffman, 1956), a showcase for the world as well as a shelter against it (Frykman and Löfgren, 1987).

The very idea of home in Western societies is built up against that of the public space (Cieraad, 1999); it is commonly referred to as the 'withdrawal into the domestic sphere' (Kaufmann, 1988): the idea that 'there is no place like home', that 'home is where the heart is'; the idea, in brief, that home is a 'place apart' (Martin and Mohanty quoted by Jackson and Moore, 1995, 13). Some, like Forty (1986), see this notion of home as 'a place for anything but work', as the product of the industrial revolution, of the removal of work from home to factories and offices and the ensuing transformation of the household from a production unit to one defined by consumption. It is true that in England for instance, since the end of the 18th Century and over the 19th Century, the middle class home has become increasingly separated from the workplace (Davidoff and Hall, 1995) just as much as the bourgeois house in France (Segalen, 1996) or the middle class house in Sweden (Frykman and Löfgren, 1987). Following Philippe Ariès, most authors, however, see the emergence of the current ideas about home, about 'home sweet home', as being related to
changes in the emotional and psychological structure of family relations. For instance, in England, current ideas of home are related to changes in the ideas of domesticity within bourgeois circles (Hall, 1985; Davidoff and Hall, 1987; 1995). In Sweden, they relate to the emergence of ‘familism’ among the middle class: a family-centred lifestyle dedicated to the ‘cult of love’ which is founded on the couple, the caring parents and domestic comfort (Frykman and Löfgren, 1987). The separation of the home and the outside world is a gendered one. It relates to an opposition between what has traditionally been considered the female and the male spheres, and to the subordination of the former to the latter as the works of Davidoff and Hall (1987, 1995) in England illustrate. From the end of the 18th Century in England, women were excluded from work. Their innocence, their virtue and their purity, those same qualities that were taken to make them unfit to work outside home made them suited to the management of home (Forty, 1986). Hence, men had to care about public life, the commercial and the business spheres, whereas women became the heart of the home and their family (Hall, 1985). As such, motherhood and housekeeping were recognised as occupations at the middle of the 19th Century, the 1851 census in England recognising the status of housewife (Hall, 1985). This opposition between the inside and the outside also bears religious connotations. The English Evangelist at the end of the 18th Century and the beginning of the 19th Century nurtured the belief that men and women were born to occupy different spheres. For Hannah More, an 18th Century Evangelist theoretician, the biological constitution of each sex was the expression of the difference of their destiny. The province of the man was to find the means of supporting the home; that of woman was to make the home an enjoyable place (Davidoff and Hall, 1987). According to More, who is

2 In her discussion of the 19th Century English domestic ideal, Marcus (1999) stresses that this vision of middle-classes everyday life has been questioned by feminist scholars. She recalls Davidoff and Hall’s work which showed that the term ‘separate spheres’ masks the asymmetry of a division in which men had full access both to the public realm and to the comforts and pleasures of home. She also cites the work of Gallagher (1985) who questioned the very division between private and public, as well as that of Poovey (1988) who demonstrated that such a division relied on gender differences that could never be sustained. In other words, Marcus points out that the situation was more complex in practice. Having said that, I am interested here in the discourse, not the practices.
quoted by Hall (1985), for a woman the quest for success in the man's sphere was thus taken to be the negation of the tasks and duties assigned to her by God. Hall insists that this gendered opposition between the private and the public spheres was also shared by the Methodists and the Baptists as well as the Utilitarians who, after Bentham, considered the separation of the public and the domestic spheres as de facto more than a moral issue.

From the 19th Century, home became a source of moral welfare: it provided protection against social anomie, illness and aggression. It was kept separate from the public realm of business, vice and squalor (Davidoff and Hall, 1995). It came to be seen as the only place where authentic feelings could be displayed. It came to stand for honesty, truth and love (Forty, 1986). It was made virtuous, the place where virtue would be nurtured (Davidoff and Hall, 1987). More importantly, according to Frykman and Löfgren's (1987) formula, 'femina domestica', women became the guardian of home as well as the guardian of its virtues; the production of 'homeyness' being a woman's work. Even though there exists no similar historical account of the development of the notion of home in Canada and in the Province of Quebec, there are good reasons to believe that the situation described in England, Sweden and France applies when we examine the works on alcohol, gender and the home. Krasnick Warsh's (1993) discussion of women and alcohol in Canada, for instance, allows us to draw some parallels. She recalls the responsibility devolved upon woman, at the end of the 19th Century, during the Temperance Movement, to preserve the home against the threat of alcohol; a responsibility clearly related to the protection of the virtues of home. As Nadeau, Mercier and Bourgeois (1984) emphasise, the 'sacred space' of home needed to be protected from the corruption of the external world.

This domestic cult which is in fact a cult of sexual difference, evolved along the lines of the conception of the woman's body. At the heart of the home lay a wife, a mother, the 'angel of the house'. Home came to be seen through the
metaphor of woman’s body. And the woman was expected to care for her home as much as she cared for herself (Forty 1986, 104). In fact, since the 19th Century, “it is the personality of the mistress”, as Elsie de Wolfe (quoted by Forty, 1986, 104) put it, “that the house expresses”. Woman’s status was thus elevated to the mastery of the domestic sphere, but it remained contained within it (Davidoff and Hall, 1987). Thus, woman’s virtuosity lay in her ‘containment’ in the sphere to which she belonged “like the plant in the pot”, as Loudon, a 18th Century ideologue, argued. That is

thoroughly domesticated, particularly endearing and capable of receiving especial regard (Loudon, quoted by Davidoff and Hall, 1987, 190, 191).

The opposition between home and the public sphere is still an important feature of Western domesticity. It remains a biased opposition relating to ideals of genders. Chapman and Hockey (1999), for instance, acknowledge that until the 1960s it was accepted wisdom in Britain that the home was a woman’s domain, a place to which men returned from their ‘natural’ preserve, the public world of work. They emphasise how men’s experience of employment has changed dramatically since the 1970s with the challenging of life-long careers, unemployment and temporary work. They also recognise that women have a greater place on the labour market outside the home. However, they point out that equality between sexes in employment or in the domestic sphere is far from achieved, that women continue to undertake most of the domestic work, not to speak of the physical and imaginative work, as Attfield, (1995) and Hunt (1995) put it, performed in order to create a home environment for the family group.

Feminist critique have also stressed how the idea of home is itself gendered (Chapman and Hockey, 1999); how this place long viewed as the place for women has typically been built and designed by men with men’s interests in mind (Watson, 1986. See also Rendell, 2000, on women’s practice of architecture); how, in practice, home is far from opposed to work for women,
how it is still the woman’s workplace (Harris and Pratt, 1993). They emphasised how there is often very little space for privacy and retreat for women within the home (Madigan and Munro, 1999); how home is still a space of confinement for women (Duncan, 1996; Duncan 1981; Loyd, 1981) as well as an oppressive space in many instances (Munro and Madigan, 1993). In fact, the feminist critic opens up a broader discussion of privacy and privatisation; an idea deeply embedded in Western political theories of freedom and sovereignty, the idea that home is where one can do whatever one wants. Privacy is a concept that patterns and legitimises the exclusion of outsiders (Chapman and Hockey, 1999). It is also frequently employed to construct, control, discipline, confine, exclude and suppress gender and sexual differences and preserve traditional patriarchal and heterosexist power structures, as Nancy Duncan (1996) puts it; the differences between private and public spaces encoded in Law are also deeply rooted in North-American and British cultures. As such, for feminists critics such as Duncan, it is clear then that private and public distinctions remain gendered and that

the designation of the home as private space limits the role of political institutions and social movements in changing power relations within the family (Duncan, 1996, 131)

For Duncan, so-called ‘private issues’ such as domestic violence need to be ‘deterritorialised’ in a Deleuzian sense (Vergely, 1993), namely freed from any bounded logic because domestic and intimate relations remain political relations. Home, in other words, cannot be seen as a space which is beyond the gaze of the public world (Chapman and Hockey, 1999).

The moving threat

I would like here to insist on another dimension implicitly underlying the symbolic construction of Western domesticity, a dimension which is rarely
acknowledged: the issue of stability. Hall (1985) rightly stresses how at the end of the 18th Century and during the 19th Century in England, home came to be taken to provide comfort and intimacy as well as the sense of security necessary to the conduct of family life, for a 'stable' family life, as she says. All, from the Evangelists to the Utilitarians, recognised the importance of a stable family life and of a well organised home (Hall, 1985). Davidoff and Hall (1985) note for their part that the domestic cult of the late 18th Century and of the 19th Century propagated the vision of family as a repository of stability and firm values, that a stable family was assumed to achieve social harmony and individual fulfilment in England, whereas in Sweden virtues of a stable life, and of a stable home life, were praised among the middle classes (Frykman and Löfgren, 1987). The emphasis here is on the stability of relations, perhaps, on the Christian ideas of fidelity and marriage. But it is implicit that stable relations are taken to go along with a stable home, people and place being immanent in the other, the stability of the home reflecting and guaranteeing that of the family. As a matter of fact, as Marcus (1999) points out, the 19th Century English ideal of home subordinated the spatial implications of the home's status as a 'castle',\(^3\) to temporal ones. It represented durability, the persistence of past into present and timelessness; it protected against the passage of time. At the heart of such a conception of stability lies the association between place and stability, an association which is all the stronger when place construction is opposed to movement, as we have seen in the introduction, and that home

is a concept of place rather than space, implying emotional attachment and meaning beyond constraints of the physicality of any particular dwelling house (Birdwell-Pheasant and Lawrence-Zuniga, 1999, 6)

Home, in brief, has become a symbol of intimacy and privacy. It has become the expression of nurturing and security, some sort of shelter. It has become a

\(^3\) Marcus refers here to Edward Coke's quotation dating back to 1644: “For a man's house is his castle, et domus sua cuique tutissimum refugium [and one's home is the safest refuge to everyone]” (Marcus, 1999, 236).
familiar place, a stable place. Going further, I would say that stability has become a condition of domesticity. The mythical ideal of stability goes along with the creation of the idea of home and is driven by the idea of home. It is enacted through the very notion of home. This ideal of stability is threatened by mobility, however. For moving can “shatter the calm of our family and make the sturdiest marriage start to fray”. It can threaten the “vital balance” and the “physical securing stability of home” which is “so important to individuals’ psychological equilibrium”. If we were extending Hockey’s (1999b) argument on the mutual constitution of the sense of self and home, we would say that moving is to dwelling what the ‘house of doom’ is to the ideal home: a threat to the self. For that reason, moving in itself has long been perceived as a threat. DeFoucauld (1990) reports that Benjamin Franklin would have declared that “three movings equated one fire”. The belief that moving may be threatening, that it may stand among the most stressful events for human beings, following the death of a spouse, a divorce, ex aequo with a bombing, has also inspired a French director in a film on house moving. It is so strong a belief that it is taken to extend to plants and animals. As such, Canada Posts advises their customers to “watch the effects of the move on your family and pets so you can lend a helping hand and be reassuring”.

---

5 Millet et al. (1980, 212).
6 Duff and Cadotte (1992, 207).
7 See L’entretien avec Olivier Doran transmitted to the Montreal journalists in the scope of the promotion of the film ‘Le déménagement’ during the Summer 1998. It is possible that Doran referred to The Social Readjustment Rating Scale of Holmes and Rahe (1967) according to which the life events with the highest magnitude of anxiety are the death of a spouse, a divorce, a marital separation, etc. However, in Holmes and Rahe’s scale, moving only came in 32nd position. See Hobson, Kamen, Szostek, Nethercut, Tiedmann and Wojnarowicz (1998) for an update of the scale.
8 Smart Moves, the guide to make your next move easier, Canada Posts (1998). See also McCall’s, March 1981; Prevention, September 1989; and Pets Magazine, July/August 1995. There is an assumption here that what is true for humans is true for animals and things. I do not want to dispute it here. I rather wish to emphasise the extent of the threat of the move.
Moving pathologies, moving as a pathology?

During the past thirty, forty years, a great deal of attention has been devoted to the moving threat and to its repercussions from a medical point of view. The decades 1960-70 witnessed the emergence of a discourse on the alleged pathology of moving. Frequent moving and its disturbing or precipitant effects (Hall, 1964, 1966) were considered with increasing suspicion. Some, like Kuhn (1973, quoted in Millet, Pon, Guibaud and Auriol, 1980), saw moving as a form of wandering. Others, like Vereecken, saw it as the symptom of mental instability associated with ‘nomadism’, while acknowledging that undoubtedly the Western man will find the temporary return to this primitive way of life quite charming (Vereecken, 1964, 621).

These works gave way to the development of an aetiology and a psychopathology of moving all concerned with moving ‘troubles’ that ranged from neighbourhood pathology to relocation blues, through postmove blues, moving day blues, nostalgia, homesickness, homelessness, depression, home mourning, mortality, and so forth. These studies were mainly concerned with the identification of the periods of life at risk from the emergence of crisis as well as that of the groups vulnerable to moving, which included children, women and the elderly people.

The discourse on children’s vulnerability as expressed in popular educational publications rallies the scientific ‘authorities’ and the ‘specialists’ of childhood. From these articles emerges the notion that children abhor change. Dr. Kapuchinski, for instance, holds that because of a move, children lose whatever is stable in their life.\(^9\) For Julius and Zelda Segal,\(^10\) moving can generate considerable sadness and anxiety whereas, for Marilyn Segal, it is a

tragic event, even if it is only down the street. For these ‘specialists’, the slightest change becomes dramatic to such an extent that, according to Joan Costello, even ‘moving’ from one bedroom to another can generate apprehensions among 5 to 6 year old children. Or, for Michael Inbar, if it occurs between the ages of 6 and 11, it can hurt a child’s ability to cope in a school environment, and lower his or her ability to think and react intelligently. It could even lower his or her IQ!

The matter of determining which age is the most vulnerable one is at the heart of these works: for some, it is the first year of life, for others it is the age of 4, the period from 5 to 6, from 6 to 11, or adolescence. In fact, every age appears to be vulnerable. Furthermore, it emerges from some of these discussions that young girls are more sensitive than boys to the pressures of moving. For instance, in an article on the psychological effects of moving, a reporter asserted that several researchers had found that boys, in general, relocated more easily “perhaps because of the universal interest in, and facilities for, athletics or perhaps because boys have been taught or have the instinct to be explorers”. Others, like Raviv, Keinan, Abazon and Raviv (1990), consider this difference to be related to patterns of play and the development of social relations, to the fact that boys play ‘outside’ more than girls, the latter being, as it were, closer to home. The association between women and home in turn is taken to explain the alleged vulnerability of women to the pressures of moving in later life as well as moving’s pathogenic effects and its disruptive effects on women (Vereecken 1964; Weissmann and Paykel 1972; Butler, McAllister and Kaiser, 1973; Guibaud 1979; Millet et al., 1980).

What is relevant for the purpose of our discussion is that this opposition

---

13 Science Digest, December 1976.
19 PTA Magazine, October 1972, 37.
between the inside space of women and the outside space of men also changes into another opposition, that between women and movement which translates a conception of womanhood threatened by moving and mobility, not to say every kind of change. In other words, it is a conception in which moving is, for women, contre nature. These works, thus, attempt to re-assert the ‘natural’ foundations of the gendered opposition between the inside and the outside, stability and mobility. I say re-assert because this opposition between woman and movement is a persistent one. According to Foucault (1984, vol. II, 229), we can find some signs of such an opposition as far back as Aristotle’s Economics in which the gendered division of the household was taken to be founded on natural differences; man being strong, woman being restrained by fear; man bringing goods to the house, woman watching over the house; man finding his health in movement, woman being inclined towards a sedentary way of life. We have seen earlier how for 18th Century Evangelist theoreticians the biological constitution of each sex was the expression of the difference of their destiny. We can go further. In his history of the making of sex, Laqueur (1990) recalls that since the end of the 18th Century the dominant view was that of two incommensurable and opposite sexes acting as the basis for different views of gender roles. As Laqueur put it, biology became the epistemic foundation for prescriptive claims about social order. Interestingly, Laqueur quotes Patrick Geddes, whom he describes as a prominent professor of biology as well as a town and planning writer from the late 19th Century, for whom cellular physiology could explain “the ‘fact’ that women were ‘more passive, conservative, sluggish and stable’ than men, while men were ‘more active, energetic, eager, passionate, and variable’” (Laqueur, 1990, 6; italics added). Nowadays, as is suggested by McCollum’s (1990) work, one would rather talk about moving as a separation from home experienced as a form of ‘mourning’ for the woman, as the ‘loss of a part of the self’, as a ‘loss of identity’. As a popular journal claims,

moving is like a death to a woman, and a period of mourning must be gone through before she can begin to live again (Redbook, July 1977, 60).
If we were to speak about woman’s vulnerability, vulnerability lies not in any sort of “natural attachment to home” as Millet et al. (1980) argue or in any natural aversion to movement but in the fact that, for historical reasons, women used or had to use home for objectification, to create themselves through their practices of home aesthetics as we have seen earlier. Not only was the woman taken to be specialised in the efficient organisation of the domestic work, as Christine Frederick and the ‘domestic engineers’ who applied the Taylorist principle of the workspace to the designing of the kitchen testify (Rybczynski, 1986), woman was recognised as an expert on how to decorate, how to create ‘homeyness’ (Cieraad, 1999); her identity construction was bounded by the domestic sphere as we have seen earlier. Her status was elevated within the domestic sphere while remaining contained in it. One could understand, then, that for historical reasons women are expected to lose more of themselves if they lose their home. I wish to insist on the fact, however, that the woman as a passive victim was constructed as an ideal just as much as the domesticated woman. As Laqueur (1990) points out, science does not simply investigate. It also constitutes. As such, it rationalises and legitimises distinctions of sex just as much as those of race and class to the disadvantage of the powerless. In practice, as could be observed in the course of this ethnography, women often played the central role in the move. Their contribution is less immediately appreciable, however, because our understanding of mobility neglects the importance of those tasks that women more often assumes, as we will see in Chapter 6: those hidden tasks relating to the preparation, the cleaning, etc. Similarly, the preservation of home stability appears to be a woman’s obligation, a moral duty, a responsibility imbued to her towards the children and the family which cannot but remind us of the late 18th Century and 19th Century construction of women’s role. When moving happens, a general claim is that it is woman’s responsibility. At least, her responsibility is to ensure the continuity of the services related to private and

---

20 See also Auslander (1996).
intimate spaces as the ethnography of Desjeux et al. (1998) on house moving in France, reveals and that an American woman journal summarises well:

As any woman who's ever moved can tell you, moving is women’s work – that category of invisible labour, such as doing laundry, that no one notices unless it doesn’t get done... even if the move is a mutual decision, more likely than not it is the wife who will spend a substantial amount of time occupied with the logistics of moving (Redbook, May 1982, 22).

If we were to accept the idea that moving socially weighs upon women, it is probably because the move is more often the woman’s responsibility. As such, Kaplan and Glenn argue that

women tend to see their role in a family’s move as helping other family members to settle in, often brushing aside their own needs and goals in the process. This often results in symptomatic behaviour as physical illness and depression (Kaplan and Glenn, 1978, 434)

More than ever, we see that the ideal of the stable domestic life, an ideal dedicated to the cult of love, an ideal founded on the couple, the caring parents and domestic comfort underlies the ways of conceiving stability. We also note that the obligation or the moral duty of the loving parent, of the loving mother, is still to smooth the move for others if not preventing it. This is exemplified by the abundance of articles published in the popular press of the years 1970-80, even the 1990s, that attempted to advise women on how to ease the move for their families, like: "Here's advice on helping your family adjust to their new home", 21 "Some steps to help your family adjust more easily to moving to a new place", 22 "Helping children adjust to moving", 23 "Prepare your children for their new home", 24 "How to help your family adjust", 25 "Déménager ça n'emballe pas nos bébés! Comment les aider. L'expérience

---

21 Parents, June, 1983.
22 Parents, April 1986.
des autres mamans”, and so forth. Thus, taking up again the expression ‘femina domestica’, we could say that the woman, the guardian of home and its virtues, also became the guarantor of its stability.

Elderly people constitute the last ‘vulnerable’ group to the moving threat. It is a group for whom moving is said to be a “negative life event” (Kraaij, Kremers and Arensman, 1997) experienced as an uprooting and a stress-producing situation (Thomasma, Yeaworth and McCabe, 1990). The departure from a place an elderly person was ‘attached to’ for many years is considered as having the potential to become a shocking experience because of the feeling of disorientation and the powerlessness it produces (Choi, 1996), because of its association with ‘loss’ (Brault, 1994), and because, it is argued, it can lead to death (Bourestom, 1984). It is also commonly believed that elderly people abhor changing residence; hence, one can suppose, the frequent association between ageing and immobility, ageing becoming a determinant of immobility. As such, it is usually acknowledged that elderly persons are less ‘mobile’ than younger ones and that the ‘propensity to move’ decreases with ageing (Golant, 1972 quoted by Northcott, 1988; Shulman, 1980; Gauthier and Duchesne, 1991; Ram, Shin and Pouliot, 1994).

The psychological essentialisation of stability

I will contend that the conception of the moving crisis which is in question here and which underlies the medical discourse on the crisis rests upon the assumption that stability is a normal, not to say a natural, state of equilibrium. Moving is often compared metaphorically to an uprooting, the attachment to a place becoming tantamount to some sort of inertia. Some, like Lee (1966), see this inertia, this tendency not to move, as a ‘natural tendency to remain in

place'. Others, like Northcott (1988), speak about this inertia as building up over an adult life time; hence, the decreasing 'propensity to move' when getting older. McGinnis (1968), Yee and Van Arsdol (1977) and Huff and Clark (1978) attempt to explain this decrease in the propensity to move by a form of attachment resulting from some 'cumulative force of inertia', a notion according to which mobility would decrease as the duration of occupation of a place increases (Mongeau, 1989); or, inversely, for which frequent moving would engender frequent moving, an idea close to Packard (1972) and Vereecken's (1964) conception of instability. Thence, even though the medical work on the moving crisis has abandoned Packard's nostalgic tone, it still tends to mythify stability by conveying a conception of stability as something obvious and natural. The point needs to be made, however, against the psychological essentialism of stability. The Hadza of Northern Tanzania described by James Woodburn (1968, 1972), for instance, value movement to the point that living for a long time in one place is thought to be dangerous to health. Good health is seen by Hadza as an attribute of regular nomadic movement and failure to move frequently enough is taken to lead to illness. These examples drawn from the study of nomadic populations should lead us to reconsider the inherent character of moving as a crisis, the naturalisation of stability and the conception of the move as a pathology of place. They should also seriously undermine any 'natural attitude' towards stability. As such, there is always a risk of elision from a consideration of the moving pathology to the consideration of moving as a pathology rendering the persons who enjoy moving, or who do not experience it as a crisis and as a discontinuity, as abnormal or dangerous.

On the 'lack' of attachment

An illustration of the risks of considering moving as pathological is provided by the discourse on tenants' mobility in civil society. Tenants have long been
recognised on a statistical basis as more mobile than homeowners (Spear, Goldstein and Frey, 1975; Rossi, 1980; Mongeau, 1989). Their greater freedom of movement is often taken to relate, however, to a 'lack' of stability. Tenants are perceived to move 'more easily' than owners (Che-Alford, 1992). They are perceived as being 'freer to move' (Boreland, 1972) and 'less attached' than homeowners (Moore and Rosenberg, 1997), as if moving was a function of a lack of attachment. There are, in fact, many idée reçues about the tenants. Some of my informants and some people met during my fieldwork in Montreal believed that the tenants' instability — because greater mobility is often taken to be a problem of instability — is related to a tenant's mentality which is opposed to the 'sense of ownership', the 'soul of the owner' that people either have or don't have. In this respect, tenants would be 'less cautious', 'less reliable', 'less attached' to their home. After all, isn't a homeowner a settled person, someone you can rely on? Interestingly, the French expression 'être peu attaché', namely 'being less attached' which relates to a certain freedom of movement also connotes a certain lack of concern. As such, it is customary to reproach the tenants in Montreal their alleged lack of care for their place or their lack of motivation in investing in its improvement. Saying that tenants are less attached to their place, however, enjoins the feeling of belonging to a place and the sense of owning it. Similarly, pretending that tenants are less attached than homeowners to their home is to overshadow the fact that they are usually constrained in the transformations they can legally bring to their dwelling since they often have to render their apartment back to its original state. As such, the difference between tenants and homeowners is probably less to be found in their degree of attachment to the place than in the possibility of investing in it. This is why it would be erroneous to confuse the capacity to invest oneself into

27 Which recalls in many respects Saunders' (1990) 'natural desire to own' or the belief in an instinct to own (Duncan, 1981; Werczberger, 1997; Agnew, 1981).

28 Art. 1890. C.c.Q. For Rossi (1980), tenants are more mobile than owners because they do not benefit from the freedom to modify a place that owners enjoy. Using Rossi's expression, owning provides a household with a more flexible housing bundle than tenancy does. In other words, moving is an alternative to in situ transformations.
a place, to appropriate a place, for instance through aesthetic practices, and the possibility to invest in a place (Miller 1988).

Since the time of Locke the ‘good citizen’ has been identified with ownership, only those with ‘estate’ being fully recognised as full members of civil society. According to MacPherson (1962, 248), a commentator on the thought of Locke, there were two reasons for this: ‘only they have a full interest in the preservation of property, and only they are fully capable of that rational life — that voluntary obligation to the law of reason — which is the necessary basis of full participation in civil society’. Reviving Lockian thought, Conservatives in Britain held in the 1974 White Paper that “Home ownership is a most rewarding form of house tenure, that it satisfies a deep and natural desire on the part of the householder to have independent control of the house that shelters him and his family” (quoted in Short, 1982, 60). Thatcherism also considered that owning one’s home “gives the home owner a stake in society” (Lundqvist, 1998), and that it produces civility. For the Conservatives in Britain, home ownership would indeed foster politically active and virtuous citizens. It would also encourage independence and thrift (Short, 1982). The Swedish Conservatives assert for their part a positive effect from increased ownership on the ‘civic virtue’ of citizens and democratic community (Lundqvist, 1998). As Saunders and Williams (1988) argue, owners would develop a stronger interest in a steady and foreseeable social political and the economic development of society. As such, as Choko (1993) shows, owners are often taken to be more motivated, more involved, more responsible and more serious than tenants (Choko, 1993). More importantly, they are taken to be ‘more stable’. It is true that higher transaction costs entailed by the ownership transfer produce stability (Bourassa, Greig and Troy, 1995). Let us just remind ourselves that, for Engels, indebtedness was taken to make workers more dependent on their employer. Engels uses the metaphor of the ‘chained worker’ to describe the workers tied to their house, claiming that “for our workers in the big cities, freedom of movement is the prime condition of
existence, and landownership can only be a fetter to them” (Engels, 1970, 45). In a similar vein, Harvey (1978) argues that a mortgaged worker is a pillar of social stability; the house nearly ‘possessing’ its occupants if we were to quote Seeley, Sim and Loosley (1963, 77) “because of the attention it requires and the monthly mortgage payments which it exacts from most owners”. As such, one could even argue that owning requires a certain dose of stability, of job stability (Dieleman and Everears, 1994). And, in turn, that it stabilises. But this line of reasoning goes further. According to Perin (1977, quoted in Agnew, 1981), long-term debt serves to enhance certainty in the housing and banking industries whereas renting involves short-term leases and limited financial obligations which create unpredictability. Concomitantly, as Perin goes on to say, when there is nothing owing there is no social tie. For Perin, tenants, then, are not integrated in society through debt commitment, the threat of mortgage foreclosure and the acquisition of social esteem associated with ownership. They form, if we were to use Perin’s expression, an unsettled and unsettling ‘out-group’. At best, in the North-American context described by Perin, tenancy is a stage one passes through before ‘settling down’ and becoming a owner (Choko, 1993; Perin, 1977). Accordingly, in Canada, in the 1970s, it was commonly thought that tenants were less desirable citizens than homeowners. This is at least what emerges from an article published in Habitat, the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation journal, under the title “Tenants are people too” (Boreland, 1972). It must be said that since the end of the Second World War, the Canadian federal government has taken an active part in the promotion of ownership via the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (Harris, 1991; L’Écuyer, 1975). As part of its post-war reflationary strategy, the federal government gave priority to the stimulation of the residential construction market and to the promotion of the accession to home ownership (Linteau, 1992). It adopted, in particular, the National Housing Act and the Act on the Mortgage and Housing Corporation in 1945 (Wolfe, 1998). It also put in place various subsidy programmes, new credit

---

29 L.R.C.C. N-11.
facilities (direct loan, mortgage insurance, interest rate warranty) as well as programmes of accession to home ownership (Miron, 1995). This whole housing policy relied on the assumption that “the accession to residential ownership on the private market should allow us to resolve the bulk of the housing problem” (Séguin, 1994, 66). Similarly, since the creation of the Quebec Housing Corporation in 1967, the Quebec government has actively worked at promoting ownership. With its proposal of the Livre Vert in 1985, the increase in the number of owners came to be considered as ‘a measure of progress’ (Choko, 1987).\(^{30}\) The efforts of the Quebec government to promote ownership intensified at the beginning of the 1980s (Thomasset, 1987).\(^{31}\) Following the radical diminution of the average nominal interest rates on mortgage approvals in Canada,\(^{32}\) the level of owned dwellings in the City of Montreal rose from 18.5 in 1976 to 25.6% in 1986.\(^{33}\) In 1996, this proportion reached 27.2%.

The Lockian philosophy which lies as a fundamental of the civil society’s classical model thus presupposes the existence of residential classes, classes which become the basis for social stratification (Saunders, 1978, 1986, 1990). The concept of a ‘Property owning democracy’ (Anthony Eden quoted by Lundqvist, 1998) and that of a ‘Nation of home owners’ (Saunders, 1990) are recent examples of such a model. These conceive citizenship through ownership. Saunders (1978, 1986, 1990), for instance, relies upon a ‘domestic property class model’ in which ownership and non-ownership create a distinct basis of social stratification. As such, Saunders considers that housing is a central commodity which gives rise to consumption-based effects on other social relations such as voting patterns. Saunders has been criticised for freeing

\(^{30}\) The belief that ownership might be a measure of progress has been seriously questioned (Werczberger, 1997).

\(^{31}\) With the adoption of the Programme d’aide à l’accession à la propriété résidentielle in 1981 and the adoption of the Programme d’aide à la mise de fonds in 1988.

\(^{32}\) On average, interest rates on mortgage approvals fell from 19 or 20% at the beginning of the 1980s to 9 or 10% in 1992 (Miron, 1995).

\(^{33}\) This supports Choko (1998) criticism of the culturalist explanations often put forward by historians in attempting to explain the large number of tenants in Montreal, and the fact that most of them were French Canadians; an explanation assuming that French Canadians have a ‘lower preference for ownership’ than other ethnic groups (Balakrishnan and Theng Wu, 1992; Firestone, 1951; Harris, 1986; Steel, 1979 quoted by Choko, 1998).
consumption from classes and production determinations (Warde, 1990, 1992; Fine and Leopold, 1993; Fine 1995). More importantly, the very existence of residential classes has been challenged and the use of tenure mode as an analytical tool questioned (Bourassa et al., 1995; Choko, 1993; Pratt, 1986; Somerville and Knowles, 1991). Nonetheless, even though contested on an analytical basis, residential classes remain, in practice, the basis of a stigmatised construction of society.

The ideology of stability

Beneath the myth of stability and the stigmatising tone of the discourse over 'instability', an ideology of stability is subtly looming. This ideology asserts itself in the opposition, even the hierarchy, of permanence and transience. It is fed by a medical essentialist discourse which associates permanence with confidence and reliability, transience with distrust and flakiness; a hierarchy where the number of moves is the measure of one's instability. It culminates in the opposition between ownership and renting, owners and tenants; tenants often being taken to be more transient than owners, if not 'unstable'. And it expends into the moral promotion of ownership. As such, or as a consequence, homeowners are often taken to "maintain their dwellings in superior condition" and to better "contribute to neighbourhood stability".34

It is probably no coincidence if tenants in Montreal have historically been considered as 'second class citizens', presumably, at least partially, because of their greater mobility, not to say their alleged 'instability'.35 Within the Montreal democratic context, a municipal government system of British inspiration,36 in which taxation, citizenship and ownership have long been

---

35 To be fair, since the 1973-74 reform of the Civil Code, tenants' condition in Quebec advantageously compares to that prevailing in the US, Britain or France. See Chapter 3.
36 See Kenniff and Morin (1974).
associated, tenants only acquired the right to vote in municipal affairs and the right to be eligible for the office of mayor or counsellor in 1968\textsuperscript{37} even though they have traditionally outnumbered homeowners.\textsuperscript{38} In fact, we can probably say that the City of Montreal authorities tend to support ownership. Such a preference could be justified by the fact that revenues of the municipality come from the tax paid by owners\textsuperscript{39} but as the \textit{Regroupement des comités logement et associations de locataires du Québec} (1998) reminds us, taxes are transferred to the tenants through rent increases. A more pervasive explanation is probably to be found on the side of the pressure of the lobbies such as the real-estate development lobby in Canada who, as Harris (1991) points out, have many political resources and are strongly committed to building owner-occupied homes. As such, Pierre Bourque's government has often been criticised for working hand in hand with private developers. In any case, this preference is legitimised by the 'fact' that tenants are less stable. For the Montreal Mayor, for instance, the massive moves constitute an "important sociological problem", engendering important costs for the municipal administration.\textsuperscript{40} In this respect, the urban and social revitalisation programs such as that of the Hochelaga-Maisonneuve neighbourhood which are administered by the City of Montreal are aimed at

favouring the accession to ownership... \textit{in order} to increase the feeling of belonging of the population?\textsuperscript{41}

Even though it is plausible to speak about some contempt for tenants and tenancy, the situation is more complex. As Ball (1983), Bonvalet and Gotman (1993) as well as Choko (1993) point out, the distinction between tenants and homeowners only imperfectly translates the terms of a residential stratification


\textsuperscript{38} See Table 3.

\textsuperscript{39} This is the argument put forward by the Montreal Mayor Pierre Bourque in an interview in Petiteau (1995).

\textsuperscript{40} \textit{Ibid}.

\textsuperscript{41} \textit{'Je choisis Hochelaga-Maisonneuve'}, a revitalisation program administered by the \textit{Collectif en aménagement urbain Hochelaga-Maisonneuve} mandated by the City of Montreal. Italics added.
inasmuch as it neglects well-off tenants, people renting a secondary residence, etc. Nor does it account for the settled way of life of some tenants and the mobility of other homeowners. As such, it is probably worth asking whether a contempt for tenants does not mask a deeper contempt for the freedom of movement, for the very possibility of leaving; a contempt which rests upon a certain opposition, not to say a hierarchisation of stability and mobility. This is where the link between philosophy and ideology appears: when the philosophy of stasis becomes a form of legitimisation, of enforcement and of inspiration for a stigmatising discourse.

This research might have lead to an analysis of the subversion of the Establishment of stability. It might also have lead to an unconditional celebration of mobility. However, the ethnography does not follow these tracks. As I have said in the introduction, this North American society often described as one of the most mobile ones is in fact extremely preoccupied by stability, at least by different kinds of stability. In fact, we can probably argue that what is really constructed as an ideology is not so much the ideal of stability, but the binary opposition between stability and mobility. It is through the opposition and the hierarchy of stability and mobility that tenants are conceived of as second class citizens. In practice, however, the people in Montreal do not operate within such a binary opposition. They do not valorise or privilege mobility in any simple sense. Nor do they reject the idea or the ideal of a stable life. Their practices rather reveal that stability and mobility are always interwoven in complex ways. As we will see in the following chapters, people in Montreal try to achieve ‘stability’ through different means. They often move over short distances, where relations and memories remain relevant, where these used to work in the past or where they could possibly work. They often seek change while at the same time deploying efforts at counteracting the disruption of a move. They also try to create a sense of continuity with the help of the ‘mobile’ possessions that they take with them, by recreating their sense of place along successives displacements. They
usually do not reject the idea of 'settling down'. As a matter of fact, they rather want to feel, they want the capacity to believe that they can decide where to settle and with whom.

What if, instead of opposing the 'unstable' and the 'stable', we spoke about different degrees of mobility? What if the number of changes of residences ceased to be taken as the measure of someone's instability and if steadiness only counted, borrowing the well-known expression of Roland Barthes, as the zero-degree of mobility? Some, like Packard, would probably argue that we would suddenly lose all our landmarks. I would be more inclined to think that we could be aiming at a better understanding of dwelling practices. More importantly, then, and only then, could we begin to understand the experience of mobility. That then we could begin to see how and why moving may be experienced as a crisis.
Chapter 3

The moving question

A political economy holds that housing problems and crises are not incidental to the housing market, but inherent to it (Harris, 1991). Indeed, it is argued that housing is provided for those who can afford it, not necessarily for those who need it. Understanding it requires, thus, an understanding of society’s wider structure of class interests (Castells, 1977). The issue of mobility could be considered an extension to the ‘housing question’ (Engels, 1970) from a political economy perspective. In this respect, I will examine how residential stability has been constructed as a norm in the Province of Quebec through the State’s intervention and legislation, through the adoption of a ‘stability policy’ (Jobin, 1982; Archambault, 1993) by the Quebec government at the turn of the 1960s; a policy aimed at preventing tenants from moves that could occur under the impulse of political or economic constraints: this is what I call here the domestication of stability. The domestication of stability extends beyond the legal confines. It also manifests itself through the adoption of a ‘stay-put policy’ aimed at helping elderly people to remain in place for as long as possible during the 1970s. And it has been relayed to the sphere of housing design by the development of *in-situ* programmes of transformation of habitat. Hence, I will analyse how stability as a social norm has been domesticated and how it has become part of the ways of thinking about the home; how in the historical evolution of the Western notion of home, stability has become a norm
of comfort as much as air circulation, water, light and heating (Rybczynski, 1988), a source of physical and moral welfare, of health and hygiene. I will argue that the domestication of stability draws its strength from a therapeutic discourse on the 'moving crisis' and the threats of mobility for individuals and family life elaborated during the 1960-70s, the crisis becoming a legitimisation for the call for a greater stability. In fact, it was made possible by the development of this therapeutic discourse.

This chapter reveals that stability is protected in the Quebec legal context. Despite such a protection, people still move in Montreal. In the next few chapters, I will argue that moving responds, in fact, to a structured set of preferences which is particularly prominent among tenants who count among the least advantaged groups. In other words, it is in the light of an examination of the legalisation of stability that moving fully emerges as an 'habitus'.

The moving problem in the post-war context

Since the Second World War, housing problems in Canada have manifested themselves on a country-wide scale. But moving itself as part of the housing problem is particularly 'problematic' in the City of Montreal where the proportion of tenants has historically largely outnumbered that of owners. Since moving is considered, in the first instance, to be linked to the relationship between tenants and landlords, it falls under the jurisdiction of the provincial government (L'Écuyer, 1975; Miron, 1995), in this case, the government of the Province of Quebec. In practice, however, jurisdictions are often the object of dispute between the Quebec and the federal government. They become spheres of influence.

---

1 See Chapter 2.
At the end of the 1960s, a crisis raged in the housing sector in Montreal. For Linteau (1992), the pre-eminence given to residential construction after the Second World War has overshadowed the problem of older accommodations. Numerous authors report that during the 1960s and 1970s, a period of urban renewal, demolishing hovels was the only solution recommended. Demolition works were often undertaken in favour of Montreal downtown expansion and road network extension such as the enlargement of the Dorchester Boulevard, the construction of the Ville-Marie highway, etc. (Choko, 1987; Ley, 2000; Linteau, 1992; Melamed, Schaecter and Emo, 1984). Many commentators reported that at that time evictions were massive. Some talked about ‘catastrophic demolition works’ of low cost housing. Others denounced the insufficiency of the public housing accommodation available to rehouse the people evicted. Committees of residents threatened by eviction or expropriation appeared. One of the most well-known is the Milton-Park committee, whose members faced the threat of the Concordia estate project in 1968. The 1970s also gave rise to the transformation of part of the rented housing stock into joint ownership property by declaration, also called co­propriété divise. This led to the eviction of many traditional tenant households because of the repossession of the dwellings to be transformed or because of the rent rises resulting from the restoration of the dwellings and their increased value on the market (Choko, 1987; Linteau, 1992; Thomasset, 1987). Above all, it resulted in a diminution of the number of dwellings available for rent (Jobin 1982). If we were to paraphrase Engels, we would say that in this context of crisis, the ‘moving question’, became increasingly regarded as part of

---

2 The 1930s crisis is characterised by a low rate of construction in the rental sector and by a shortage of low-cost housing in Montreal (Linteau, 1992; Choko et al., 1986; Séguin, 1994). During the Second World War, the Province of Quebec enjoyed a certain economic recovery. But the mobilisation of the war effort prevented the construction boost. In 1941, the proportion of tenant occupied dwellings reached its highest historical level: 88.5%. This proportion was 57.5% in Toronto (Choko et al. (1986). And 84.2% in New York (Choko (1987). According to Choko et al. (1986), Montreal showed the worst overcrowding problem ever. In 1942, there were no vacant dwellings in Montreal. As Choko et al. go on to say “forty percent of the dwelling are occupied by more than one family; between 1200 and 1400 families dwell in garages, warehouses, cellars, and stores... not counting hotel rooms, and the thousands of unhealthy dwellings...” (Choko et al., 1986, 128)


4 The Act was adopted in 1969. It only comes into force in 1970, however.
the broader housing problem. This is evident when we consider the works of the Commission permanente des affaires municipales, appointed during the 1960s to examine the housing problem and residential construction in the Province of Quebec and those of the Civil Code Revision Office appointed to review the legislation on leasing and its bearing on the '1st May massive moves' occurring in Montreal.

The claim of the right to remain in place

During its session of 27 November 1969, the Commission permanente des affaires municipales set up by the Quebec government received many organisations working in defence of tenants: the Confédération des Syndicats Nationaux (CSN), the Coopérative d'Économie Familiale (ACEF) and the Milton Park residents committee as well as the Architects association. The CSN presented to the Commission its housing policy, a policy that found its strength in the issue of tenants' rights. It recommended the adoption of a standard lease complying with the Civil Code that would respect tenants' rights. Indeed, the CSN campaigned for the recognition of the tenant's right to keep his or her dwelling. It also recommended that the end date of leases should be moved to 1st July; as we said earlier, the leases had ended on 1st May. The Commission also heard the Milton-Park committee representatives who insisted for their part on the burden of a move and on uprooting difficulties. The Milton-Park committee emphasised the right of citizens to a neighbourhood; the right to benefit from the government's assistance in the case of an eviction; the right, in the end, to remain in place. The position adopted by the Milton-Park committee was akin to that of the Comité sur l'habitation et la rénovation urbaine

---

5 The Commission was in session until 1979, until the adoption of the Act establishing the Régie du logement.
6 In 1971, in Le locataire et son droit, the CSN published its own version of the standard lease.
7 Débats de l'Assemblée nationale, Journal des Débats, Fourth session, 28th legislature, 3916.
8 The CSN (1970b) formally supported the Milton-Park residents in their claim for the right to remain in place.
9 Journal des Débats, ibid., 3938.
de la région de Montréal\(^\text{10}\) for which residents were granted the right to pronounce on the urban renewal plans of their neighbourhood and the right to reject those plans that would jeopardise the continuity of the community life of their neighbourhood or their right to remain there. This claim came to reinforce that of a better recognition of citizens’ rights in the Montreal region where the majority of the residents are still tenants.\(^\text{11}\) Let us remember that in 1971, 80.8% of the dwellings were rented in Montreal. Various solutions to the housing problem were put forward in the course of these audiences. These ranged from encouraging the standardised production of accommodation to the nationalisation of the soil through demand subsidising by means of allocations or even the payment of moving allowances. For its part, the Architects Association recommended a downward revision of the construction norms, which were considered to be too expensive.\(^\text{12}\) The adoption of a standard lease was also requested so as to restore the balance of power between landlords and tenants, in order to protect tenants’ rights and to put an end to the tendency to privilege the landlords’ rights and the obligations of the tenants.\(^\text{13}\) Above all, a call for greater State intervention in the relations between landlords and tenants came clearly out of the consultations. The State was increasingly taken to be responsible for welfare.\(^\text{14}\) As such, it was argued that it was within the government’s province to work at solving the market’s imperfections regarding accommodation shortages, accommodation overcrowding, the unhealthiness of accommodation\(^\text{15}\) and, we can legitimately conclude, the problem of the ‘lack of stability’. Hence, the claim for greater tenants’ rights, especially for the right to remain in place; a claim that was expressed the more clearly when the tenants set up associations.\(^\text{16}\) This call for greater State intervention was nonetheless inseparable from nationalist claims

\(^\text{10}\) The memo of the Comité sur l’habitation et la rénovation urbaine de la région de Montréal is reproduced in the appendices of the *Journal des Débats*.

\(^\text{11}\) *Journal des Débats*, 3951, 3952.


\(^\text{13}\) *Ibid.*, 3916, 3817, 3958.


\(^\text{15}\) *Ibid.*, 3910.

\(^\text{16}\) *Le Devoir*, 7th January 1969.
for increased powers for Quebec Province within the Canadian federation. Yet, in 1965, the *Rapport Marier*\(^7\) requested the Quebec government to set up a housing policy. The *Comité Marier* talked about “finding the means for resolving the housing problem” by using all the resources available including the financial resources of the federal government “as long as this financial help [could] be obtained without prejudice to the provincial autonomy”\(^8\). In the course of the audiences of the *Commission permanente des affaires municipales* in 1969, the tone was more firm, however. The CSN recommended in the very first instance that “the Quebec government ask ‘vigorously’ and ‘unequivocally’ for its exclusive jurisdiction in the matters of housing and urbanism”,\(^9\) a recommendation that was supported subsequently and steadily by the nationalist press.\(^10\) Since the end of the Second World War, the federal government’s interventions in the field of habitation through the promotion of ownership\(^11\) have aroused certain worries, as L’Écuyer (1975) reports, among the supporters of provincial autonomy; hence, for autonomists and nationalists, the need for an urgent intervention from the Quebec’s government in the area of habitation. Because, for Paul Sauriol, *Le Devoir*’s editorialist,

> the best way for Quebec’s government to protect its jurisdiction over habitat is to act so that the Central government cannot intervene by claiming to fill in a gap (*Le Devoir*, 3rd October 1967)

This politicisation of the housing problem, which is revealed in the audiences of the *Commission permanente des affaires municipales*, is important when we consider that the moving problems are part of the broader housing problem. The fact remains, however, that at the beginning of the 1970s, tenants were still

\(^7\) *Comité interministériel d’étude sur l’habitation* mandated on the proposal of the Minister of Family and Welfare.
\(^8\) *Rapport Marier*, 1965, 12.
\(^11\) See Chapter 2.
citizens who were "badly protected". Moving was still greatly associated with the loss of freedom. It was still a threat.

The '1st May massive moves'

At the end of the 1960s, the fact that most of the people in Montreal moved at the same time of the year was increasingly considered to be problematic. As *Le Devoir* reported, numerous people considered that "this tradition that borders, here, on folklore [had] lasted long enough". In the wake of the project to reform the lease which would lead to the 'stability policy' as we will see later, the Civil Code Revision Office mandated by the Justice Minister of the Province of Quebec examined in 1969 the 'problem' of the 'massive moves' and its bearing on the lease system inherited from the 1866 Confederation. The question raised was whether a reform of the Law should maintain a fixed date of moving, whether it should abolish it or simply change it. The Office which looked into the legal aspects of the 'problem' suggested two solutions and submitted them for public consultation. The first solution consisted in staggering the leases' termination throughout the year. The second consisted in changing the date of the lease expiration in favour of a date "less inconvenient" such as the 1st of July or the 1st of August: outside the school year that ranged from September to the end of June. Thirty-one memos were transmitted to the Office. Most of them, about twenty, came from Montreal organisations or provincial organisations based in Montreal which shows how the preoccupation for the massive moves of 1st May was a Montrealer one. The Office received memos from the business circles: utility suppliers, banks, real estate companies and moving firms and associations. The Office also

23 As we have seen in the introduction, the lease system in force since 1866 suggested that the leases should end on the first of May of each year.
25 Calls were made to the public through *The Gazette* and *Le Devoir* on 16th July 1969.
26 *Archives nationales du Québec*. See the list of the memos submitted to the Office in the bibliography.
received some memos from the legal circle, the Trades Unions, the family associations as well as the Association des locataires de la région métropolitaine de Montréal and the Montreal Owners League. Generally speaking, the business circles was in favour of the indeterminacy of lease termination. It was argued that a staggering of the moves over the year would allow the companies to better meet the demand, which would result in a diminution of the costs, a diminution which would in turn benefit the users. Besides, the memo of Bell Canada, the telephone services supplier, referred to the moving period as a crisis period, while some moving firms did not hesitate, for their part, to talk about 1st May massive moves as a ‘plague’ or an ‘extreme problem’. As such, the Canadian Association of Movers argued that in Montreal,

conditions make it uneconomical and unpractical for moving companies to try and purchase equipment and build their work force of permanent employees to cope with a one week deluge of moving... Rather, the various moving companies in the Montreal area do the very best they can to cope with this extreme problem and quite often the quality of service is far from what it should be due to inexperienced help and the hours of work which must be experienced by everyone in attempting to cope with the insurmountable volume of business at this time.

"Unfortunately", as we can read in the report of the Chambre de commerce des jeunes du district de Montréal,

the citizen suffers serious harm and cannot, alone, overcome this tradition. He (sic) deserves to know the solution to his problem. As such, he expects that the State and society will help him.

Thence, the Chambre de commerce des jeunes du district de Montréal, supported by the Association du Camionnage du Québec, called on the government to undertake "a popular education campaign in order to increase public awareness of all the consequences of 1st May mass moves" and to work at discouraging the poor,

27 Memo of the moving firm Baillargeon express.
28 Memo of the Canadian association of Movers, 1969.
30 Ibid., 15. Italics added.
and the middle classes from “moving without any serious motive”,\textsuperscript{31} to encourage them, in other words “to move in a normal fashion as in the United States and among the European countries”.\textsuperscript{32}

The parents’ associations and the family economy associations like the Association Féminine d’Éducation et d’Action Familiale, the Cercle Codère, the Comité Consultatif de Parents de la Paroisse St-Paul-Apôtre were rather inclined towards a simple change in the lease termination date in favour of 1st of July.\textsuperscript{33} The Association des locataires de la région métropolitaine de Montréal\textsuperscript{34} and the Confédération des Syndicats Nationaux (CSN) also supported the choice of 1st of July\textsuperscript{35} alleging that because at that time of the year classes were over, the Summer holidays not having yet started, young people could give a hand with the move. Moreover, as the CSN memo mentioned, 1st July was taken to provide a long weekend inasmuch as it was Canada Day, a national holiday “which allows the father to move without losing a single workday”.\textsuperscript{36} Besides a few exceptions,\textsuperscript{37} a consensus emerges from these consultations against 1st May as a termination date. The main reasons put forward were the need to prevent the interruption of the school year and the need to improve the availability of moving firm services and of the provision of public services that could be affected by the concentration of moves. Opinions were divided, however, between the first and the second solutions. The first solution, that of indeterminacy of lease termination would be favoured by the Civil Code Revision Office, however. It would be accompanied by a proposition to adopt a

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., 13.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 4. Italics added.
\textsuperscript{33} The Fédération des unions familiales, for its part, is inclined towards 1st August.
\textsuperscript{34} The Montreal Owners League does not take a position, the consultation carried out among its members being inconclusive.
\textsuperscript{35} Yet, in 1968, during the 43rd session of the CSN conference, in its resolution no. 40 on the leases ending, the union claims that the date of the lease or the date of the moves should become 1st July instead of 1st May in order to prevent children from changing school. The CSN reiterated its resolution during the 44th session of the conference in 1970.
\textsuperscript{36} Memo of the CSN.
\textsuperscript{37} As such, the Director of the Institute of Comparative and Foreign Law of McGill University raises objections to the two solutions proposed by the Civil Code Revision Office. He stresses the harm caused by the two solutions. He gives the example of professors on a contract ending in accordance with University practice, on 31st May.
transitory Act aimed at converting the leases ending on 30th April into indeterminate duration leases, by the wish that everyone would choose the day that suited them best\(^8\) and on negotiation between the parties.\(^9\)

**The public debate around the moving date**

Opinion polls were also conducted on the scope of the public consultations of the *Civil Code Revision Office* in the newspapers, on radio and on television, which allows us to think that the debate took on a public dimension. For instance, in 1969, the television program *Voix de femmes*\(^{40}\) presented by Thérèse Casgrain on Canal 10 launched a contest inviting its audience to declare themselves “in favour or against 1st May moves”.\(^{41}\) The majority of the spectators, most of them women, were against moving on 1st May. Many were in favour of 1st July because of the national holiday; because, as Mme Verreault of Ste-Rose mentioned, on 1st July “the husband doesn’t work”; because it “doesn’t disturb those who have a Summer chalet” (Mme Courchesne, Ste-Louise); because the children are then on vacation which allows them to “take part into menial chores” (Mme Parisien, Montreal) and to “help their mothers” (Parents Association of St-Henri). People often preferred July to August so that the Summer holiday was not interrupted by a move. They preferred July to May also so that the school year was no longer interrupted. Otherwise, as Mme Talbot from Lasalle mentioned, “We need to change the children’s school if we want to move into another part of the city”. The *Voix de femmes* audience generally rejected 1st May because it forced people to search for an apartment around the end of February or March. At this time of the year, “a lot of people refuse to let you in to visit because there is still snow outside, they don’t want to have their house dirtied” as Mme Guérin from Montreal put it. Otherwise, Mme Boulogne from Montreal stated

---


\(^{40}\) Canal 10, Station C.

\(^{41}\) Archives Nationales du Québec.
that “many people cannot go out during the Winter because of illness, because they must take young children with them when looking for accommodation”. In a reminiscence of Bonheur d’occasion’s (Roy, 1945) depiction of Rosanna searching for an apartment when it came to Spring time, Mrs Boulogne went on to say that, “Most often it is the woman that must search, the husband being at work or having no time for it”. These considerations contrast with those of the CSN for the workers moving without losing a single working day. They contrast even more with the paternalistic ones of the Chambre de commerce des jeunes du district de Montréal which betrayed a misunderstanding of the ‘moving question’ inasmuch as it attacked less the problems that might result from the move and more those who moved. Not only did the Chambre de commerce des jeunes du district de Montréal, tackle the problem of the moving date, it also set about the people who moved themselves supposedly without serious reasons. It identified the poor as carefree movers, not to say the source of the problem.

The proposal to abolish the termination date of 1st May was debated until 1973, until the Civil Code reform that I will discuss in the next section. Meanwhile, the issue of the moving date reappeared in 1972, in the scope of Bill 59 on the Code des loyers. On this occasion, the Centrale des Enseignants du Québec (CEQ) declared itself in favour of 30th June to satisfy students’ parents, whereas the Parti Québécois opted for a staggering of lease termination over the year. The Centre de recherche sur le logement expressed for its part some reservations about the simple displacement of the termination date in a report published in 1972, arguing that changing the termination date from 1st May to 1st July would simply move the problem; that it would only be tackling

---

42 To repeat, Bonheur d’occasion is a novel depicting the condition of working class families of St-Henri who moved frequently.

43 The Chambre de commerce des jeunes du district de Montréal had already submitted a memo on the consequences of those mass moves on supply services, family budgets, children’s education, etc. in 1967 to the Prime Minister Daniel Johnson. In the scope of the consultations of the Civil Code Revision Office, the Chambre de commerce des jeunes du district de Montréal again took up the bulk of the conclusions of this memo.

44 Le Devoir 8th July 1972, 28th September 1972.
the problem on the surface. For the authors of the report, the mass moves were not, in themselves, a problem, the problem being rather one of poverty. As such,

the fixed date of the 1st if May as a moving date presents major inconvenience, but the greatest one remains the move itself.\footnote{Centre de recherche sur le logement, 1972, B-1. Italics added.}

For the Centre de recherche sur le logement, the important thing was to ‘handle’ the mass moves problem. But more importantly, that of the move \textit{per se}. For moving is clearly part of the ‘housing question’.

\textbf{The ‘stability policy’ of the Quebec government}

At the beginning of the 1970s, the increasing concerns expressed for the moves caused by the urban renewal works in Montreal and the stronger claims for tenants rights, especially for the right to remain in place, met with many attempts at intervention by the Quebec government in the legislation on residential renting. The first attempt at intervention, Bill 59 on the \textit{Code des loyers} proposed in 1972 and the Bill 79 in proposed 1973\footnote{Le Devoir, 8th July 1972, 28th September 1972; Thibault-Robert, 1974-75; Jobin, 1996.} failed. These first attempts provoked hostile reactions among the representatives of the landlords (Kelada and Marchand, 1974). These were opposed to any form of rent control and to any kind of State interference in the free market,\footnote{Le Devoir, 13th December 1968.} by arguing that a restriction of the profitability of this sector of investment would lead to a flight of capital towards other sectors.\footnote{Le Devoir, 19th October 1972; Jobin, 1982.} Moreover, the Association Canadienne de Courtage saw in Bill 59, which made provision for the recognition of increased rights to the tenants, some electioneering concerns. For the President of the Association, conceiving the tenants as voters was a monumental mistake. A more suitable solution would be to abolish the Régie
des loyers and help tenants to accede to ownership, to help them “to become owners, hence responsible and solvent men”.

Again, the accession to ownership has been perceived as the solution to the housing problems since the end of the Second World War. It was often perceived as an alternative to the enforcement of tenants’ rights. People had to wait until the end of the work of the Civil Code Revision Office and the reform of 1973-74 for a modernisation of the legislation regarding residential renting which dates in great part from the Confederation of 1867 (Brossard, 1974-75). This reform paved the way for the Quebec government’s ‘stability policy’ (Jobin, 1982; Archambault, 1993), a policy through which the State fully acknowledged its protective role. The assumption were that the tenant wished, at the end of his or her contract, to remain where he or she lived (Clos, 1974), that remaining in place was more advantageous for him or her.

The two fundamental principles of the ‘stability policy’ are the right to maintain occupancy and the control of rent increases. These two principles are considered to be complementary and inseparable (Livre Blanc, 1978; Jobin 1982). The right to maintain occupancy aims at limiting the right of disposal of the landlord (Thomasset, 1987). It is intended to protect the tenant against the costs of a move, the assumption being that in some circumstances the tenant may prefer a rent rise to a move and undergo those costs at his or her own expense (Thibault-Robert, 1974-75). By virtue of the right to maintain occupancy, every residential lease is then renewed on its termination on the same conditions, unless otherwise informed, as long as the tenant respects his or her obligations. The second principle, the control of rent increase aims at providing tenants with the right to refuse a rent rise considered unjustified (Thibault-Robert, 1974-75) and to save them from being evicted because of excessive increases (Thomasset, 1987), an abusive rent rise having the

49 Le Devoir 27th October 1972.
50 See Chapter 2.
51 The reform concerns two bodies of measures: the Act to promote conciliation and the Act on the lease or hire of things.
52 The rent is initially determined by market rules.
potential to become a means of negating the tenant’s right to remain in place (Livre Blanc, 1978). Those rent control measures are simply aimed at preventing abusive increases, however, which contrasts with the rent control system in force in Switzerland for example. Contrary to the Canadian context, where ownership is accessible, where it is even financially advantageous (Choko, 1993), in Switzerland costs are so high as to make ownership inaccessible. The high costs of owning caused by the taxation of imputed rent and capital gains, as well as the lack of capital incentives to save for a down payment, encourage people to rent. Having said that, the Swiss system provides tenure discount and delayed and partial adjustment of rents to rising costs and prices, which makes renting more attractive the longer a tenant stays in the same apartment (Werczberger, 1997). In other words, the Quebec government’s ‘stability policy’ barely encourages tenants to remain in place for a long time.

There is a recognition, however, that any reform aimed at ensuring residential stability would not have any effect in a context where most of the leases are of 12 months duration unless it were accompanied by mechanisms that ease the renewal of those leases and ensure the continuity of the contract. The standard lease was introduced for that purpose. Let us remember that the standard lease had been proposed during the audiences of the Commission permanente des affaires municipales in 1969. It was gained at the end of what is called the ‘battle of the standard lease’ in Trade Union circles. Its introduction took place in the wake of the Act on Consumer Protection (Kelada and Marchand; Brossard 1974-75; Jobin, 1996). It responded to the desire to regulate the housing market and to protect tenants against the abusive conditions sometimes imposed on them by some landlords (Linteau et al., 1989; Kelada and Marchand, 1974; Jobin, 1996). It constituted, in other words, a limitation of the contractual freedom. In fact, the principle of contractual freedom was supplanted by that of protection of the more vulnerable party of the contract (Thomasset, 1987), which was later called public order of protection (McMurray, 1996-97). In this regard, the Quebec government attempted to regulate the distribution of powers between tenants and landlords. It aimed at re-establishing what was
considered to be an imbalance of power between tenure classes, between a powerful minority of owners and a majority of tenants deprived of rights (Brossard, 1974-75). One must say that, before the 1st January 1974, the date on which the standard lease came into force, the Law allowed the parties to include all the clauses they desired except those running against public order and good moral standards (Kelada and Marchand, 1974). Paul Sauriol reports, in an editorial, some of these abusive clauses: the tenant giving up his or her rights, the landlord off-loading all his or her responsibilities, the possibility of the landlord terminating a lease if the tenant failed to honour his or her commitments, the exemption for the landlord to go through the normal legal procedures in case of dispute, etc. (Le Devoir, 16 April 1968).

What is particularly relevant here is that the continuity of the contract is ensured by the automatic renewal of the lease (Clos, 1974, Kelada and Marchand, 1974; Thibault-Robert, 1974-75; Jobin, 1982). A fixed lease of 12 months is renewed for an equivalent period of time, whereas a lease of more than 12 months is also renewed for a 12 month period, which contributes to the normalisation of a 12 month length for a lease. Nowadays, the whole economy of the housing rental Law in the Province of Quebec is still articulated around the tenant's right to maintain occupancy as long as he or she fulfils his or her obligations (McMurray 1996-97). For example, a dwelling lease is automatically renewed by right with or without modifications.

---

53 If the lessor wishes to modify the lease's conditions, a notice regime applies. It is then for the lessor wishing to increase the rent at the renewal of the lease to advise the tenant of his or her intention through a written notice. In the case of a fixed term lease of 12 months, such a notice can be sent to the tenant 3 to 6 months before its term, the modification taking effect at the expiration of the lease, on the occasion of the lease renewal. The tenant can either accept the modifications of the lease and remain in place. He or she can also refuse the modifications within 30 days and remain in place. A case is then brought to the administrative court of the Régie des loyers. Otherwise, he or she can refuse the modifications proposed within 30 days and leave the dwelling at the term of the lease. If, however, the tenant does not use his or her right to reply, he or she is reckoned to have accepted the conditions of the notice. The lease is then renewed on the conditions proposed by the lessor. If no parties of the contract manifest themselves, a simple regime of lease renewal applies (Clos, 1974).

54 Art. 1941 C.c.Q.
Moving the moving date

In the scope of the 1973-74 reform of the Civil Code, the Quebec government also ordered that leases ending on 30th April 1974 would be extended, unless otherwise specified, for a 14 month period (instead of 12 months) until the end of 30th June 1975 (Kelada and Marchand, 1974). First July became the moving date. At the time of the reform, the lease freeze was perceived as a means to finally put an end to “1st May moving custom” (Brossard, 1974-75) “with all the inconvenience it caused: the simultaneous moves, the public service disruption... the students taken away from school for the last two months of the school year” (Kelada and Marchand, 1964, vii). And yet, the choice of 1st July for lease expiration was not what the Civil Code Revision Office favoured, as we have seen earlier. The Office rather advocated an indeterminacy of lease expiration. The choice of a fixed moving date for dealing with the alleged mass move problem is thus at least surprising, not to say questionable. The reason why the moving date was changed on the occasion of the adoption of a stability policy remains unclear. Indeed, if the mass moves were problematic because of the large number of people moving at the same time, if the school year needed to be uninterrupted, abolishing any fixed date of moving would have been a suitable solution. In any case, this points to the paradoxical nature of the policy.

55 The Law allows an elderly person renting an apartment and who is admitted on a permanent basis into a Centre d'hébergement et de soins de longue durée or into a foyer d'hébergement to terminate her lease (McMurray, 1996-97; Archambault 1993). A three month notice is required, the termination coming into force at the end of the three months.

56 Let us remember that the memo of Professor Charbonnier from the Faculté de droit et des sciences économiques of Paris submitted in the scope of the Civil Code Revision Office stresses the disproportion between the scale of the transformations brought to the Civil Code and the main objective which is to diminish the inconvenience of the move for children going to school. Above all, the author notes that not every tenant has children of school age.
The paradox of the 'institutionalisation' of instability

According to Jobin (1996), at the turn of the 1960s there was a growing awareness that most of the assumptions of individual autonomy and of liberalism upon which the Codification of 1866 lent could not be verified, especially with regard to residential renting. As Jobin explains, the Commissioners in charge of the Codification who had been given the task of identifying the Law in force in Lower Canada and of codifying it following the French Code believed in the citizen’s perceptiveness, and in the freedom to choose. They also believed, as Jobin adds, in a system of the free market in which regulation would not impede competition. According to Hann (1996), the model of civil society in vogue in the 19th Century is tied to liberal individualism. It is also conceived in opposition to the State. It relies upon the Western conception of the individual as autonomous.\(^{57}\)

At the turn of the 1960s, the conception of civil society, of the role of the State and of the dwelling was reconsidered. Habitation came to be considered as a fundamental need. And it was increasingly acknowledged that, in certain circumstances, this need could not be satisfied without the help of the State. In fact, the 1960-70s in the Province of Quebec were characterised by a trend of political, institutional and social reforms commonly referred to as the Quiet Revolution. These were initiated by the government of Jean Lesage (1960-66) at the end of the Duplessis regime (1945-60). The 1960-70s was a period of ‘catching up’ and ‘modernisation’ for Quebec society (Pelletier, 1992) which gave way to the accession to power of a new bureaucratic middle class and to the rejection of traditional values in favour of ‘statism’ and secularisation (Dickinson and Young, 1995). It was also marked by the accession of the Parti Québécois to power in 1976, the rise of nationalism (Linteau et al., 1989) and the politicisation of social and cultural issues (Handler, 1988). The Quiet

\(^{57}\) This conception of the person is particularly prominent in the Neo-classical economy, after the 'Marginalist revolution' (Berthoud, 1987; Boland 1985; Lagueux, 1989).
Revolution led to the reappraisal of the British minority's hold and to the promotion of access to the control spheres of the Francophone majority. Moreover, the 1970s were the years of the 'linguistic struggle' between the supporters of 'Québec français' and those of freedom of choice (Levine, 1990; Linteau et al., 1989; Rocher, 1992). Here, I wish to insist that it was a period that led to the establishment of the Welfare State and to its extension to the housing sector. This trend of reform occurs less as a rupture, however, than the common interpretation of the Quiet Revolution would lead us to think. The reform of legislation on residential stability is to be situated in line with a set of reforms introduced by the federal and the Quebec provincial governments since the Second World War. In fact, the first intervention in the field of habitation consisted in the adoption of rent control measures by the federal government in 1939. By virtue of the Loi sur les mesures de guerre, the Wartime Prices and Trade Board was thus created to prevent any excessive increases in the price of food, fuel and other basic staples, in order to insure sufficient provisioning and an equitable distribution (Trudel, 1978). Trudel reports that a few weeks later the government introduced the Board's regulations, which would be extended on 11th September 1940 to rents and housing prices. According to Trudel again, the Board was conferred the power to determine the maxima rents and to proceed to the nomination of a rent administrator. Nonetheless, because of the opposition of a majority of city councillors and of pressure of groups such as the Montreal Owners League and the Montreal Board of Trade, we had to wait until August 1945 for these rent control measures to be imposed in Montreal (Choko, Collin and Germain, 1986; Choko, 1987). Effectively, this intervention constituted, for Jobin (1996), a rent freeze. For

---

58 I follow Dickinson and Young (1995) as well as Pelletier (1992), who emphasise how the Quiet Revolution is to be understood as the continuity of the social transformations noticeable since the end of the Second World War.
60 Statutory order P.C. 2516, 3rd September 1939.
61 Statutory order P.C. 3998, 5th December 1939.
62 Statutory order P.C. 4616, 11th September 1940.
63 Statutory order P.C. 8528, 1st November 1941.
64 See Trudel (1978) for an overview of the modifications and substitutions of the regulations.
Thomasset (1987), it also provided the 'seeds' of the right to maintain occupancy.

The post-war period led to a relaxation of rent control by the federal government. From 1947, the government authorised annual rent increases of 10 to 25%. It also authorised the eviction of tenants who refused those rises. In 1951, it undertook the complete lifting of rent control measures (Choko, 1987; Jobin, 1996). Nevertheless, the Quebec provincial government observed the rent control measures initiated by the federal government under the pressures of the Action catholique (Choko et al., 1986). Indeed, the housing situation remained critical in Montreal because of the low construction level in the residential sector between the two wars and the lack of maintenance of the existing housing stock (Linteau, 1992). In this respect, in 1951 the Quebec government adopted the Act respecting the regulation on rentals that became in the same year the Act to promote conciliation between tenants and property owners. This Act came into force on the very day the federal measures came to an end, on 30th April 1951. This Act was aimed at preventing excessive rent rises that might follow the lifting of federal control. It proscribed any rent rise during the first months of its application and imposed the renewal of leases at term. The Act also instituted a Commission des loyers to favour conciliation between tenants and property owners, decide upon eviction matters, lease extension and rent fixing (L'Écuyer, 1975; Jobin, 1996). This Act of temporary nature, due to expire on 1st May 1953, was extended from year to year until 1977.63

As I have said earlier, the Quiet Revolution in the field of housing did not occur as a rupture. What was new in the 1960-70s, however, was the growing awareness of the moving crisis. This awareness was a tributary of the development of a therapeutic discourse on the moving crisis which saw the

---

63 S.Q. 1950-51, c. 20.
66 The Commission des loyers became a permanent body in 1977. It was replaced, however, in 1979 by the Régie du logement through the adoption of the Act establishing the Régie du logement.
prevention of the move as the best — if not the only — means to prevent crisis. It is true that the 1973-74 reform put the right to stability within the legal domain. But such a reform could only occur once moving itself had moved into the realm of crisis. I do not speak here about crisis conceived in Engelian terms, but in psychological ones. As Jobin, a jurist, explains,

mentioning the right of a tenant to his dwelling is naturally to call on the idea of stability. As such, it is easy to understand the motives which underlie the contemporary legislation aimed at ensuring a greater stability to the renting of a dwelling. Suffice to think, for one moment, of the unfortunate condition of a tenant who, in a market that favours the owner-landlord because of strong demand, is devoid of any legal protection... (Jobin, 1982, 353)

The reform conveyed, then, the preoccupation of the State with tenants placed within an uneven balance of power (Jobin, 1982), as well as the preoccupation of a benevolent, protective, not to say paternalistic State concerned with the disturbing effects of a move. Because, coming back to Jobin, the tenant

is exposed to all the human inconvenience of the move such as the worries and the efforts to find another adequate dwelling, the rupture with his or her own environment; the tenant is also exposed to the economic inconvenient of the move such as the transportation costs of his or her personal belongings, the settlement and the decoration costs. It goes without saying that his or her new dwelling can be more expensive (Jobin, 1982, 353; italics added)

Beyond the loss of freedom with which moving had until then greatly been associated, moving began to appear as a threat from a humanistic point of view; stability being now akin to the preservation of well-being. As evidence, in the same period, during the 1970s, under the impulse of the same therapeutic discourse, health care services for elderly people in the Province of Quebec were reorganised in favour of a stay-put policy and the provision of health

---

67 See Chapter 2.
care services at home, a policy based upon the assertion of the curative virtues of home. This policy explicitly intends to ‘save’ elderly people from having to move. Going further, architects’ efforts undertaken since the 1920s to develop ‘flexible houses’ or ‘evolving houses’, houses that favour steadiness, were pursued. Flexible or evolving houses were aimed at preventing their inhabitants from feeling the need to move (Merlin, 1988). Or, as Duff and Cadotte (1992) put it, they were aimed at postponing the move. In the same vein, we now speak in Canada about adapting the dwelling according to the changes of household needs in the course of life, as people get older, in order to favour steadiness (Wexler and Mishara, 1985; Wexler 1988; Renaud, 1989; Teasdale and Wexler, 1993; CMHC, 1995). In this respect, it can be argued that these design guidelines embody the value of stability, not to say the assumption of stable family life. They become a way to domesticate ideals and social norms defined in the public realm (Buchli, 1999). As such, the prevention of moving recalls the 19th Century hygienist project which saw the nation’s moral improvement through the improvement of housing conditions (Forty, 1986; Linteau et al., 1989; Choko et al., 1987). I will contend that the greater importance devoted to the incorporation of stability values in the very design of the house testifies to a broader movement towards the privatisation of housing issues. Indeed, whereas the 1960-70s were characterised by the rise of the Welfare State and its ‘normative inflation’ (Thomasset and Laperrière, 1988), the 1980s led to ideas of privatisation and deregulation (Linteau et al., 1989) and to the reappraisal of the role of the State in Quebec society (Pelletier, 1992), especially in the area of housing, and the benefit of the promotion of ownership. This withdrawal of the State is part of a broader

---

68 This policy of health care services at home was established by the Ministère des Affaires Sociales of the Province of Quebec in 1979 (Ministère de la Santé et des Services Sociaux, 1994; Roy, 1994). However, we find a thesis on French Canadians’ attitude towards health care services at home produced at the Université de Montréal as soon as 1965 (Vendette, 1965).
69 For instance, see the works of Habraken (1961) on support structures.
70 ‘Flexible houses’ are houses that can be transformed and re-arranged according to the transformations of the household composition or to changes in the household needs over time.
71 In Britain, we also speak about life-time homes. The standards of the life-time home are based on the potential for adaptation for the future (Age Concern, 1999; Kellaher, 2001).
72 See Chapter 2 for a discussion of the Quebec government efforts to promote ownership at the beginning of the 1980s.
move by the Western States towards market approaches to housing problems (Wolfe, 1998) as was the case in Britain, for instance, with the rise of Margaret Thatcher’s Conservative government (Ball, 1983). If we come back to the Province of Quebec, we note that another reform of the legislation on residential renting was introduced in 1979, which gave way to the adoption of the Act establishing the Régie du logement. This reform completed that of 1973-74 and strengthened the gains in the matter of residential stability (Jobin, 1996) by reiterating the right to maintain occupancy (Archambault, 1980-81). However, Thomasset (1987) shows that the right to maintain occupancy is reasserted in 1979 at the expense of the recognition of the universal right to a dwelling although the theme had been at the heart of the debates leading to the adoption of the Act establishing the Régie du logement. Thomasset holds that by refusing to recognise the universal right to a dwelling, but in reaffirming the principle of the right to maintain occupancy, the Quebec government transferred to the landlord the social responsibility that it refused to assume from then on: that relating to the satisfaction of every citizen’s need for stable housing. In fact, the 1979 reform gave way to what could be described as the privatisation of the problem of residential stability and of the ‘moving question’. This is at least important when we consider that what is at issue behind the short duration leases is the ‘control over timing’ (Munn, 1992). I will argue that leases remain short, however, because lease conditions can only be modified at the expiration. As stipulated in Quebec’s Law, if the duration is 12 months or less, the rent can not be adjusted during the duration of the lease and a clause that would make such provision would have no effect. If the duration of the lease is of more than 12 months, the rent cannot vary during the first 12 months. Neither can it vary more than once in each following 12

73 Loi instituant la Régie du logement et modifiant le Code civil et d’autres disposition législatives, L.Q. 1979, c. 48. The Régie acquired full jurisdiction regarding the dwelling lease, non-extension of the contract, determination, revision and adjustment of rents, modifications of lease conditions, division, change of destination as well as any clause relating to dwelling conservation, the demolition, the alienation and the conversion into joint ownership (Archambault, 1980-81). It became the sole administrative entity in charge of the application of the Law (Thibault-Robert 1974-75). In practice, however, as Thomasset (1987b) shows, the Régie du logement confines itself to the functions of rent control and rent recovery.
months period (Archambault 1993, 655). In other words, leases remain short because this allows for the possibility for increasing the rent at term and for doing it frequently, every year.\(^4\) When we consider the short duration of leases in conjunction with the lack of incentive for tenants to remain in place for a long time as we have seen earlier, we realise that paradoxically the stability policy 'institutionalises' instability. It is not a 'lack' of stability in any moral terms which is institutionalised, but the possibility of moving. Thus, the determinant of the yearly basis of the Montreal displacements and of their frequency probably lies in the legal conditions of renting.

**Easing displacement instead of simply preventing it**

The promotion of the tenant's right to a stable home is all the more justified that remaining in place has long been a privilege related to social status and financial means. Indeed, from the middle of the 19th Century until the end of the 1960s the changes of residence among the working class and the underprivileged classes often followed from political and economical constraints. Because of precarious job and housing conditions, because of urban renewal works which often resulted in the relocation of the poor (Choko et al., 1986), and because of transformations of the housing stock, house moving has long been associated with the loss of freedom. Such a 'stability policy' appears to be all the more founded as the condition of numerous tenants remains precarious nowadays, especially among single person households, the single parent family, and single mothers (Séguin, 1994). Let us just remember that in 1996, 36% of Montreal families with children were single parent families and that 41% of the total of households were single person

---

\(^4\) Even though a tenant wished to sign a lease for more than 12 months, the landlord should still accept, the negotiation of a lease taking place within a power struggle. It is an empirical question, however, whether tenants would always accept getting involved in longer leases, for many, as it will become clear in the conclusion, take advantage of the short duration of leases.
households. This shows that the protection of disadvantaged people's stability is still highly topical.

Working at establishing the material conditions that will help people who wish to remain where they live is praiseworthy. It starts from a noble undertaking: to save tenants from the political and economic threat of moving, respecting the wish of many elderly people to remain at home as long as possible, and so forth. However, I believe that the current efforts aimed at 'preventing' moving often start from a misunderstanding of the popular practices of moving house. This call for stability and the discourse of prevention overshadow the potentially positive aspects of moving house. It neglects how, as Thomasma et al. (1990) put it, anxiety \textit{per se} is not necessarily negative, how moving can even be enjoyed. Above all, it entails a conception of people moving that is more than emphatic. It is a stereotypical conception of mobile people as victims, as passive victims. It neglects, in other words, how moving in a context such as Montreal can be a crisis that may be worth going through. In other words, the current prevention efforts lack an understanding of what it is, in practice, to move. This is what I will analyse in the following chapters, using ethnographic evidence.
Chapter 4

Should I stay or should I go?

From time to time, Montrealers are compared to ‘nomadic people’ by the local press. It is said that in Montreal many people move, and that many of them move at about the same time. It is also not uncommon for them to move frequently. We can read, however, that Montrealers are ‘nomads’ that don’t move very far: they move on the same street, around the corner, in the same neighbourhood; sometimes in a different neighbourhood, a neighbourhood that is adjacent, close by, not too far. Indeed, short distance moves are the norm in Montreal. As Lavigne (1976) reports in her study of the inner city migrations in Montreal, at the end of the 1970s changes of residences occurred over short distances. The General Social Enquiry of Statistics Canada of 1990 confirms this result. Most of the Canadian households who move do so over short distances. Since the very majority of the changes of residence, that is 60%, occur within a distance of 10 km, it is plausible to think that most of the people move within the limits of the same city, within the same municipality, even the same neighbourhood (Che-Alford, 1992). Ram et al. (1994) even show that the mobility rate diminishes as the distance of the move increases. In other words, people move all the more often when they don’t move far. My ethnographic evidence confirms these results. Sandra Parent was relocated on

---

the same street, approximately 500 meters away; Gabriel and Anne moved on the same street, 250 meters away; the Lambert family moved between two street corners, less than 250 meters away; Béatrice Forgues moved on the same street, in the same neighbourhood, 250 meters away; Mme Debray moved into a residence located less than one kilometre away, in the same neighbourhood; Charlotte moved in the same neighbourhood, 500 meters away; Régine Mercier remained in the same neighbourhood, less than 2 kilometres from her previous place; Mr Ricard moved in the same neighbourhood, a little more than 2 kilometres from his previous place. And yet, we could also speak about Caroline who changed neighbourhood, who moved from the Centre-South neighbourhood to Hochelaga-Maisonneuve, over a distance of less than 2 kilometres; about Mr Richer who moved from the Côte-des-Neiges neighbourhood to the Notre-Dame-de-Grâce neighbourhood while remaining in the same administrative territory of the Régie de la santé, less than 2 kilometres away, etc. There are, of course, exceptions: Mira Filipovic moved from Ville St-Laurent to Pierrefonds, a dozen kilometres away. She wished to be closer to her workplace.² Lisa Blackburn for her part moved away from her job, whereas Marie-Sol moved close to her university, from the East side to the West side of the city (see fig. 3).

What is the meaning of all these displacements? Is moving simply the result of an instrumental logic of ‘adjustment’?³ When we consider that short distance displacements are often taken to be ‘whims’, the result of an ‘insatiable restlessness’,⁴ of a ‘gentle mania’⁵ or of a ‘déménagiste’⁶ varying in acuteness

---

² Because of the development of the modes of transportation and the generalisation of the use of the car in North-American urban centres since the second half of the 20th Century, the proximity from the job location has lost some of its relevance in the choice of a residential location (Simmons, 1968). Lavigne (1976) even demonstrates that the average distance between the residential location and the job location was, before the move, 3.9 km with a standard-variation of 4.4 km, and 3.7 km after the move with a standard-variation of 4.4 km.

³ See Chapter 1.


⁵ Nous, February 1975.

⁶ Le Journal de Montréal, 1st July 1999; La Presse, 9th June 1991; Châtelaine, July 1981; La Revue Imperial Oil, 1971.
according to its frequency, shouldn’t we regard moving as the manifestation of a lack of logic? In fact, those moves that occur over such short distances may easily be considered as avoidable moves, non-real ones. If we put aside any customary number fetishism, however, short distance moves that *a priori* give the impression of a great inertia reveal some high stakes. Indeed, I will argue that the distance of the move is important precisely *because* it is short. Short distances are tantamount to the desire—or need—to stay in place and the desire to move. Should I stay or should I go? That is the question.

**Short moves, high stakes**

The significant moments of people’s and families’ lives are revealed through changes of residence. The transformations of the household, the changes in relations, are often accompanied by changes in residences. Changes in residence not only accompany or reflect those transformations, however. They also accentuate them and materialise them. They may be used to bring change as well. Some moves are imbued with particular value and are constructed as positive or negative changes along the people ‘residential trajectory’ (Bonvalet and Gotman, 1994; Brun, 1993; Desjeux *et al.*, 1998) or ‘housing career’ (Dieleman and Everears, 1994). This is the case of the departure from the parental home which is analysed as a ‘passage’ to adult life (Gauthier, 1997) and a means for ‘acceding’ to maturity as much as a consequence of it (Rose, Mongeau and Chicoine, 1998). It is a move that Céline, one of my informants, described as the beginning of her adult life and a way of gaining confidence. Another move constructed as a change is the ‘accession to ownership’, which is often associated with the transformation of the family structure such as a marriage and the birth of a child, the stabilisation of the family’s status, that of income as well as the prospect of a continuous source of income (Dieleman and Everears, 1994).
In other cases, as on the occasion of a separation or a divorce, moving occurs in a social context of crisis. The move is experienced particularly negatively when it occurs under the impetus of a power struggle. As such, Chapman and Hockey (1999) claim that two of the most stressful experiences which householders risk are burglary and relocation. I have discussed extensively in Chapters 1 and 3 how, in Montreal, until the 1960-70s, moving was often associated with the loss of freedom; how it occurred under constraints. Nowadays, a household may still have to abandon a dwelling because of some disagreement with the landlord (Wexler and Mishara, 1985; Wexler 1986), repossession proceedings from a landlord wishing to house one of his or her kin, an eviction as well as a relocation. As an example, Sandra Parent, a 41 year-old woman receiving social assistance who inhabited a social housing apartment, an HLM, was relocated by the Office municipal d’habitation which manages the social housing in Montreal. Since her separation, 8 years ago, Sandra Parent had been living in a 6 1/2-room apartment in the Hochelaga-Maisonneuve neighbourhood, an apartment into which she first moved with her 3 sons. But since the departure of her oldest son 4 years before and of her second son the previous year, she was alone with the youngest. This led the Office Municipal d’habitation to ‘relocate’ her into another apartment ‘better suited to her new situation’ according to their criteria: a 4 1/2-room apartment situated on the same street, a few hundred meters away. The OMH considers a change of dwelling as compulsory when changes in the household composition occur; when, as in the case of Sandra Parent, the number of the household members drops from 4 to 2. For her part, Sandra Parent has always experienced this move as an eviction.

---

7 Habitation à loyer modéré.
8 The apartments in Montreal are usually designated in terms of the number of rooms. The half room is the bathroom.
Another type of move constructed as a crisis is the move, among elderly people, from domesticity to care. The move from domesticity to care is often precipitated by events such as illness, a deterioration in health, a fall, etc. (Choi, 1996; Cribier, 1980; Moore and Rosenberg, 1997; Sell, 1983; Wiseman and Roseman, 1979; Wiseman, 1980). Most of the elderly people that I met who moved into a residence did it because of a deterioration in their health, needing more support, being incapable of remaining alone or refusing to do so. Moving is also often experienced as necessary after the loss of a spouse because the place is now too big or too difficult to maintain; because everything in the dwelling bears the memory of the deceased; because, as Bachelard (1957) puts it, memories being spatialised, changing place provides an avenue to erase happy or painful imprints and to escape from the past. In any case, elderly people’s move is often constrained or experienced as such. This is clear in the words of one informant already living in residence who recalls how she would have liked to, but could not, keep her house after her husband’s death 5 years before. The house was too big, she had been robbed, she fell sick. She added that her family did not understand anything. They ‘put her into a home’.

In other instances, people even create their own sense of compulsion (Rowlands and Marcoux, 2000). At least, they wait until they are ‘forced’ to move. This was the case of Mr Richer, a 81 year-old blind man living on his own who hesitated to move until the deterioration in his health made it difficult for him to remain alone and made necessary a move into a more supportive environment like a residence. In the 6 months preceding his change of residence, Mr Richer changed his mind repeatedly. He decided to move here when considering that it would probably be preferable to do so while he was still able. He decided not to move there because he felt able to remain in place. It was at the end of Summer 1998 that Mr Richer first decided to leave his

---

10 My interpretation of this particular move is strongly inspired by the work that I have done with Mike Rowlands and Leonie Kellaher in the course of the research From domesticity to care. How elderly people think about their home?
apartment. At that time, it was not a matter of moving to sheltered housing or residential care, but to another apartment. His building was too noisy. It was situated along Edouard-Montpetit Street, a busy street, which prevented him from leaving the windows open in the Summer when the temperature may easily rise to 20° or 30°C. The building was also poorly soundproofed. Most of his neighbours who were ‘students on the party’, as he called them, were disturbing him. At the end of October, Mr Richer changed his mind. He considered the adaptation of the new apartment that would be awaiting him and the refurbishment of this one to be too expensive and too difficult; he considered that he would have to notify his change of address to all his friends and the bank; he considered how he would need to learn a new neighbourhood. Moving elsewhere suddenly seemed unthinkable for him since he knew his current surroundings very well. He had his drugstore close by, he could walk securely on the street, he had a metro station only a few hundred meters away, he knew the bus lines, etc. He concluded that he should rather stay where he was. He admitted that his apartment was not “tidy tidy” as he put it, but at least it was his apartment. He recognised that his apartment was noisy, but he noted — as if he wished to convince himself — that the situation had improved, that his neighbours had been less noisy recently. All he needed was to fix an air-conditioning system so that he would not have to open his front window any more.

Mr Richer appeared to be afraid of moving, of having to learn new surroundings, a new neighbourhood, a new set of bus lines as well as a whole new material environment. He appeared to be afraid to have to learn the geography of a new apartment and the place of every object as well. In fact, it is more the fear of the unknown that frightened M. Richer as if, instead of being attached to his place, he was above all frightened to leave it. In mid-November, following a deterioration of his relationship with the landlord, Mr Richer re-considered his decision once again and decided to move again. Mr Richer perceived some essential repairs in the bathroom to fall under the
landlord’s responsibility. The landlord refused to pay for them, however. Mr Richer undertook a search for an apartment. His priorities were a soundproofed apartment located along or near some main streets he knew well, for he wanted to be able to orient himself; an apartment on Edouard-Montpetit, for instance, near Laurier Street or Mont-Royal Street, along the bus lines he already used and knew well. He also considered the possibility of moving into Outremont, a cosy municipality adjacent to the Côte-des-Neiges neighbourhood where he lived. During the following weeks, Mr Richer visited some residences for the elderly with a professional worker of the local CLSC and he consulted the classifieds. At the end of November, however, discouraged as he was by the lack of outcome of his search, Mr Richer reconsidered once again his decision to move. The cost of an apartment in Outremont appeared to be too high for him and this led him to conclude that it would be more ‘logical’ to stay in place and to keep on using the home care services provided by the CLSC. He put aside his moving project until the month of April of the following year, until the limit of the expiration date of the modification announcement delay. Let us recall that Mr Richer’s lease ended on the 30th of June. As such, his landlord asked him to decide whether or not he would renew his lease, and to do so before 1st April. This was when Mr Richer finally decided to move or when the decision to move finally imposed itself irrevocably. He preferred not to renew his lease. In fact, Mr Richer refused to commit himself for another 12 months. He was, according to his health care professional, in a state of crisis: his sight was decreasing, he was falling into nervous depression, etc. He probably felt, then, that he could not remain in the same apartment for a whole year. Mr Richer decided to move into a residence suggested to him by the health care professional, a residence located within the same administrative territory according to his preference. And it was agreed that he should move there at the term of his own lease, on

11 Mr Richer even thought that his landlord would benefit from his move by increasing the rent. He thought that refusing to pay for the repairs as he did was a means of exerting some pressure on him.

12 See Chapter 3 for a discussion of the lease renewal procedure.
1st July. On 19th April, however, Mr Richer’s health condition had seriously deteriorated. According to his health care professional, he showed signs of decompensation and dehydration. He had little appetite, he was stressed and he was concerned about financial matters. As the imminence of the move approached, he became more and more concerned with the cost of the move. After the move was completed, he confessed to me that he had been worried about the cost of his move more than the move itself. Mr Richer feared that his former landlord required him to restore the apartment that he had occupied for the last five years and transform it according to his needs by fixing shelves here, cupboards there. He feared that he could not afford to pay for such work. I suppose that by remaining in place Mr Richer thought that he would not have to incur these expenses. He was also afraid of not being able to pay for his place in a new residence, not to speak about affording the cost of the move itself. All these worries probably contributed to the deterioration of his health condition which in turn forced him to move before the due date, in an emergency. Without this move, however, according to the health care professional, Mr Richer would obviously have been hospitalised “with all that might imply for the morale of the person” as she went on to say.

Mr Richer’s case is a particular one. He had considered a move for a long time with his health care professional when they agreed on his Individualised Plan of Intervention and defining the scope of the care provided to him. The plan envisaged a relocation as long, as Mr Richer made it clear, as it were not into Centre d’hébergement et de soins de longue durée (CHSLD), that is a nursing home. Hence, the need to move did not come as a surprise. Mr Richer was prepared. It goes without saying that when he finally decided not to renew his lease at the beginning of April, the health care professionals were able to intervene quickly by making him visit residences. We must also mention that

---

13 Art. 102 of the Loi sur les services de santé et les services sociaux, L.R.Q., chap. s-4.2. The IPI identifies the needs, the goals, the means and the duration of the provision of health care services (RRSSS, 1996).

14 This reinforces the need to distinguish between relocation and institutionalisation among the elderly (Thomasma et al., 1990).
inasmuch as he was taking part in pilot research when we first met, the SIPA project, Mr Richer also received financial help for the boarding costs incurred by the move before the due date. Having said that, Mr Richer never really wanted to move. He waited, consciously or not, voluntarily or not, until the need to move really imposed itself, until he found himself with no other option than moving. This occurred progressively, however. First, he accepted the idea of moving in the same building, then in the same vicinity, in the same neighbourhood, and in the same CLSC territory. This was as far as he could go it appears. It is thus a clear example of how a person comes to accept, reluctantly, the compulsion to move. His story has a happy ending, however. It is a 'success' of adaptation in the health care professional and the residence director's own opinion. Afterwards, he conceded that the move was finally for the better, that it had made him feel secure. He undertook improvements and decorated his new room. He even started to envisage moving again.

A question may be raised here. Can we simply see in elderly people’s wish to remain at home as long as possible an aversion to moving? The ethnographic evidence suggests that in most cases, elderly people’s apprehension of the move rather entails the desire to postpone as long as possible, not to say for ever, entry into a Centre d'hébergement et de soins de longue durée or a nursing home. Indeed, for the elderly people met, the move was almost always associated with institutionalisation. They only rarely considered the two separately. Moving for them was to move into an institution, except in the case of the younger elderly people met, who probably considered that more options were available to them. Institutions have long been perceived as alienating places where one loses one's identity (Goffman, 1961). They have long been associated with death, and taken to be twilight homes, the move into an institution appearing as one step towards social death (Hockey, 1990), a sort of ‘decivilising process’, as Seale (1998) puts it. Institutions are still described

15 Système de services intégrés pour personnes âgées en perte d’autonomie.
16 I will come back to Mr Richer’s desire to move again in Chapter 9.
by some like Amarnick as a 'life sentence to mental and physical imprisonment' and as a 'prelude to death'; the institutionalisation being described for its part as a major cause of suicide among the elderly (Amarnick, 1996). In fact, as Hockey (1999) shows us, life in an institution or in a residential 'home' is at odds with the ideal of home since it is in fact a 'dying space'. One understands, then, the aversion of elderly persons like Mr Legrand to move into an institution. Mr Legrand, a 63 year-old man living alone, admitted that it was hard to have to rely upon other people, but even worse to feel abandoned, and this is how he perceived institutionalisation. This is why he hoped he would never have to move into an institution. For his part, Mr Richer refused for a long time to move into an institution which he associated with "old people", small talk and bingo playing. He only agreed to move into residential care, in my opinion, when he found himself with no other options and when he realised that such a residence was not an institution strictly speaking. Meals were provided. He would receive some maintenance help as well as the follow up of medical personnel. But he would remain on his own. The fear of the institution was also shared by Mlle Bolduc, an 89 year-old single woman who moved into residential care. Mlle Bolduc was apprehensive about her move. She used to describe it as a major change in her life, a page turned over, a difficult experience. She usually spoke of her entry into a residence as a sacrifice. This woman, who had always been single and who had lived alone all her life, admitted that she had never thought she would live long enough to get into a residence. She was apprehensive about suffocating in her room, she who was used to wide spaces, she who left a 3 1/2 -room apartment, she who owned a country house, as she reminded herself. The move into care is often imbued with negative values and apprehensions. Losing one's home, moving into a care environment, in this regard, is like losing oneself. Many studies such as Finch (1989), Sixsmith (1980) and Wenger (1984) have emphasised the importance of retaining one's home as both a symbolic and a practical expression of autonomy. This is probably why many elderly people wish to remain at home as long as possible (Golant 1980;
Wexler 1986). I will contend that the fear of institutionalisation is also related to the fear of the relative dispossession accompanying it. Mlle Bolduc, to take up her example again, found it particularly difficult to have to get rid of most of her personal belongings and furniture because of a lack of space at the residence she moved to. And this is important. For the moving crisis is embedded in a material matrix to the point where it can even become hazardous to extract the social crisis of moving from the material one. Moving following a separation and the conflicts over the division of the household’s patrimony is an example of this sort of ‘crisis’; elderly people afraid of losing their landmarks is another one. For instance, some studies report that older people are often attached to contemplative possessions that help them survey their past. These also emphasise that the separation from those possessions is thought to be related to the high mortality rate from ‘transplantation shock’ and ‘uprooting’ on the occasion of a move (Godkin, 1980; Sherman and Newman, 1977; Howell, 1983 and Pastalan, 1983 quoted by Mehta and Belk, 1991).

House moving may be dreaded when it is imposed, when it occurs in a crisis context, and when it implies leaving a known place, a place one is attached to (Rubenstein and Parmelee, 1992). The fear of moving expresses the fear of losing one’s environment. Thereby, it expresses the fear of losing oneself as a person who exists in the habits of objects surrounding oneself. It expresses the fear of getting separated from everything that represents the person, that conveys memory and that acts as landmarks. To move, then, becomes an act of alienation. Anxiety may also hover around the place arrived at, as in Mr Richer and Mlle Bolduc’s cases: the entry into a residence symbolising and materialising the loss of autonomy, a certain social death. It may also hover around the move itself, as we will see in Chapter 6.
A crisis that is worth going through?

Parkin (1999) points out that philosophically it is impossible to draw a distinction between voluntary and forcible movements, elements of both being always involved. Gigi Tremblay, a 40 year-old woman who suffered from a chronic illness, seriously impeding her mobility moved into an HLM. Because of her handicap and of the need to use a wheelchair, Gigi could not get out of her apartment alone. Her apartment, situated in a basement, had no access ramp, which confined her to her home. Because of her handicap, once again, Gigi could not work. She was only receiving social assistance. She could not even remain in place: her apartment was too difficult and too expensive to heat. Gigi started to prepare her move as soon as she received her first electricity bill, in January, in the middle of the Winter, before even having another place to go to. She explained that she was "totally frustrated" when she received her bill; so much that she decided to move. She decided that she would not spend another Winter in that apartment. She also started to pack her possessions in January even though she only got an apartment from the council the following October. Gigi did not move on her own volition even though she wished to do so, which illustrates Parkin's point. The move imposed itself, but it also occurred as a relief to her. She was pleased to move into an apartment including an access ramp, an apartment better insulated and less expensive to heat. In fact, the move is often all the more complex when it bears in itself the threat of a crisis while at the same time entailing the promise of improvement. In other words, moving may sometimes be apprehended as a crisis, but a crisis that is worth going through. Other cases found among the younger informants support this claim. Béatrice Forgues, a 41 year-old woman who was forced to move in the context of a separation alluded to the fact that her move was a positive event offering her the opportunity to start her life over again. Charlotte, a 20 year-old student, wished to move with her partner Eduardo. Eduardo and she had been together for two years at that time. Each of them lived with his or her own co-
tenants in separate apartments in different neighbourhoods. They moved together because it was important for Charlotte for their life as a couple to do so. She did not really want to move. Charlotte confessed that she would have preferred to keep her apartment. It was important for her, however, that they start together in a new “neutral” place that the two of them could appropriate as she put it. When we look at another case, that of Caroline, we can probably go as far as to say that people may voluntarily create their sense of crisis in order to produce some change. Caroline, a 24 year-old woman, decided to move away from her partner after 2 years in an apartment with him. She moved with her girlfriend Céline because, as she explained, her partner was irresponsible and did not do anything at home. Such an announcement provoked their rupture. Her partner cleared the place and moved to his mother’s home. Caroline did not intend to provoke such a rupture, but she confessed that she knew it would happen. On occasion, she admitted how difficult her decision had been. This reminds us how an element of crisis may always be present in the decision to move. It appears, however, that she did it on purpose. It allowed her to reorganise her relationship the way she wanted. For a few weeks after the move, Caroline and her partner had come back together, but on a different basis: her partner was now living at his mother’s place. In this respect, the move is often associated with the idea of ‘refaire sa vie’, ‘repartir à zéro’, namely to start all over again. It is associated with ‘un changement de peau’ because the people who change place are a little bit like the snake that changes skin.

I do not imply, here, that considering the move as a crisis that is worth going through is a voluntary assessment. I would rather hold that in some circumstances the move may be constructed as a set of structured preferences to take up Bourdieu’s (1979) terms. Having said that, in echoing Oldman (1991), we must not disregard the possibility that a significant group of old people might also want to move house in old age. Take the example of Mr Ricard, a 71 year-old widower, a former teacher who came to perceive as a
desirable option moving into a self-contained apartment in an elderly people’s private residence. Mr Ricard moved to lighten the burden of the maintenance of his house. He took the decision to move when he realised that he was no longer capable of taking care of little jobs of maintenance in the house; when, after the 1997 Ice Storm, he realised that he would possibly have to assume important costs such as changing the roofing. Above all, he moved because he felt increasingly isolated; because he went to feel insecure there; because he came to check if the doors were locked, not once, but twice every night.

Another example is that of Mme Cabot, a 78 year-old widow who decided to move in the hope of breaking her condition of isolation and who was pleased to do so. In most of these cases, thus, people do not necessarily want to move. They often wish to remain in place. But they can not. The social compulsion to move becomes even more evident in the case of elderly people who decide to move instead of becoming a burden on their family members. Mlle Bolduc, an 89 year-old woman presented earlier, decided to move into care despite her fear. Mlle Bolduc had to move after a stay in hospital after it appeared that she could not remain alone any longer. She either needed to move or had to accept more help from the CLSC. Indeed, in principle, Mlle Bolduc could have stayed in her home by integrating further the stay-put policy program by accepting some bathing help, some help in the preparation of meals, some food provision help; services that had been offered to her according to a CLSC professional assigned to her care. But such a greater integration into the stay-put program would have amplified what she considered the greater intrusion of people from outside in her domestic affairs. She refused such help because she did not want to see any “stranger” involved in her affairs, “dans ses affaires”. She decided or resigned herself to move to a residence “where nobody would be worrying about her”, where she would not be a burden for anybody as she put it. In fact, considering the move as a crisis that is worth going through may become a way of rationalising and appropriating what is otherwise imposed or constrained.
Coping with the crisis

Even though she did not really want to move from her apartment, Charlotte considered it necessary. She came to the conclusion that she needed to move to a new place, but she refused to move too far from where she lived. Put differently, she accepted moving as long as she could remain near the Jean-Talon market between St-Denis, St-Laurent, Beaubien and Jean-Talon Street in what she called the ‘Latino area’ for she loved the shops, the atmosphere of the place and the numerous Latin American people living there. People like Charlotte may move in the hope of improving their housing condition, by changing to a dwelling with a courtyard, a parking space, a balcony; a dwelling slightly bigger, slightly cheaper and so forth. They often move close by, not too far, as I have said earlier. Just like Gabriel, a 26 year-old social worker, who moved to a loft near his work place, in the same neighbourhood that he already lived in, on the same street. Since he had migrated to Montreal from the Saguenay region 7 years before, Gabriel had moved 3 times: always on the same street, only a few hundred meters each time. In fact, Gabriel confessed his aversion to moving. He simply hated moving in general, and it was as if moving close by allowed him to go through the move.

In any case, people do not move at random (Young and Willmott, 1957; Fortin, 1987). They often consider or attempt to remain where relations and memories work as is the case with Béatrice Forgues. She is the mother of two children, 3 and 4 years old, who moved in the context of a separation. Béatrice Forgues wished to remain in the same neighbourhood. As such, she moved into another apartment located on the same street, only 250 meters away. She had to accept some trade-offs and sacrifices, however. She lost her courtyard. She lost the view that she had from her dining room and that she found was really important. Moreover, she had to move from a 6 1/2-room apartment that cost $750 per month and that she shared with Carl, her former
partner, into a 5 1/2-room apartment costing $615 per month. She explained her choice by her attachment to the neighbourhood: she knew the neighbours, she felt confident there, she liked the greenness of the surroundings. She went on to say that by moving in the same area, her children would remain in the same kindergarten which was located only 5 minutes away by bus. Her decision to remain in the same neighbourhood starts from the interiorisation of the discourse of children’s vulnerability to a change of residence. All of Béatrice Forgues’ actions, from her decision to move on one day, her decision to assemble the children’s beds as a priority so that on the night of the move they could “retrieve their landmarks”, her decision to remain in the same neighbourhood, were driven by the same concern: easing the move for her children. She insisted on saying that she remained in the area for the sake of her children: to assure her children some ‘stability’, some emotional stability. Hence, as she explained, it was important for her to remain near “the Animal park they liked so much”. In fact, Béatrice Forgues probably did not want to move. At least, she wanted to remain in place. Another case is that of Mme Debray, a 68 year-old widow, who moved on medical advice. She moved within the same municipality, close by her sister’s place, within what she considered familiar territory. Similarly, let us also recall how Mr Richer was seriously concerned about remaining within the same CLSC territory, where his relations worked. We need not idealise family and proximity relations, however. Mr Richer, to take up his example again, preferred to move in a residence located in the same CLSC territory instead of moving closer to his daughter in the northern part of the city, a daughter with whom he no longer had relations. Indeed, family tensions and ruptures get materialised as much as the relations in the choice of location.

I will say then that short distance moves are often the product of a tension between the desire to improve one’s condition while at the same time

---

17 The ‘half’ designates the bathroom.
18 See Chapter 2.
preserving one's gains: a typical case of the Bourdieusian conception or reproduction: changing while remaining the same.

Keeping up with relations

Moving may also be a matter of keeping up with relations. Mme Cabot, a 78 year-old widow, decided to move from a fully catered apartment into a room and boarding residence in order to break up what she described as her condition of isolation. She admitted that she had come to be afraid of loneliness. For this reason, it is difficult to speak of any volitional move. We can not, however, negate how the agency is asserted through a move, even though the move imposes itself. This move, Mme Cabot saw it, to use her own words, as a “liberation”. Mme Cabot could have remained alone. She was autonomous. This is probably what her problem was: people expected her to manage things on her own, as she put it. In fact, Mme Cabot deliberately, voluntarily, made herself anti-autonomous. On the occasion of her move, she got rid of her car, which isolated her, as she emphasised. She used to go to her children’s place by herself with her car whereas friends of hers had their children pick them up at their own place. Obviously, she envied them. Mme Cabot sold her car because she thought her children expected her to visit them by herself. She thought her children considered that she was autonomous enough. Now, as she explained, she wished other people to care for her. This is why she moved into residential care. She acknowledged that she was about to rejoin people older than herself, but she believed that “this time” it would be better for her than to live alone. Mme Cabot had spent almost all her existence in the same neighbourhood, in the same “parish”, as she put it herself, the Côte-des-Neiges parish. She had spent all her existence there with the exception of a 6 month stay in a residence for the elderly in the Ahuntsic neighbourhood on the Gouin Boulevard along the Prairies river. She stayed there only 6 months, however, for she did not like it. “The country...” as she
explained, “it is nice. The birds, the river bank, but...”. But she thought that she was too young at the time to stay in a residence with “old people” as she called them. She did not like the atmosphere. Neither did she try to adjust. So she came back to Côte-des-Neiges parish until she decided, 6 years later, to move again. This time, Mme Cabot moved on the Plateau. She changed neighbourhood for she wished to change “milieu”, to be “where the people were”, where sociality was. She wished to be in a lively neighbourhood. In fact, Mme Cabot moved close by one of her daughters, only a few hundred meters away. Mme Cabot moved from the Côte-des-Neiges area to the Plateau, some 4 km away. She moved in order to make herself anti-autonomous and available at the same time. This example reveals that though the move is not expressly directed by the search for sociality, it can become an opportunity to try to rearrange one’s relations. As such, it is often said that elderly people move closer to their social support (Attias-Donfut, 1995; Finch, 1989; Godbout and Charbonneau, 1996; Moore and Rosenberg, 1997) or their children. Mr Ricard, for instance, a 71 year-old widower took the opportunity of his move to come closer to his children. He moved in the same neighbourhood just because he wanted to feel close to them.

Moving may also be a matter of finding where relations could work, or where they used to work. Lisa Blackburn, a 41 year-old teacher being granted custody of her child, moved from l’Île Bizard to Ahuntsic, a few dozen kilometres away. She came back to the area where she grew up, an area where she hoped to find, as she put it, the friends and the stores of her childhood. Mrs Blackburn explained that l’Île Bizard had become too far, that she received fewer and fewer visits there. Ahuntsic was closer to where her friends were. She was fully aware that her move to the other side of the island would take her away from her job location in the West island. She knew that this move would take her son away from his friends. She knew that it would be difficult for him. But she considered that, after all, this new location would be more convenient for him in the future: her son would be closer to the school
where she hoped he would be admitted; he would be closer to the subway station for when he went out... As such, she tried to turn a constraining move into an investment in relationships. In a similar vein, Mlle Bolduc marginalised herself by moving too far, in a residence situated in the suburbs of Montreal. She first thought that this move would bring her closer to her place of origin, a city located some fifty kilometres away from Montreal where her relatives still lived, as if hoping to receive more visits from them once there. She tended to forget that her brother and sister, who were less mobile, could hardly visit her as often as she hoped. One month and a half after her move, because she had had hardly any visits up to then, she nearly regretted her choice of location and confided to her sister Mathilde that she should probably have looked for a residence in Montreal.

Alienating oneself

A move may precisely be aimed at producing isolation, however, especially among the younger people encountered who did not hesitate to move to the opposite end of the city, far from their parents’ home, not to say to other cities. When reflecting on her departure from her mother’s home at the age of 17, as well as from the town of Tracy where they were living, Kim admitted that what she wished at that time was to migrate in Montreal, to change environments, to acquire her freedom as she put it. Indeed, Kim used her desire to take language courses only provided to Montreal as a pretext to persuade her mother of the need for her to move there and to take an apartment, German courses being offered only in Montreal. Buying a car and commuting between the two cities, over a few dozen kilometres every morning and every night would not have changed anything for her; no more than taking an apartment in Tracy. What she wished was to leave Tracy and “its small town mentality”. Kim’s case illustrates the wish to enjoy the possibility of not taking root, at least to invent oneself somewhere else and to decide where. It
denotes less the incapacity 'to take root' than a refusal to do so in a place that is not chosen. Moving away, changing neighbourhood, changing city may be apprehended as difficult, however. After one year in a co-tenancy apartment, Kim moved again. This time she moved alone. Kim admitted that she felt a certain anxiety. She knew nobody in the new area. She, who enjoyed solitude, acknowledged that she was apprehensive of isolation. But this is what motivated her at the same time. In fact, the auto-production of alienation is far from related to the distance of the move. Régine Mercier, a 37 year-old single woman, wanted, as she put it, to achieve a certain withdrawal, to find refuge in a place that would reflect her, that would become her reflection. She wanted, if we were to use her own words, to retrieve herself. She moved into a condominium that she acquired. And she saw her move as a positive event, for it corresponded to her needs, to how she wished to live at that period of her life as she explained. Régine Mercier moved on her own while remaining close to her mother's nursing home. Just in case... She considered herself 'better placed' to take care of her mother. In fact, remaining close by may be important for those people in charge of their parents, often the daughters (Culturello 1988; Lewis and Meredith, 1988) if it were only to perform daily help, do the shopping, to drop by and have a look in the refrigerator and assess what is missing. In this way, Régine Mercier moved within the same neighbourhood, in another development. What appears here is that the auto-production of alienation results from a double movement of retreat into the domestic sphere and of change of location. Moving, in other words, is at the heart of a dialectic between the creation of a sense of place, namely the creation of home, and of a localisation. It is made possible by domestic withdrawal. At the same time, it is aimed at overcoming it. This is what Régine Mercier's case reveals. It also becomes evident in Mr Ricard's case described earlier. In moving into a residence, Mr Ricard wished to reach people with similar needs. Having said that, he did not want to have to mix with them. He wished to feel surrounded while at the same time remaining isolated. Hence, he moved into a residence in the hope of finding a sense of
Social Being in the sense given by Sennett (1974). Birds of a feather flock together, as the saying goes. But that is as far as it goes. In any case, we are far from Packard’s simple condemnation of mobility or of the idea that mobility might be responsible for the dissolution of social bonds. Moving may help rearrange, maintain, even reinforce, interpersonal relationships. It may help to break a condition of isolation, maintain a sense of Social Being or simply secure oneself. Moving may be a means of producing sociality. It may become a means of escaping it as well. Moving may become a means of creating some personal freedom, of building up a space of freedom or intimacy. As such, moving may be part of a sociability that recalls in many respects the urban experience described by Simmel (Frisby, 1992) who saw in the metropolis’s anonymity and indifference the possibility for the individual to conduct his or her life according to his or her own wishes. There are risks, however, as we have seen with Mlle Bolduc; risks of abusing such anonymity, of feeling like “a drop of water in the ocean”, as she confessed.

The desire for autonomy and the need to be surrounded

The situation depicted here parallels that prevailing in Longana described by Rodman (1985) where the contradictions that may arise between rootedness and transience is resolved through the moves, especially short-distance moves. Just as in Longana, Montreal’s displacements are at the heart of a tension, and in many cases a contradiction, between rootedness and transience, between staying in place and leaving. People’s moves create ever changing social and physical arrangements that reflect changes in the domestic sphere as well as changes beyond the household level. The change of place, thus, is far from a simple response or an outcome of the households’ needs as implied by the adjustment paradigm which considers changes in housing.

19 ‘Mobile homes’ which are particularly popular among ‘young retired’ people in North America provide another example that is worth investigating.
needs to be ‘conditioned’ by endogenous household changes (Rossi, 1980; Rossi and Shlay, 1982) or Desjeux et al.’s (1998) work, which juxtaposes the changes of place with the affective and professional trajectories of the household. No more can we consider the household in isolation as in Jarvis’ (1999) recent works on the nuclear family’s mobility. Montrealers’ changes of place are sensitive to transformations within the domestic sphere, as we have seen up to now, as well as those beyond the household level. Although, for some people, the domestic sphere may become increasingly important at the expense of the outside, the choice of a localisation remains fundamental. This is particularly evident in the cases of the ‘less mobile’ people: elderly people like Mme Debray, who needed a wheelchair, Mlle Bolduc who was so weak she could hardly take a walk outside, or people like Gigi Tremblay, a 40 year old woman suffering from serious mobility disability. Even though people need or wish to remain enclosed in the home, in the cosy ambience of an environment they manage and control, they might also wish to remain where sociality is in order to maintain a sense of Social Being by making themselves ‘more available’, ‘more accessible’, and so forth. Through the choice of a localisation, then, emerges the opposition between the desire — or the illusion — for autonomy and the need to be surrounded by other people. This is what Finch (1989) calls the balance between dependence and independence. It is particularly true in the case of the middle class elderly people who valorise autonomy as Godbout and Charbonneau (1996) mention; the possibility of not depending upon others being for them at the same time a duty and a source of satisfaction. It may explain the preference of some people for remaining independent and for refusing some help (Godbout, 1995). As such, many of the elderly respondents encountered during this ethnography strongly expressed their refusal to become a burden to their children or, as in the case of Mlle Bolduc, to their kin. This could explain the tendency noted by Godbout and Charbonneau among the elderly, and that Mlle Bolduc exemplifies well, to prefer moving into a residence and to call upon the resources of the market the day they are no longer autonomous instead of
having to rely upon others. It fact, it is a move conducive of a redefinition of the sense of autonomy.

This opposition between the desire for autonomy and the need to be surrounded is often presented as an alternative; elderly people's alternative being, for Moore and Rosenberg (1997), to move closer to other people that could potentially provide some help in the pursuit of day-to-day activities — usually the family members — or to move locally into a dwelling better adapted to their needs, into a more supportive material environment (Lawton, 1985). I would argue, however, that this alternative is a false one. As we have seen earlier, Mme Cabot moved to the more supportive environment of a residence that was at the same time closer to her daughter's place; Mr Ricard moved into a residence for retired persons in order to move closer to his offspring; whereas Mme Debray moved into a residence for persons with loss of autonomy and chose, in doing so, to move closer to her sister. Hence, people may wish to enjoy more support while at the same time moving within some securing distance of their children kin and supportive relations. They may wish to move closer, but not too close. They may wish to move closer in order to remain at hand without becoming a burden. I have spoken extensively about the elderly people but these observations apply equally to the younger people that I have followed. One will have noticed Béatrice Forgues' resistance to moving away from an area where she knew the neighbours, where her children had their landmarks, Lisa Blackburn's desire to retrieve her relations, Charlotte's refusal to leave the Latino community, Régine Mercier's concern to remain close by her mother's institution, and so forth. Put differently, the more general point to make here is that moving may allow one to think of him or herself as autonomous while providing a sense of Social Being. Mobility can then mediate and reconcile the apparent opposition between the need to separate oneself from others (Hockey, 1999b), what I will call here the desire for autonomy, and the need to be surrounded. For that reason, we cannot reduce the issue of staying put to an alternative between remaining in place or moving without
isolating the household from the outside, without reducing the attachment to place to the attachment to home at the expense of a broader sense of space that would leave place for movement.

The people encountered during this ethnography did not celebrate mobility over stability. Neither were they scared of moving or ashamed of it. They were often anxious. And yet, they were rarely caught off guard. Moving is simply, for them, as much a form of habitat as staying in place. It is, if we were to use Querrien and Lassave's (1993) expression, a 'pratique habitante' or a dwelling practice. What people celebrate is the freedom of choice. They want to feel, they want to be able to believe that they can decide where to settle and with whom. This does not mean that people are autonomous actors nor that they are free, to move as we will see in the next chapter. It means that choice is socially constructed as a preference. This contradicts, in a sense, the legalisation of stability discussed in Chapter 3, a legislation that sees the freedom of the tenant in the possibility of staying in place. In the end, short distance moves appear to be tantamount to the desire – or the need – to stay in place and the desire to move. This is what Pauline Julien, a popular singer, expresses in her song "J'sais pas si j'vas déménager ou rester là". Should I stay or should I go? That is the question.
Chapter 5

Being civil
in a mobile society

A recent campaign orchestrated by the City of Montreal\(^1\) which aimed at favouring the accession to ownership promoted different neighbourhoods to different social groups and life styles. As the campaign put it, the Rivière-des-Prairies and the Pointe-aux-Trembles neighbourhoods are for those people dreaming of water courses, greenness and a nice and peaceful environment... Old-Montreal is for those who dream of a loft and a setting offering both historic charm and a modern effervescence. The Rosemont neighbourhood is for young families seeking an area where they can raise their children securely. And so on.

At first sight, such a campaign offers a view of the landscape in which people might move according to their needs, with whom they need. It celebrates a certain freedom of movement. And it does so by paving the way for homeowners and those interested in acquiring property. Such a campaign encourages people to move. But not everybody. What about the others? What about those who can not afford to move into neighbourhoods like Rivière-des-Prairies or Pointe-aux-Trembles, the two wealthiest neighbourhoods in Montreal? What about those who can not afford to accede to ownership?

\(^1\) *Habiter Montréal.* January 2000.
Those who can simply not afford to think about it? The literature on the city’s
gentrification (Bridge, 1994; Butler and Hamnett, 1994; Ley, 1996; Mills, 1996;
Rose, 1994; Smith, 1979; Smith and Williams, 1986; Warde, 1991; Zukin, 1982,
1991) and the city’s commodification (Philo and Keams, 1993) stresses how,
for these people, mobility is imposed. It shows that individual changes of
residence often take place within the broader movements of capital between
places, neighbourhood, areas or types of accommodation; that moving often
takes place within a matrix of power relations. Too often, however, by
focusing on the structural aspects of the move at the expense of the agency, the
literature tends to assume that moving corresponds to disempowerment in its
most complete form. This chapter will examine how mobility may be
meaningful for the least advantaged people who often appear to be tenants. It
will try to capture how it can even become empowering, that is a form of
appropriation through which the subject creates itself and asserts its agency. In
the line of recent work on housing and power (Sommerville, 1998), I will argue
that moving may become a means for these people to take advantage of
renting, that it may become an attempt to make the best of it. By inscribing the
move within the broader political matrix of civil society, I wish to demonstrate
that mobility may help assert what Harrison (1995, quoted by Sommerville,
1998) calls the ‘character of a citizen’. It provides, in this respect, a way of
Being civil in a mobile society.

Affording to move

A Montreal real estate agent motto says that the three most important criteria
in the choice of a house are “first of all the location, secondly the location and
thirdly the location”. The choice of a location is in fact influenced by the types
of accommodation available in a given area as well as by the extra-housing
amenities like the schools of the area, services and recreation facilities. In turn, the choice of a type of accommodation is directed by area. Here, I follow Rossi and Shlay (1982) in emphasising that we cannot empirically disentangle the choice of a residential environment from the choice of the dwellings that compose it. For example, lofts are found in the former working class neighbourhoods like Hochelaga-Maisonneuve, along the Lachine Canal; bungalows are found in the peripheral neighbourhoods such as Ahuntsic and Cartierville as well as in the suburbs. Similarly, elderly people's private residences are more likely to be geographically concentrated along the Prairie River. Rents and house prices are thus related to areas. As a consequence, changes in a household's social or economic status may be accompanied by a change of area.

This becomes clear when looking at the case of the Lambert family. This is a four-member family with two adults in their forties. Gérard, the father, works as an electrician. Sandrine, the mother, works as a part-time sales-person. Flo and Patrick, their two children, aged 16 and 17, are students. For the previous 16 years, the Lambert family had stayed in different apartments and neighbourhoods in Montreal. They stayed on the Plateau, on Papineau Street, in a 4 ½-room apartment; a small apartment with bunk beds for the children, as Sandrine explains. It was an "economical place" as she puts it. The rent was low and so were the heating costs. Also, as she goes on to say, the children were young then. The Lambert, moved away after 8 years as the children got older. They moved to Lacordaire Street in the municipality of Montreal-Nord, into a "big" 6 ½-room apartment, including a well-finished basement as well as a garage. They had to move again after a year because their landlady retook possession of the dwelling to house a member of her family. So they moved to Cartier Street in the Ahuntsic neighbourhood, into a

---

2 Desjeux et al. (1998) report in their study of house moving in France that some people move in a given area so that their children may become eligible for the school of that area.

3 20% of the private residences for elderly people of the Greater Montreal Region are concentrated in the North of Montreal and Montreal-Nord areas (CMHC, 1998).
7 ½-room apartment with a courtyard that they kept for 7 years. This is where the Lamberts were staying when I first met them. As the children grew older, the Lamberts successively moved into bigger places, as well as into peripheral neighbourhoods. Ultimately, they acquired a bungalow in the Ahuntsic area. What is important is that the Lamberts moved as their financial situation improved. More importantly, they acceded to ownership when their financial condition made it possible. Indeed, as Harris (1991) and Krishnan and Krotki (1993) report, household income is important for ‘entering’ home ownership just as much as income level and income expectations are. Among the people I met, most of those who acceded to ownership were middle class people: engineers, professional workers, teachers, and so forth. All of them at least enjoyed a certain job stability. Income or financial capital is not a determinant in any simple sense, however, as Bourdieu and Saint-Martin (1990) emphasise. A certain financial capital is necessary for acceding to ownership. Above all, a certain capital is necessary to simply afford thinking about it. Another example is that of Mira Filipovic’s residential trajectory, which translates the social ascension that ownership completes. Mira Filipovic is a 49 year-old former Yugoslav refugee who arrived in Canada in 1994 with her 12 year-old daughter. Since her arrival in Canada, Mira Filipovic ‘successively’ moved from an HLM in Sherbrooke to a privately rented apartment in the same city, then into an apartment in Ville St-Laurent, on the island of Montreal when she started to work as an engineer, and finally into a house closer to her job, a condominium that she acquired in Pierrefonds, in the north-west suburb of the island of Montreal.

In a socially segmented and segregated landscape such as that of Montreal, financial capacities are determinant of people’s margin of manoeuvre when the time comes to move and to choose where to move. People like the

---

4 The cases of Switzerland, a country with one of the highest per capita incomes in Europe and with a low level of ownership, and of the 19th Century Parisian bourgeoisie, who were often tenants (Choko, 1993; Werczberger, 1997), remind us how ownership is not in strict correlation with income.
Lamberts and Mira Filipovic moved where they could afford it. The Lamberts, for example, considered many neighbourhoods when they decided to buy a house: Rivière-des-Prairies, "but it was too far"; Cartierville "but there were too many people", "the detached houses were huge and very expensive" and "there were too many immigrants"; indeed a localisation takes on its importance in physical as well as in social terms, what matters is where a person lives and with whom (Rodman, 1985; Ingold, 1986). The Lambert family finally chose to remain in the same neighbourhood where they lived: Ahuntsic. The bungalow houses were "affordable" there. As such, they only had to move two street corners away, which Sandrine found advantageous. It allowed them to remain close to the Visitation park where Gérard and she used to jog, which she considered "very important". It also allowed the children to remain in the same school until their graduation. And it allowed her to walk to her work place. Similarly, Mira Filipovic considered many areas in which she could find recently built condominiums. Above all, she wished to buy a house that she thought she could have paid for before retiring, and she bought it with the idea of keeping it until the time of retiring in order to save on house moving costs. At the age of 49, considering that the retirement age is 65, that it left her 15 to 16 years to work, Mira calculated that with an annual income of 50 to $60,000 she could find approximately $90,000. What she could afford for that amount was a condominium. Similarly, Gabriel, a 26 year-old social worker who purchased a loft, looked at the lofts in other neighbourhoods such as the Plateau, but these were too expensive "for the same thing", as he put it. He decided to acquire a loft in the Hochelaga-Maisonneuve neighbourhood.

Financial capacities are determinant of people’s margin of manoeuvre when the time comes to move and to choose where to move. In turn, the resources of a given area open up a different set of possibilities (Marsh and Mullins, 1998). Financial means are also determinant of the ease with which people may change neighbourhood. Kim, an 18 year-old student who wished to move
away from the Hochelaga-Maisonneuve neighbourhood, one of the poorest
eighbourhoods\footnote{See Table 5.} which she did not like, which she found “ugly”, “poor” and
“frightening”, could only do so because of the financial support of her
parents. She could afford to move away and, thanks to her parents’ support,
take an apartment alone on the Plateau that she described as more “in”. She
moved into a 1 \(\frac{1}{2}\)-room apartment that cost $290 per month in comparison
to the $175 per month that the previous apartment had cost her. Above all,
Kim could afford to dislike the Hochelaga-Maisonneuve neighbourhood, which
shows how preferences are, in fact, a matter of power. In contrast, a lack of
financial means is related to the incapacity to ‘escape’ areas like the poorest
neighbourhoods where the rents are lower, the move within the same area
becoming a form of containment, in an ‘espace clos’ (Haumont, 1993). Sandra
Parent, a 41 year-old woman receiving social assistance, nearly always moved
within the same area: Hochelaga-Maisonneuve, the working class area, one of
the poorest areas of Montreal, because she could not afford to move
elsewhere. Sandra Parent moved from the corner of Champlain and Ontario to
the corner of Frontenac and Rouen. And then onto Theodore Street. And again
on Theodore again, again and again; always in the same neighbourhood. She
who lived in a social housing apartment when we met was relocated some 500
meters away by the Council estate on the same street. Sandra wished to move
away from Hochelaga-Maisonneuve, but she could only dream about it until
she found a job. Until then, the best she could hope for was to be relocated.
Her case suggests how freedom of movement is illusory, or at least
conditioned. In this respect, space as a social product (Simmel, 1903; Harvey,
1996; Lefebvre, 1974) operates with the full force of objective facts. It is
socially constructed as a container and a mediator (Soja, 1989) because the
location is not only an outcome. It becomes, in itself, a means of asserting and
sustaining one’s advantage over the resources of the landscape. In contrast,
the incapacity to pay for a certain location may reinforce difficulties in
securing access to employment opportunities as well as access to health cares

\footnote{See Table 5.}
services, which is particularly important for the elderly people met in Montreal; health care services—especially care at home—being provided on a territorial basis. This lack of means may then reinforce ‘social exclusion’ or the feeling of being socially excluded. As Brun (1993) points out, the ‘lack’ of mobility is also a symptom, not to say a ‘cause’ of urban problems such as marginalisation, segregation or exclusion.

Financial means are also particularly important in the case of elderly people confronted with the need to move into a residence or into residential care; a move which is often taken to be disempowering. Here, the very possibility of moving to a private residence, as well as the choice of the residence itself, will be related to the person’s financial means, social class and health condition. Private residences, for instance, are intended for ‘autonomous people’ or people with ‘slight’ loss of autonomy. The access to these residences is direct. And the financing is under the responsibility of the users. For

---

6 See Chapter 4.
7 The private sector falls under the Loi sur la Régie du logement. See Chapter 3. It includes room-apartments in residence and the room and boarding residences. The private sector also includes the private and registered Centres d’hébergement et de soins de longue durée (CHSLD) intended for ‘non-autonomous’ persons or those who need more than 2.5 hours/care per day. These provide permanent medical care (CMHC, 1997).
8 One social worker in charge of a home care once explained to me that elderly people had, in her opinion, ‘territorial habits’ and ‘abilities’. As such, even though they might move into a residence outside their area, in a different milieu, their territorial abilities would remain. She went on to say that ‘someone from Outremont moving to Pointe-aux-Trembles would not ‘fit’. Her remarks are interesting inasmuch as they tend to assume that social class and space are intertwined.
9 In 1997, 6.1% of the elderly people aged over 65 in the Montreal-Centre territory lived in private residences (CMHC, 1998).
10 They provide services such as the preparation of meals, the provision of hygiene care, surveillance, housekeeping and entertainment as well as the assistance of medical personnel in charge of the distribution of the medications and basic health care.
11 By contrast, the access to the resources of the public sector is controlled by the CLSC. These resources are intended for people with a geriatric profile that are at risk of losing autonomy or who have lost autonomy. A person will be admitted if he or she meets some bio-psycho-social criteria regarding the nature and quantity of care required, an absence of support from his or her surroundings or a lack of resources. And the amount of hours/care needed are assessed using the Grille d’évaluation de l’autonomie des personnes par la voie d’une classification par types en milieu de soins et services prolongés (CTMSP). The public sector includes non-institutional resources like the pavilions and the family residences, as well as institutional resources, also called the CHSLD. The public sector falls under the Loi de la santé et des services sociaux (RRSSS, 1996).
12 As an example, the range is between 430 and $750 per month for a studio in residence, 650 and $1,350 for a 3 1/2 room-apartment in residence, 650 and $1,500 for a room residence, and between 1,500 and $4,475 per month for a room in an institution (Centre Visavie, Choisir la bonne résidence et planifier son déménagement, 1992).
instance, Mr Ricard, a 71 year-old widower, a retired teacher, chose an apartment in a private residence well located along the Rivière-des-Prairies in Montreal-Nord. His apartment was situated on the 19th floor where he had what he described as a magnificent view of the region. Mr Ricard could afford to pay for what he himself described as one of the nicest residences along the river. By contrast, Mr Richer, a former construction worker, considered moving in Outremont to be perfect for elderly people like him. He saw it as a secure and a calm neighbourhood. And he appreciated that by moving in Outremont he would not have to change CLSC and medical personnel; Outremont is indeed part of the same CLSC territory where he had already lived. He considered this possibility until he realised that an apartment in Outremont was too expensive for him. In other words, Mr Richer did not have the means to realise his ambitions. He could not afford to move in Outremont. He had to content himself with moving in Notre-Dame-de-Grâce. Moving in Montreal, in other words, asserts itself as the expression of a deeper social process of differentiation (Huxley and Winchester, 1991). It becomes the enactment of social, economic and linguistic differences. It reproduces, in other words, social structures under a spatial form. By moving, then, people classify and are themselves classified, as Bourdieu (1979) would put it. They segregate themselves and are segregated by their displacements, by the means of their displacements or by their lack of means.

Is remaining in place always profitable?

Should we conclude that remaining in place is simply the cheapest solution? The hypothesis is plausible. It is all the more plausible when it is sometimes claimed that many elderly people owning their house stay put because they have already redeemed their mortgages, remaining in place appearing, according to Moore and Rosenberg (1997), to be “the least expensive
solution". In the case of tenants, a study of elderly people inhabiting the Rosemont neighbourhood in Montreal reveals that people who stayed at least 10 years in the same dwelling usually paid less expensive rents than others (Aubin, Boivin and Paquin, 1989). Let us also recall how Mr Richer feared not being able to afford the cost of a move. In short, moving costs; it impoverishes. Hence, tenants’ associations’ often recall that, for tenants, “stability... is always profitable”.

And yet, the ethnographic evidence reveals that people in Montreal do not only move when they can afford to do so. It shows that some people move without really being able to afford it. Paradoxically, this is especially the case of the poorest people met, those in the more precarious financial conditions. Moving in Montreal, especially over short distances, pertains to mobility practices that are more mundane and at the same time much more significant than what Rossi’s (1955, 1980) ‘adjustment paradigm’ or the more recent work of Desjeux et al. (1998) consider. Moving does not only occur on the occasion of major life crises. Nor does it simply punctuate the social status transformations, the professional changes, or even the intimate ones, as implied by Desjeux et al. It is true, as this ethnography reveals, that these social, domestic and professional transformations and ruptures are often punctuated by changes of residence. The changes of residence among the people that I followed in Montreal are far from restricted to these, however. Moving is rather routinised. It occurs often. It can occur every year among the social groups experiencing precarious life conditions. At least, every year, when the time comes to renew the lease, the possibility or the potentiality of a move is brought back into consciousness. Moving, in other words, is a common practice. At the same time, moving practices in Montreal are

---

13 According to Moore and Rosenberg (1997), this proportion of elderly people who have purged their mortgage payment would approximate 70% in Canada. A study published by the CMHC and the Quebec Housing Corporation in 1990 mentioned a rate of 90% in the Province of Quebec (Renaud, 1990, 29). See also Lebreux (1996).
14 See Chapter 4.
15 La Presse, 22nd March 1990.
16 See Chapter 3.
significant practices. Moving may become a means of changing co-tenant, of changing neighbour, not to say landlord. In this respect, Montrealers' use of mobility is strongly associated with the idea of control as in the case of nomadic populations (Rapoport, 1978, 1995). When Fortin (1987) asserts that in the suburbs where people are more likely to own their property they have no choice but to cultivate good relationships with their neighbours, whereas in the city where people are more likely to rent an apartment they can always move, is she not saying that moving may bear the potential for releasing the pressure of conflicting situations? If we pushed further Sommerville's (1998) argument on empowerment and residence, it could then be argued that tenants' strategies do not simply consist of working within the rules set by the landlord or of challenging them. It may also consist of changing them. Far from being unreasonable, moving may become a means of making one's life, of inventing, not to say re-inventing oneself and for keeping control of one's life and one's relations. At least it may be perceived as such. In other words, far from being a simple outcome or response, moving may become a means of attempting to act on reality, and bringing change.

In some cases, as in Sandra Parent's, the move is clearly taken to escape an oppressive environment, as Madigan and Munro (1999) would put it, a disadvantageous contractual relation with a landlord as well. After her relocation by the OMH, which she described as an eviction, Sandra only cared about moving away, somewhere else. She wished to escape the apartment that had been imposed on her, even if it were within the confines of the same neighbourhood. Indeed, from the first day she moved into her new place, Sandra considered moving somewhere else because of her fear of "suffocating" there, as she put it. She kept repeating that she could never live in such a small place, that there would not be enough place for her and her son, for her to store her things, and so on. Her new apartment was smaller; so small that Sandra could not even keep her appliances, which she considered intolerable for a woman like her in charge of a teenager, simply could not
afford to use the laundry. Since the new apartment did not provide sufficient space for the appliances she already possessed, which made them useless, on the moving day Sandra resigned herself to sell them. She even agreed on the terms of the transaction with Pierre, a friend of hers who came to give a hand with the move. Three weeks later, however, she changed her mind. Instead of selling them, she stored them in a cupboard in the expectation of using them somewhere else, in what appeared then to be the next apartment she longed for. She sacrificed her storage space, in other words, to keep her appliances because they objectified her future projects and hopes. Her moving plan became more concrete through her purchase of more compact stacked-up appliances, which she placed in the corridor leading to the kitchen in a transitory form of arrangement. She bought second hand equipment that she got for $350 with a buy-back option of $175 in the course of the next year. As such, I believe that she proclaimed her will to leave that place. At least, she was giving herself one more year to see. For Sandra Parent, the domestic withdrawal was almost a condition of incarceration. It was not until 6 months after she moved that Sandra stopped talking about moving, at least that she started to consider staying where she was for another year. This was not because she ended up loving the place. Neither did she abandon her moving project. She simply realised that she could not afford to move; not yet. Sandra could only ask to be relocated within the OMH once she had spent 3 years in the same dwelling. In this context, a move could only take place outside the social housing program. To move, she needed to find a job, which she did. Sandra, thus, did not move to work. She worked in order to move.

Despite this limited freedom of movement, despite the financial constraints, the people who move often play an active role in it, as Sandra Parent's case shows. At least, she believed that by moving she could regain control over her life. Another example is to be found in the case of Marjo, a 30 year-old community worker, and Rupert, her partner, a 28 year-old municipal employee, who moved together in expectation of the birth of a child. Marjo
and Rupert looked for an apartment that they could share and which would
include an additional bedroom for their child. At the same time, Marjo and
Rupert wished to pay less. In Marjo's words, one needs to provide some space
for the baby even though the baby will not be paying her part of the rent. They
moved from the Plateau, a neighbourhood where the rents became prohibitive,
as Marjo put it, into another one that they could afford: the Petite-Patrie
neighbourhood. In this regard, their move is a typical case of a move occurring
under the impulse of a gentrification process. According to their wish, they
were able to find a bigger apartment less expensive than the one they already
had. They moved into a 6½-room apartment that included a kitchen, a
double living-room, a room for the baby, an office that Marjo and Rupert
would share, as well as a bedroom. This new apartment cost them $495 per
month in comparison to the $700 for the apartment that Marjo shared with
two other people on the Plateau and to the $695 for the apartment that Rupert
shared with two people, also on the Plateau. Marjo and Rupert did not
undergo a drop in status or a de-classification as the gentrification theory
would imply, however. At least they did not experience it as such. On the
contrary. Instead, their move should be considered strategically, in the sense
understood by Lauzon (1989, 1992), as a use of the range of possibilities of
the renting market in and beyond a given neighbourhood. In his works on the
19th Century Montreal working classes, Lauzon tries to show that people were
not always constrained to move, that they also used the resources of the
housing market of a given area to adjust their housing needs and their
resources. As such, he insists on the role of agents in the move while
acknowledging the constraints weighing upon them. It is true that people like
Marjo and Rupert who found themselves 'forced' to change area are subject to
the pressure of the rent increase concomitant to the movement of capital, as
the literature on gentrification would imply. But I would be cautious in saying
that they are subjected to move in any simple sense. People like Marjo and
Rupert do not defy or make light of the constraints of the housing market. They
rather try to 'play' with them. Marjo asserted that she usually moved when she
felt that she had reached the limits of the potential of transformation of her place. She even argued that one can change apartment in order to improve his or her “standing”. Since she moved away from her father’s home in the suburb at the age of 17, Marjo had stayed with her grand-mother in the Hochelaga-Maisonuneuve neighbourhood in a 3 1/2-room apartment, and with a friend in a 1 1/2-room apartment on the Plateau on Sherbrooke Street. She recalls that there was room for only one bed and that she was sharing it with her friend. She went back to her father’s home when she ran out of money, which she described as a failure. As she explained, “it is difficult to put oneself under somebody else’s authority once you have tasted living alone”. At the age of 20 or 21, Marjo successively inhabited a 4 1/2-room apartment alone on the corner of St-Dominique and Beaubien, a 6 1/2-room apartment on the Plateau at the corner of Brébeuf and St-Joseph with a close friend, a 6 1/2-room apartment on the Plateau again on Bordeaux, near Mont-Royal, which she shared with an acquaintance and then with a colleague. Together, they moved into a 7 1/2-room apartment on the Plateau at the corner of Delorimier and Marie-Anne where Marjo’s sister joined them. The three of them stayed there for 2 years. Marjo moved away from Montreal for a year to pursue her studies. And when she came back she moved with her sister and one of her girlfriends to the Plateau on St-Hubert Street. This is where I met her. Marjo’s trajectory is punctuated with changes of place as well as changes of company. She shared spaces with relatives, friends, acquaintances and colleagues. Interestingly enough, as she recalled it, her relatives considered that her apartments improved every time she moved, along her past 12 moves. They considered that her apartments had more and more allure and that her new one, the one she took with her partner, looked like a “real house”. This time, no social change gave way to the change of place. Quite the opposite. Marjo, a community worker under contract whose income approaches $7,000 annually, suffered from serious job precariousness, while relations between employees and employers at Rupert’s job were troubled at the time of the move. Hence, the move cannot be taken to be a simple ‘consequence’ of the changes in social
status. It becomes a means, at least an attempt, to change, to improve one's condition through a change of place. Marjo, who admitted that her financial condition was far from stable, declared that this did not even bother her. She simply said that she always managed. She took small jobs here and there: she even washed Kanuk Winter coats, as she herself emphasised, in her bath. This is how moving can be seen in her case: a way of managing.

The costs and the symbolic profits of the move

Sandra Parent longed to move. Sandra may, of course, be moving against her own advantage. Her moves may in fact simply reproduce and exacerbate the social order which maintains her in a position of disenfranchisement. Having said that, she actively prepared for it. Marjo, for her part, claimed that she enjoyed moving. She proclaimed that she liked novelty and that changing place provided her with such novelty. Even though these people have a very limited margin of manoeuvre in their moves, they often think or believe that they can improve their condition by using it. They are probably not completely deluded by believing as such in the symbolic benefits of the move; for what we are talking about here is symbolic benefit. Transaction costs for the tenants in Montreal are relatively advantageous in comparison to those entailed by a change of property. Tenants only have to assume the costs of the change of address. Owners for their part also have to assume the transfer rights commonly called the ‘Welcome tax’, the notary fees, the fees of inspection and estate assessment as well as the real estate agent’s commission. When

---

17 As an example, in 1999, the costs of change of address ranged from 75 to $135: $20 for the electricity provider, $55 for the telephone provider (Bell Canada), $30 for the cable provider (Vidéotron) and $30 for the re-handling of the mail. In addition to the costs of the move per se.
18 The Welcome tax, named after Minister Bienvenue, corresponds to 0.005% of the first $50,000 of the house’s value and 0.01% for the amount exceeding $50,000 (L.R.Q.c. D-15.1).
19 Approximately $1,000.
20 200 to $400.
21 These may range from 3 to 6% of the price of the house (Harris, 1991).
we consider the low costs of the move per se, how finding an apartment is ‘relatively’ easy for most tenants, and how the legal conditions of the housing market in Montreal encourage frequent displacements, the least we can say is that changing place is at least possible, not to say understandable, if not rational, especially for tenants. This is what transpires from Jobin’s remarks that “the general practice of fixing at one year the duration of a residential lease will often allow the tenant the possibility to satisfy his or her mobility need” (Jobin, 1982, 355, italics added). In fact, the move is all the more important for those people who can hardly, apparently, afford it. It becomes symbolically profitable. Among the people I met, the tenants, the poor and the people experiencing the more precarious life conditions, often regarded moving positively. These people were probably those who were the more likely to consider it as such as a positive experience. In Foucault’s (1975) line of thought, moving becomes for these disempowered and disenfranchised people a way of manipulating the urban system. Small moves, in analogy to Foucault’s small gestures or ‘micro-physics’, become attempts to assert one’s presence and identity. Moving, in this regard, becomes an attempt to regain power. It becomes an attempt to empower oneself. Hence, just as much as Buchli has shown that “… totalizing world-views or ‘spatial logics’ can be radically subverted — absolutely and discontinuously — by the most ephemeral manipulations of material culture” (Buchli, 1999, 6), Sandra Parent, Marjo and Rupert’s examples show how people may attempt to assert their sense of agency by moving despite their limited or illusory freedom of manoeuvre. Their moves and their moving project reveal how moving itself may become a way of ‘managing’ as Marjo puts it. Their cases reveal how displacements may

---

22 More importantly, they are kept at a low level by moving by oneself, which is the norm in Montreal. See Chapter 6.
23 I do not wish to underestimate the discrimination against certain groups like the recipients of social welfare or those that the Owners League call the ‘bad tenants’ (La Presse, 27th January 2001). I just want to stress here that, in Montreal, apartments are advertised in the classified ads as well as by notices. There are no renting agencies as is the case in France (Desjeux et al., 1998) or in Britain. The situation may differ, however, between neighbourhoods. It is also important to recognise that the decreasing rate of vacancy may make the change of apartment more difficult, or even favour steadiness. The vacancy rate was 3.0 in the MUC in 1999, 1.4% in 2000 (La Presse, 8th January 2001; Le Devoir, 12th April 1999).
24 See Chapter 3.
respond to consumption strategies and be related to social or cultural forms of capital (Southerton, 1999). In other words, their cases open up on a discussion of a form of mobility which is not strictly defined in terms of 'needs' (Haumont, 1993). It goes further, however. As Butler (1993) would say, these cases clearly exemplify how the move may bring the subject into existence by giving it a material presence. I will argue then that, through their short moves, people constitute or establish a new kind of subjectivity. Even with a limited margin of manoeuvre, they often try to realise their spatial aspirations, because this margin is provided to them by the move.

Moving as a mode of appropriation

It should be clear at this stage that tenants’ mobility is not related in any sense to some ‘tenants’ mentality’ or to any lack of rationality. Moving is constructed as a predisposition in the Montreal context and it is made possible by the legal and economic conditions of the housing market. If we wish to account for the mundane use that people make of different places and movement, and for the fact that some people move even though they apparently cannot afford it, we probably need to broaden, in a typical Bourdieusian move, the notion of the profit of the move. In other words, if wish to account for the symbolic costs and profits of the move, if we wish not to fail to recognise the rationality of these moves, we need to redefine the move as an investment and revisit the economic opposition between consumption and investment. In doing so, I will use Miller’s work on the anthropology of consumption which relies upon the notion of change and which offers an understanding of consumption as a mode of appropriation, namely a form of investment of the subject.

Miller’s work can be situated in the broader context of a criticism of the ‘myth’ of the homo economicus in the social sciences (Douglas and Isherwood, 1979; Fine, 1995; Galbraith, 1987; Sahlins, 1972) and of the narrow conception of
profit entailed by the economic approach (Bourdieu, 1972), which rejects in the sphere of the 'unthinkable', 'absurdity' and 'irrationality' the symbolic profits and losses, non-material and hardly quantifiable stakes of an action or a practice. Miller (1998, 1988, 1987) joins many authors, like Campbell (1987, 1995), Featherstone (1991), Lee (1993), Williams (1983) or Yonnet (1985), who challenge the negative moral connotations traditionally attached to the idea of consumption. In doing so, they call for a consideration of consumption freed from its connotations of destruction. Miller goes further, however, by showing how consumption may be creative and empowering. In fact, one of the merits of Miller's work, in my mind, is its rehabilitation of the idea of 'change' which, in the context of a discussion on consumption, has often historically been regarded as conductive of waste (Baudrillard, 1970; Galbraith, 1958, 1967; Veblen, 1899), ephemerality (Lipovetsky, 1987) fashionability (Haug, 1986), or of the loss of authenticity. I will use Miller's theory as a theory of change. I will contend that this theory is particularly appropriate to understanding the change of place in a housing market such as that of Montreal where people do not produce their accommodation by themselves, especially when we consider that "the average Canadian can expect to move about a dozen times during a lifetime" (Moore and Rosenberg, 1993, 121).

In the line of a Hegelian tradition, Miller (1987) revisits the very duality of subjects and objects by emphasising the importance of a processual constitution of one through the other. Miller insists on the importance of the experience of material culture and on the appropriation work performed by the subject, the appropriation of an alien materiality which exists outside the subject and which becomes part of the subject through its objectification. Consumption is then understood as a dialectal means of resolution of the separation of the two. It is, for Miller, the use of a materiality that has preceded cognition. This is why change is so important.

---

By extending Miller's conception of change to the study of mobility, we will say that the subject constitutes him or herself through the appropriation of an alien materiality (Miller, 1988) and through the transformation of that materiality into something that is familiar. In this respect, the subject does not simply consume places by changing. He or she creates itself as subject by investing a place and by experiencing such a place. In other words, he or she comes into existence through the coming of existence of the place, by objectifying him or herself into that place and by changing place as well. In this case, however, change does not stand so much for the transformation of a place, than for the change of place itself. It is thus the change of place more than the place itself which becomes meaningful and 'actively sensed' or experienced as Feld and Basso (1996) would say. This conception of change allows us to account for what lies beyond the confines of what is mastered, invested with meaning or appropriated, what Tuan (1977) calls 'the given' when describing the experience of place as a way of acting on the given. It allows us to account for the appropriation of a place which was previously someone's else space (Hockey, 1999b). The change of place becomes in this respect a form of bricolage (Lévi-Strauss, 1962): a use of pre-existing resources, sites and accommodation which become places as the result of their appropriation. Moving in itself becomes meaningful, more meaningful than the place it connects, independently from them. Moving proceeds then from a symbolic logic of territorial appropriation (Petiteau, 1995). This conception of mobility as a mode of appropriation radically subverts the classical view of movement as a form of 'adjustment' in which the change of place is conceived from an instrumental point of view. In Rossi's (1955, 1980) and his followers' view, if mobility is valued, it is through the assessment of its costs. In any case, it is devoid of meanings. For, when it is pushed to its extreme, the adjustment paradigm is not without recalling a certain environmental determinism in which the tenant is an animal that moves! I want for my part

27 See Chapters 1 and 2.
to insist on the creative work performed by the subject and by its investment in the very act of moving. A parallel can be drawn with hunters and gatherers (Ingold, 1986) who appropriate space through movement. Ingold shows that for hunters and gatherers, a space as a system of settings can be organised without being divided into mutually exclusive ‘owned’ territories. It needs neither be localised nor bounded. Ingold stresses how people and place are immanent in each other. How, in other words, hunters and gatherers do not own land. They belong to it. We cannot go as far as Ingold when talking about the Montreal housing market which is in effect divided into exclusive territories. Having said that, in parallel with the hunters and gatherers described by Ingold, Montreal tenants do not own their places. All they can do is change them. In this respect, I will thus endorse Gotman’s remarks, which emphasise how simple it would be to oppose the conception of the succession of places or habitats to the “anthropological logic of the house as a permanent space of perpetuation of the domestic group” (Gotman, 1999, 133, italics in the text) and how simplistic it would be to oppose ‘mobility’ to what could be called a ‘sedentary way of life’. As she puts it, the ‘urbanite’ is more and more ‘multi-residential’ while the sequence of residential places allows for a resolution of the contradiction between mobility and a sedentary way of life, as we have seen in the preceding chapter. This is why people can be said to inhabit a succession of places. As Tilley (1994) mentions, the successive places occupied ‘channel’ movement across space and time; whereas, as Tuan (1977) would say, every place occupied becomes no more and no less a ‘pause’.

Trying to make the best of renting

The ‘classical model’ of the civil society (Hann, 1996) conceives the political, economic and moral distribution of powers through the provision and consumption of housing in general, and the modes of tenure in particular. In
fact, the *Lockian* distribution of power in itself disempowers tenancy. The only spatial modes of appropriation that it legally recognises are ownership and joint-ownership (Thomasset, 1987). This model relies upon the alleged ‘inherent advantages’ and the moral superiority of ownership. For instance, Saunders (1990) claims that ownership is inherently more profitable than renting for it provides an indefinite right of use, a right to give away or bequeath, a right to modify, the right to do what one wills with the property as well as the security of tenure and the possibility of investing in something one controls. In this respect, ownership is considered as an investment whereas renting is a loss. As Saunders (1989) says, ownership creates a stronger sense of ‘ontological security’ because of the sense of pride it provides and enables. The idea that ownership might be ‘inherently’ more advantageous has been challenged, however, by Kemeny (1981, 1983), Ball (1983), Bourassa et al. (1995), Crook and Kemp (1996), and Werczberger (1997), who demonstrate that ownership’s advantages are socially constructed. The logical implication here is that renting may be socially advantageous in a given context. I would not go as far as saying that renting is socially advantageous in Montreal. Renting is too often associated with housing precariousness. Too many tenants are constrained to this mode of tenure. For instance, the lowest proportion of tenants are found in the neighbourhoods where the average income is the highest and the rate of unemployment amongst the lowest. In contrast, the highest proportion of tenants is found amongst the poorest neighbourhoods: Parc Extension, the neighbourhood with the lowest average income, includes 81% of tenants and the highest rate of unemployment: 30%. Hochelaga-Maisonneuve, the neighbourhood with the second lowest average income comprises 85% of tenants and the second higher rate of unemployment: 18.5%. Having said that,

---

28 See Chapter 2.
29 In Canada, ownership has traditionally benefited from a positive government bias despite socially regressive effects. In fact, government subsidisation is the most significant and enduring source of wealth for homeowners and provides the most substantial base for the economic advantage of home ownership (Pratt, 1982, 1986); let alone that, unlike almost any other type of asset, homes are exempt from capital gains tax (Harris, 1991).
30 See Chapter 5.
I will echo Crook and Kemp (1996), Whitehead (1996) and Bourassa et al. (1995), who emphasise how mobility may be part of the advantage of renting. As such, I would be inclined to believe that moving can be advantageous when one is a tenant in Montreal. And I will hold that people in Montreal are not mobile because they are tenants, but that moving is a means for them to try to take advantage of renting. At least, to make the best of it.

In this respect, we have to question the absolute association between renting, mobility and disempowerment and the belief that a sense of Being or ontological security only rests upon ownership. Moving may allow, as deCerteau (1985) would probably say, a spatial realisation of place which make practices of spaces ways of Being-in-the-world or, as Deleuze (Vergely, 1993) would contend, a way of becoming. The situation described here, often that of tenants, is the situation of people who do not or who cannot own their place. It reveals that subjects often attempt to constitute themselves through the successive investment of places, though the successive places they inhabit and the changes of places, even though their margin of manoeuvre is thin, perhaps, especially when it is thin. Moving, for them, becomes a means of realisation of one’s aspiration for the appropriation of space, which challenges the idea that ownership may be the only means of doing it. If we were to paraphrase Miller (1988), we could say that the change of place may counterbalance tenants’ sense of powerlessness. It may become empowering. This is probably why the stability policy has been criticised by some tenants’ defenders such as Lefebvre (1979), for what could be called the ‘excess of stability’. Lefebvre suggested that such a policy in favour of tenants’ residential stability, stripped those very tenants of a certain right to mobility, the move often being favoured to the legal rights by the more impoverished persons. I do not agree with Lefebvre who argues that the stability policy

---

31 To that, Jobin (1982) would retort without any doubt that the tenant still has the possibility to move by subletting his or her dwelling or by transferring his or her lease and that the tenant still enjoys the absolute right of not renewing his or her lease. As such, only the tenant can dispute the content of a notice, the lessor having no means to oppose a tenant’s decision to leave.
threatens the right to mobility. What is at issue here is not so much the right to move, but the power to do so. I believe, however, that the ‘stability policy’ can legitimately be criticised for failing to recognise the advantage of moving for tenants, more particularly, for the least privileged and disempowered people: those who may think that the legal means provided by the Régie du logement are not for them; those who may prefer to manage by themselves and to do so by changing.
Fig. 4 People moving themselves in Montreal

Photo by J. Nadeau published in Le Devoir, 2nd July 1997
A book on the life of Maurice Richard, a former hockey player of the Montreal Canadiens, tells, in an ecstatic way, of the feats of an ‘idol’. The account goes like this: “That Thursday, on the 28th of December 1944, Maurice had moved from the third floor of a building of the des Érables Street to a second floor on Papineau Street. When he entered the players’ locker room, Maurice dragged himself to the massage table. His team mates, angry and worried, came closer to him. And Maurice declared: ‘This afternoon, I moved. My brother and I, we broke our backs carrying everything. Don’t count on me. I am completely drained of energy!’” (Pellerin, 1976, 48, 49). The author goes on to explain that on that night Richard scored 5 goals, obtained 3 assists and established a record for Modern hockey. For Pellerin, “Never before had a performance been more spectacular”. Richard’s achievement, which borders on legend, is interesting here because it takes on its strength in its anchorage in the Montrealers’ moving culture. Indeed, Richard’s feat is all the more significant since he moved on the same day, and that he did it by himself. It is the allegory of a popular hero emerging through the mundane crisis of the move that is depicted here. It is a crisis in which people recognise themselves since they go through the same experience. One must say that moving in Montreal is still in many respects a physical task. People usually move with their belongings.
They also move themselves. These are called the ‘house-made movers’, the ‘autonomous movers’ and the ‘do-it-yourselfers’ (see fig. 4 and 5). Just like Maurice Richard who moved with the help of his brother, people in Montreal move with the help of family members, kin and friends. As such, mobility can be understood as a particular case of the assistance and support exchanged within kin groups (Finch, 1989; Godbout and Charbonneau, 1996; Pitrou, 1977, 1996; Wallman, 1984), on which occasion what is exchanged, lent or gifted is the body, physical help and bodily support. This is how the expression “on a besoin de bras”, literally “we need arms”, translates. More than a simple physical task, however, moving enlists performativity. It is all about physical engagement with things. It calls for comportment requiring the social definition of strength.

In this chapter, I will analyse the circulation of bodily help on the occasion of moving day. I will situate the circulation of that help within the broader network of social relations like kinship relations, a network which in turn is structured in part through the circulation of help, and which comes into existence in a crisis situation. Janet Finch’s (1989) work is particularly relevant here. Finch goes beyond the simple question of determining whether kinship relations are instrumental or expressive. She shows that the provision of help in the kinship takes place within a mixture of duty and affect, duty and love, obligation and affection. I would add that it also takes place within a mixture of subtlety and spectacularity. Hence, for Finch, family obligations are negotiated with regard to the emotional ties and history of a relationship in which people are embedded. In other words, for her, people’s commitment does not flow from moral rules. It is negotiated over time. People become committed. Drawing upon Finch, I will contend that the bodily help provided

---

1 A recent survey revealed that 70% of the people who move in the Province of Quebec move themselves (Source: Bell Canada, Habitudes des Québécois à l’occasion de leur déménagement, June 2000. Survey conducted among 301 adults. The error margin is 5.6%, 19/20).

2 Consommation, Spring 1998.

3 La Presse, 22nd June 1991.

4 Good Housekeeping, August 1986.
on the move, on successive moves, over time, to take up Finch’s perspective, is used to build up the relationship. Helping people to move, then, becomes a means of investing in a relationship, a way of nurturing it and a way of caring. Hence, to paraphrase Butler (1993), I will try to capture how relations come to matter around physical tasks and things when moving. As such, I will argue that it is not so much the help which is in the service of the move, but the move that is in the service of the relationship.

‘On a besoin de bras’

House moving in Montreal frequently involves the help of kin and close friends in the preparation of boxes, the cleaning of the ‘old’ place before the move, the cleaning of the ‘new’ place, of the cupboards, of the refrigerator, etc. not to speak of the handling of things and furniture. For her own moving day, Gigi Tremblay, a 40 year-old disabled woman, received the help of her children and her brother. Kim, an 18 year-old woman, received the help of one of her friends, of her mother and of her mother’s partner. Similarly, Gabriel and Anne, two adults in their twenties, for their part, received the help of relatives and friends: Gabriel’s father as well as his sister and uncle, who drove down from Saguenay, Anne’s cousins and Anne’s partner of the time. Here is the popular image of the Montreal moving day, ending with a pizza meal washed down with beer at the expense of the household which moves. Like weddings and funerals, moving often becomes, as in the case of Marjo and Rupert, an occasion for getting the measure of the size of kinship relations. On moving day, Marjo and Rupert could count on Marjo’s father and his girlfriend, Marjo’s sister, Marjo’s maternal aunt and her husband, Marjo’s matrilineal cousin and her partner, some friends, her former co-tenant, as well as Rupert’s parents. Moving also provides a sense of the permanence of these relations. For these were the same people that helped Marjo move in the past, as she
declared. The successive moves become part of people's biography while the help exchanged on the occasion of those moves helps to develop commitment, as Finch would put it.
The resources mobilised also include material resources, the mobilisation implying taking advantage of the resources of everyone. As such, Gigi's brother came with his pick-up truck and his trailer, Kim's mother and her partner borrowed a truck from an acquaintance, and Marjo and Rupert rented a 20 feet truck at Via-route through Marjo's cousin who, as an employee of the company, got them a 25% rebate on the cost of renting. People rent Econolines, pick-up trucks, U-Haul trucks. They also mobilise kin and friends, even colleagues with their own vehicles, cars, etc. In fact, those who own a pick-up truck are highly prized in the Summer time, when most of people move. The appeal to social networks may impose itself as an economic strategy. It provides the opportunity to move at low cost, as many examples drawn from the field testify: Sandra Parent moved for approximately $80, the Lambert family did it for approximately $50, and Béatrice Forgues did it for approximately $150. These costs advantageously compare with the costs of hiring a moving company: $300 for Régine Mercier, $635 for Mira Filipovic, $645 for Caroline. Some people such as the poorest, for example the people receiving social assistance that I encountered, had no choice but to rely upon kinship. But the appeal to kin, the family and friends is far from only economic or simply instrumental as Janet Finch would probably say. After Godbout (1996, 1998), we could also say that the help provided on the occasion of the move by the kin, the family members and the friends, appears to circulate as a gift. As such, the way in which the help is provided has its importance, as Mr Richer's example now demonstrates. Let us recall, first of all, that at the time of the move Mr Richer, a 81 year-old man, had contacts with only two of his six children: two daughters living in Europe. Mr Richer was refusing to solicit the help of his other children, however. Above all, he refused to take the first steps, to put them under an obligation to help him, to impose himself in a sense, which is consistent with the fact that elderly people often refuse to be dependant upon their children (Connidis, 1983; Godbout and Charbonneau, 1996; Déchaux, 1996). Godbout also reminds us that help as a gift can hardly be claimed. This is what Godbout calls the principle of the freedom of giving
and of receiving that supposes that no gift should be imposed. It is better to have it offered. It is Lucie, one of Mr Richer's daughters living in France, who got in touch with her brothers in Canada and asked them to help him to move. Mr Richer accepted this help without hesitation, not to say with pride. Since then, Mr Richer kept telling whoever would listen to him that his sons would move him, "c'est mes gars qui me déménagent". Mr Richer was proud to be able to rely upon his children. He saw it as a form of reconciliation, for the help provided did not make him feel dependant; his sense of autonomy was preserved, the help being requested by somebody else rather than himself. Most of the time, however, people who move ask others for some help. In fact, this help can be asked without compromising the gift character, but it can hardly be requested, even less demanded. The help, to keep on with Godbout's terms, also becomes the expression of social solidarities as well as of social support, as Béatrice Forgues' example testifies. Béatrice moved in the context of a separation, in a crisis context. She anticipated moving day crisis, as she called it, for Carl, her former partner, moved on the same day. She was apprehensive of the departure, the division of the last things, etc. However, on moving day, Béatrice was well surrounded to use her own words again. She could rely on relatives and friends: her sister, her brother-in-law, who brought his pick-up truck, two of her girlfriends, the husband of one of her neighbouring friend, not to speak of that friend who assumed the custody of her children for the day. Of course, those people gave Béatrice a hand for the move. But their presence should also be read as a form of support in going through this ordeal. It is also plausible to think that the corollary is that a lack of help may relate to a form of abandonment, as Béatrice put it when reporting how Carl, her former partner, found his own moving difficult because he received hardly any help from his relatives.

It would be tempting to see in such an expression of family solidarities the image of the grand family of the past united in adversity. This would be forgetting Pitrou's (1996) warning that such an image nourishes itself from the
myth of the family as the crucible of consensual and warm relationships and exchanges. It would also be forgetting that a generous gift may also become a symbolic act aimed at obtaining the recipient’s consent, not to say his or her affection (Mauss, 1923-24); or, as Finch puts it, a means of exerting emotional blackmail. Hence, as Finch argues, obligation can never fully be separated from emotional ties. This is what Sandra Parent’s example recalls, she who had decided to move by herself, that is with the help of her boyfriend, Rénald, and her son. Sandra found herself at the mercy of the affective blackmail of her boyfriend, however. In the last two weeks before the move, Rénald, on whom Sandra really started to count, he who had committed himself to paint her new apartment before the move, to drive the truck on moving day and to give her help on moving day, ceased to communicate with her. He disappeared after a certain ‘coolness’ in their relationship occurred, as Sandra puts it, after in fact they came to blows. Rénald’s silence and the impression it created in Sandra, the impression of abandonment, made her worry about her moving day for two weeks. In the end Rénald was present on moving day to honour his promise.

The generous gift may also become embarrassing for someone like Mlle Bolduc, an 89 year-old woman who moved just one month after coming out of hospital and who received the help of her sister, Mathilde, on the occasion of the move. It may be embarrassing because of an inability to give back. Mathilde took care of every task inherent in her sister’s move. She also helped Mlle Bolduc to settle into her new apartment. Mathilde confessed afterwards that her sister’s moving organisation turned out to be something far from pleasant, a heavy responsibility. And she wondered on occasions whether her sister really appreciated the help she received. There are good reasons to believe that Mlle Bolduc did appreciate it, at least from the conversations I had with her. Indeed, she appreciated it so much that day after day she realised how in debt she was towards Mathilde. This brings the issue of indebtedness. We have seen with Sandra Parent how donation might easily become a means for exerting affective blackmail. Mlle Bolduc’s example reminds us of the
importance of the obligation to donate; that is, to take up Godbout's terms, of
the importance for oneself to feel that he or she donates more than he or she
receives. Godbout insists on the importance of the mutual sense of
indebtedness to explain the circulation of gift in kinship. As such, he
distinguishes between owing and indebtedness (Godbout, 1998), between a
positive debt which relates to the 'pleasure of owing' and a negative debt
which appears when the recipient perceives in the donor's act the intention to
oblige him or her. The negative debt which is akin to a debt in the economic
sense is, for Godbout, a debt one looks to free him or herself from. Because, as
he points out, people are never quits, they continually attempt to give back.
The feeling of being obliged arises among the recipients, as in the case of Mlle
Bolduc, from the difficulty of giving back in return. It arises from a feeling of
powerlessness, such as that to which Mlle Bolduc confessed. Her example
shows that it is one thing to be able to count on social support, but another to
appreciate it. Appreciation being related to the capacity, in the last instance,
to give back, to donate more than what was received. We see why some
donors may use strategies to hide the help they provide. To do it, as Déchaux
(1996) put it, in a certain mise en scène, or staging of gratuity, as if the help
provided had no relational costs, the stake being to give it without giving the
impression of doing so. We also start to see why some people may decide to
mobilise, when they can afford it, the resources of the markets instead of kin
and friends. For the markets may provide them with the opportunity to escape
from the obligation of reciprocity. It may provide an 'exit'. This is the topic to
which we now move. For the moment, let us emphasise that bodily help exists
within a network of social norms and obligations. Let us also emphasise that
the situation often observed in Montreal is that of people skilled in moving. It
contrasts with the situation described by Desjeux et al. (1998, 101) who report,
in their study of house moving in France, that: "... for those who act as movers,
the lack of experience makes the task more difficult. Moving house requires
specific experience and know-how that only the professionals possess". In
contrast, the greater skills of the people observed in Montreal may be
explained by the fact that they move often,\textsuperscript{5} or that they believe they do. More importantly, whereas a general apprehension of mobility clearly emerges among the population studied by Desjeux \textit{et al.} (1998), moving being compared to homelessness, for example, the people met in Montreal never adopted such a stance. They rather valorised mobility. The question is not so much under which conditions people hire a moving company (Desjeux \textit{et al.}, 1998) and ‘delegate’, to use Kaufmann’s (1996, 1998) terms, the task of the move, but what kind of help they will mobilise to go through the moving crisis.

Handing things over to the movers

When they do not move themselves, people may turn to the market.\textsuperscript{6} They may hire ‘professional movers’ also called ‘accredited movers’ or the ‘specialists’. These hold a license from the \textit{Commission des transports} of the Province of Quebec. Their equipment usually consists solely of truck, straps and trolleys; the body being, once again, the main technology used. As such, the production mode of these movers, inasmuch as I could observe it among those of my respondents who hired them, relies upon the straight commodification of men’s strength because the professional movers are always men. Indeed, it happens to be an industry relying upon only slight mechanisation.

People may also hire ‘pirate movers’,\textsuperscript{7} ‘outlaws’,\textsuperscript{8} ‘craftsmen’,\textsuperscript{9} ‘amateurs’\textsuperscript{10} or ‘moonlighting workers’\textsuperscript{11} who flourish during the Summer, in the peak of the moving season: those “men (and a very few women) who earn some other kind

\textsuperscript{5} See Chapter 1.
\textsuperscript{6} In 1972, the \textit{Centre de recherche sur le logement} launched a plan for a moving co-operative. To my knowledge, there were no such co-operatives at the time of my fieldwork.
\textsuperscript{8} \textit{Protégez-vous}, April 1979.
\textsuperscript{9} \textit{Protégez-vous}, April 1982.
\textsuperscript{10} \textit{La Presse}, 4th May 1985.
\textsuperscript{11} \textit{La Presse}, 29th June 1996.
of living between mid-July and late June°. These ‘pirates’ are often accused by the Association du Camionnage du Québec of not holding a proper licence, let alone insurance. They are accused of causing mischief as well as the use of extortion, such as excessively increasing the bill through intimidation. As such, we can read that “damages, losses and fraud await the consumers who trade with these amateurs who lack expertise, insurance and, above all, who lack any scruples” Thence, people who care about their belongings are advised to call upon professional movers.

Some people hire a moving company because the goods to be moved are simply and materially too heavy or too difficult to handle. This is the case of Caroline, who had to move a piano from an apartment situated on the third floor of a triplex into an apartment situated on the second floor of a duplex. She allotted herself the services of movers specialised in piano moving who did it with the help of a crane, the piano being too large to go through the stairway. Caroline hired three men to move her furniture, three others to move her piano and one more to operate the crane. Others decided to call upon a moving company to free themselves from the worries of moving, like Mme Cabot. Mme Cabot, a 78 year-old woman living alone, entrusted the company Monette, the same company that had helped her to move 6 years before, with the task of moving her things. She did it in order to free her surroundings from the burden of her move. In the same vein, Régine Mercier, a 37 year-old chief nurse assistant, decided to hire a moving company for the first time in her life. She who had always moved by herself, with the help of friends, declared that she had had enough of moving by herself, of doing the painting by herself but also that there must exist some limit to soliciting friends’ or acquaintances’ help. For her, to respect one’s relationships is then not to impose upon them what

---

13 La Presse, 29th June 1993; Le Journal de Montréal, 15th May 1996.
14 La Presse, 4th May 1985.
she called "slave labour". She added that when her friends came to her place, it may be to bring few boxes, but above all, it would be to celebrate.

A question, here, may legitimately be raised. If the help provided on the occasion of a move is, above all, a gift in the service of the social relationship, should we see, in the decision to call upon the market, a dissolution of social bonds? Once again, if we call upon Godbout, we can say no. The decision to call upon the markets may relate to the desire to make kinship relationships freer, less compulsory. It relates, in a sense, as Pitrou (1994) would put it, to the respect of autonomy, independence and freedom within family relations; or, as Godbout (1995) emphasises, to the penetration of 'the cult of the individual' within the family. This is why Mira Filipovic preferred to hire semi-professional workers for the painting job of her new condominium instead of a jobless cousin. She explained that it might be complicated to entrust a cousin because he would not ask the exact price, the market price, which would create, towards him, a feeling of obligation; and Mira Filipovic did not feel like feeling obliged. Resorting to the market may then become the expression of a refusal to have to give back. It may express the desire to 'escape', or 'exit' (Godbout, 1994), the reciprocity obligation. It is only possible, however, when one can afford it. It is because they wished to avoid finding themselves obliged towards other people that Régine Mercier and Mira Filipovic decided to call upon moving companies, because they wished, in a sense, to isolate themselves or to free their kin and friends from the burden of their move. It is plausible to think that people will also call upon the market when they have no other resources. This preference appears to be socially structured, however. Some leave the care of the move to the social network, preferring 'it to remain within the family', whereas others prefer the family to remain out of it. But the poorest households met often had no other choice than to move themselves, with the help of kin, family members and friends. To take up Bourdieu's (1979) terms, I would say that people start to consider hiring a moving company when they have the financial means to do so. Among the wealthiest
elderly people met, it simply never occurred to them not to move without a moving firm. As Finch (1989) puts it, people with more resources are less worried to become 'beholden' or a 'burden' on others. They need to rely on others to a lesser extent since they have the ability to reciprocate the help received. I would also suggest that there is an element of distinction in the decision to call upon movers. As we have seen in Chapter 1, moving in Montreal is strongly anchored in the working and popular classes history. It is still, as I have argued in Chapter 5, for the disadvantaged people a means of taking control of their situation. I guess that hiring a moving firm becomes a way of emulating the popular culture of moving while at the same time distancing oneself from these people. In other words, it becomes, for the middle class, a way of legitimising the adoption of working class practices; a way of gentrifying mobility.

Hiring helpers for heavy things only

Most people never leave everything in the moving company's care. Some things are not easily entrusted if they are entrusted at all. Caroline, an horticulturist who worshipped the culture of plants at home, took care herself of the transportation of her plants on the evening of the move with the help of a girlfriend who had a car. She did not entrust the handling of her plants to the moving company. Similarly, Mme Debray, collector of paintings, did not entrust her paintings to her mover. She rather accompanied her brother and I who moved the paintings.

Option consommateurs advises people to handle the expensive but light things themselves because they are poorly covered by moving companies' insurance. The responsibility of the moving company being committed, sometimes, to an
amount determined by the weight of things instead of their value.16 I would rather be inclined to think that people reluctantly entrust those things that require special care because nobody else, to paraphrase Kaufmann (1998), is in a better position to take care of them. In some other cases, people do not separate from important things during the move. As such, on moving day, Béatrice Forgues kept with her, in a backpack, all the documents she considered important: her keys, her address books; things that she did not want to lose in the mess of the move when things are upside down. Other things, like appliances, which are among the heaviest things, are gladly entrusted. Indeed, people sometimes hire helpers for specific things only: the refrigerator, the cooker, the washing and drying machines, the freezer, the heaviest things. This is how Gabriel entrusted movers with the task of carrying the heaviest goods after his relatives and friends had taken care of the furniture and the other things. This is also how Béatrice Forgues hired two men from the St-Vincent-de-Paul society, a charitable organisation, for the amount of $60, to move her kitchen appliances and her washing and drying machines.

The case of the helpers highlights even more how the help provided during a move circulates as a gift. It is not that Béatrice could not move her refrigerator by herself or that she had no sufficient help at hand to move it on moving day; she had moved her refrigerator in the past with the help of her former partner. This time, however, Béatrice hired helpers because, as she put it, she did not feel like hurting herself or putting her friends in danger by asking them to do so. And it is this latter aspect that appears to be important. Béatrice hired helpers inasmuch as Régine Mercier hired a moving company so as not to impose the burden of those goods on her friends and relatives. If the presence of Béatrice's relatives and friends on moving day can be read as a testimony of support, her decision to hire helpers takes all its significance as a gesture of reciprocity. As if she had hired helpers and offered them to her relatives and friends in return for their help, saying, as Godbout and Charbonneau (1996) put it: 'I am

16 Consommation, Spring 1998.
grateful to you for the help and the support you provide me, and the least I can do to show you my gratitude is not to impose on you the burden of moving my refrigerator...’ Ironically, the people who call upon the ‘pirate’ movers, who are said not to care for their belongings, are precisely those who care for others. We see, then, a distinction emerging between the things that people carry themselves and those they gladly delegate. Perhaps, the distinction that emerges is one between those tasks and those things that can be entrusted to family members and to friends that donate help, and those tasks and things that people do not want to impose on them: the heavy things like the kitchen appliances, the washing and drying machines; those things that are heavy in terms of social implications and responsibilities, those that one hesitates to confide because of the efforts they require, the risks they entail.

Subtle tasks and spectacular things

The tasks are also divided within intimate relations along gender lines. For instance, Sandra Parent received the help of her partner, her son and the husband of one of her girlfriend’s on moving day as well as that girlfriend’s son who came to help to lift the refrigerator. But she took care by herself, with the help of her girlfriend, of the cleaning of the former apartment on the following day. Meanwhile, Mathilde, Mlle Bolduc’s sister, hired her own landlord for the move, but she took care by herself, with occasional help from her son and from his wife, of emptying and cleaning her sister’s former apartment and of preparing her new room, while on moving day, Béatrice Forgues’ brother-in-law and the other “guys” filled the truck and her sister and girlfriends cleaned the new apartment. More often, indeed, women take charge of the cleaning of the kitchen, of the refrigerator, of the cupboards and of the bathroom. More often, also, women take care of the children, as in the case of Béatrice Forgues. As I have already mentioned, on moving day Béatrice gave her children to the care of her neighbour, a friend of hers, while that neighbour’s husband came to give
Béatrice a hand in moving the things. Women tend to take care of those tasks of preparation and the cleaning of the bathroom, the cupboard, and the refrigerator which are rarely the object of any apologia, but nonetheless relate to the experience of mobility. In this respect, Maurice Richard’s story depicted in the introduction only mentions the presence of his brother. It is a safe bet to say that Richard’s wife was present as well on moving day, in the shadows. As such, women often take care, before, during and after the move of the hidden tasks. Desjeux et al. (1998) have reported how, among the people they studied in France, women rarely handled any heavy things. The situation observed in Montreal is slightly different. The handling of things is generally well distributed between the sexes, between the people who can carry. Marjo, for instance, who was pregnant at the time of the move, contented herself with supervising the operation. Mira Filipovic, a 49 year-old woman with a back condition, did not want to lift anything. Similarly, most of the elderly people met did not have to carry as we will see later. But these are exceptions. Instead of responding to a division between heavy and light things as implied by Desjeux et al. (1998), the gendered division of things and tasks espouse that between the subtle and the spectacular things and tasks. More often, as in Maurice Richard’s story, men take charge of the more visible, public, not to say spectacular aspects of the move: the hauling of the refrigerator for instance. Indeed, the handling of the refrigerator is probably the crux of the move, the last thing to be moved. It is the kind of item on which reputations are built. The handling of the refrigerator is “an obligatory element of the staging of a move”.

The case of the refrigerator

The North American refrigerator is one of the most common things to be moved in Montreal, one of the heaviest things and one of the most difficult because of its size; a refrigerator can easily measure 18 to 21 cu. ft. The refrigerator is

usually prepared, defrosted and cleaned by women, a few days before the move. As moving day approaches, fewer and fewer perishable goods are purchased. Often, people finish the leftovers so that the refrigerator can be emptied as much as possible for the move. The refrigerator needs to be unplugged on the eve of moving day. It also requires particular attention. For instance, it must never be laid on its side. The refrigerator is often handled by men. In many instances, women leave the place to the men when the time comes to handle the refrigerator, as if it went without saying. At other times, women leave the place pragmatically as if, in time of ‘crisis’, under the pressure of the move, people admitted the need to rely on the ‘strongest’ elements. I have heard that “one needs a man for moving”, that men should take charge of the heaviest things. This would support Young’s (1989) assertion that women are often unconfident towards physical tasks, that they tend to underestimate their physical capacities. In Young’s line of thought, these women would leave the place because of a latent, conscious fear of getting hurt when getting involved into physical tasks. During the moves that I observed, women were rather concerned about the physical tasks but they were more concerned that other people get hurt. As such, women were those who hired helpers for specific things only.

If we were to endorse Young’s assertion that women approach physical tasks with timidity, uncertainty or hesitancy, we would have to acknowledge that this gendered way of encountering things is related to social class and to the incorporation of a gender role. Among the people met like the manual workers, those with the least education capital I should say, men often encouraged women to leave the place in a protective, paternalistic fashion, claiming that things like the refrigerator are too heavy for them, that they could hurt themselves. “Move on, let me handle it...” we might hear. Women can even be pushed aside when the time comes to lift the refrigerator. As an example, in the case of the Lambert family, Flo, the 18 year-old daughter, was invited by her father to leave the stage as her mother had when the time came to handle
the heavy things like the refrigerator. Indeed, Flo was pushed aside even though she felt fully capable of handling it and claimed the right to do so; and I use the word 'right' on purpose because handling the refrigerator appears to be more like a privilege than a task to fulfil in these cases. Flo reacted with anger for being excluded. She simply refused the physical role to which her father and her brother wanted to confine her: the handling of the 'light' things, the cleaning of the kitchen, the fixing of the meal for the movers; a role her mother accepted without demur. Flo's father preferred to have the 'men' tackle it: Patrick, his 16 year-old son, two friends of Patrick of about the same age, one of Gérard's work colleague, a man in his forties, as well as that man's son, a boy aged 14 or 15. This tends to show how, on the occasion of the move, even adolescent men may be imbued with responsibilities that their women counterparts denied. As such, men often feel invested with the duty to care for the heavy objects and, we can suppose, for their peers and mother. This supports Young's argument about the immanence of woman's existence: women becoming mere objects.

In many cases, especially among the middle class households with the greatest educational capital, the teachers, the people working in the culture industry, the people with a university background, such a division of the tasks may be tolerated, not to say accepted, ironically, nearly sarcastically, as in the case of Béatrice's friends who declared that for them, women, it is "so natural" to clean up the kitchen, the bathroom, etc. These middle class well-educated women often accepted this division of the tasks and of the things, but they did not seek any valorisation in it. Above all, they wished not to be reduced to it. The women encountered often accepted performing some tasks like the cleaning as long as it remained unnoticed. Neither did they want to give the impression that they could not handle the refrigerator. They shied away from the refrigerator, but they certainly did not do it from lack of confidence, as Young would imply. If they did not carry it, it is because they chose not to do so. As Béatrice put it, she who prided herself for having moved her refrigerator
in the past with her former partner, one does not need to be strong, but intelligent to lift a refrigerator. They accepted this stereotypical division of the tasks and things because it is performed in a very precise context. They accept it because moving has a beginning and an end; because it is well defined in time, even though it is not in space. Béatrice's remark on the intelligence required for moving a refrigerator challenges any physical rationale of the current division of tasks. However, it does not challenge the division of the tasks and things per se. It negates the physical foundedness of the division of the tasks and things, but it tolerates such a division. Indeed, the case of the refrigerator reveals a change in consciousness among the middle class regarding gender roles without changes in practice. Put differently, the case of the refrigerator reveals how changes in consciousness regarding gender relations has not reached the level of physical involvement with heavy things. Borrowing Bourdieu's (1979, 1992) 'habitus', it could then be argued that the division of roles is embodied into practices and that it resurfaces at the time of the move, in a crisis context, despite a feminist ideology shared by many informants, especially among the middle class people met. I believe that what emerges here is also the whole masculine anguish in a post-industrial era, the fear of not being necessary anymore. And I would be tempted to say that middle class women accepting this division of the tasks do it, in a sense, because they feel this anguish. Letting the men take charge of the heavy things and letting them believe that these are fundamental for the move is, on the women's part, not a concession, but a means of managing the crisis; the masculine identity crisis. Taking charge of the heavy things like the refrigerator provides the men, those who take charge of it, with a sense of being necessary. It secures them in a nostalgic fashion because relying on physical strength is securing; it does not require a reconsideration of the gendered division of the roles. This division of tasks and things is accepted, in other words, with a certain complicity, as Nancy Duncan (1996) would say. As if women voluntarily shied away from the heaviest things in order to leave the front stage to the men, to let them feel that they are still important, that they still matter; to let them think that
handling the heavy things makes them essential in a sense. What appears, then, through the domestic division of the tasks and things on moving day is that the appropriation of mobility cannot be separated from contextual factors such as gender, age and class.

The situation observed in Montreal on moving day tempers the findings of many works on the mobilisation of family and kinship help, works which emphasise how women are involved more than men in the support between relatives and the support of the parents (Pitrou, 1977), how the exchanges within the kinship system and the family are often unequal, especially between the sexes, how the support often relies upon women (Kaufmann, 1996), the family and domestic service remaining in many respects a female prerogative (Déchaux, 1996). In brief, as Segalen (1996) puts it, women are the 'pivotal point' of kinship relations. Finch's (1989) research stresses how women's identity as 'people who care' shapes the negotiation of kin support, how gender is an important element in the negotiation of commitment, especially with regard to the exercise of patriarchal power, the power of men over women. Some, like Graham (1983), go as far as saying that in Britain 'caring' is the means by which men's and women's social identities are distinguished. As such,

caring is 'given' to women: it becomes the defining characteristic of their self identity and their life's work. At the same time, caring is taken away from men: not-caring becomes a defining characteristic of manhood. Men are marked out as separate and different from women because they are not involved in caring for (and with) others (Graham, 1983, 18).

The evidence presented here shows that helping people to move is to care for them. It also shows that a caring relationship can develop through the provision of support on the occasion of a move, not to say along successive moves. And that men care for others by attempting to take care of the heavy and spectacular things. A parallel could be established here with Miller's (1988) discussion of the appropriation of the kitchen in a North London
Council estate in which gender acts in complementarity. Following Miller (1988) and Broch-Due (1993), who emphasise how Turkana people constitute themselves through one, two, or even three genders, we can suggest that gender are not \textit{a priori} given. They are rather constructed through the cultural development of relational forms. The move becomes, in this respect, an occasion on which gender roles are created and enacted, with the physicality acting as both the determinant of these roles and the determination.

\textbf{Putting oneself into other people's hands}

The younger elderly people encountered prepared their move themselves, whether or not they moved with a moving firm. The situation is different among the old-old people aged over 80 or the elderly people with disabilities who are particularly dependent upon the help provided by others. Finch (1989) asserts that it is quite incorrect to assume that elderly people are necessarily dependent upon their kin or anyone else just because they are old. She reminds us how even people over 80 are competent and able to live independently, even if they have some physical impairment. However, she contends that extreme old age is a time popularly associated with greater dependence upon one's relatives. On the occasion of the move, those people are nearly forced to put themselves, to speak literally, into other people's hands. Mme Debray, a 68 year-old woman using a wheelchair, could not handle anything. She accompanied her brother, who moved her stuff. But she directed the operation and took care of her medication. Moving is physically demanding. Mlle Bolduc, a 89 year-old woman who moved one month after a stay at the hospital, who was very frail at the time of the move and who could hardly walk, did not even attend the move. Her physical capacities had left her, as she often repeated. By getting older, as she explained to me, one loses memory, dexterity and strength. As such, as she put it herself, she became unable to take care of herself or her house and still less of her move. Perhaps,
her case reveals that the anxiety of the move is also a bodily anxiety; that it is bodily demanding.

Moving does not only highlight the limitations of the ageing body. It also reveals how culture and politics are inscribed in the body (Featherstone and Hepworth, 1990; Vincent, 1999). It defines those limitations. This becomes clear in the case of Mr Richer who had to put himself in the care of others. Mr Richer was apprehensive of moving day, perhaps even more of the feeling of powerlessness, the incapacity to take an active part in it. Mr Richer had to move in emergency into a residence on 19th April, two and a half months before the end of his lease; he moved with only a few belongings with the help of a health care worker: a metal chest containing important papers, a tube of toothpaste, toilet products, shirts, ties, pants, underwear, his dirty linen, a radio, pyjamas, sheets, slippers, socks, an umbrella and a raincoat. And he left everything else behind him. Mr Richer could not take care of his stuff by himself. He had to wait for some help to empty the apartment, and wait for other people's convenience. He had to wait for 3 weeks before his friend, Marcel, gave him a hand. He also had to wait until 22nd May for his sons to move most of his stuff and again until 26th May for Judith, one of his friends, to help him bring back the last items. People like Mlle Bolduc and Mr Richer are relieved when they are taken into care. Mlle Bolduc was relieved when Mathilde took care of the move, whereas Mr Richer was relieved when his children took care of his things because he could not afford to pay even the superintendent who offered to move his stuff for $145. But this help exacerbates the loss of agency. It makes more concrete the feeling of loss, of no longer being capable of assuming responsibility for one's things and oneself. This help that is so important from the physical as well as from the moral point of view is a double edge. It also materialises the loss of the self. Mr Richer had to shy away when the time came to concretely handle things. He had to accept becoming an extra. On moving day, Mr Richer was even asked by his sons to sit near the trailer in order to give the impression that he was
checking the contents; let us just remember that, ironically, Mr Richer is blind. Mr Richer stayed there for approximately 2 hours, sitting on a chair, leaning on his cane. He did it without complaint. Why complain in any case? Did he really have any choice? The best he could hope for was to put himself in the hands of his sons, to let them take care of him and his things. This is probably why the elderly people who could afford it moved with the help of a moving firm without any hesitation; the help provided by the market allowed the person to remain in control, to believe that he or she is in control.

In attempting to capture the principles of circulation of this help, we cannot put in brackets the materiality of the bodies, of the tasks and of the things as Godbout does, however. Otherwise, we simply fail to understand why elderly people who are almost entirely dependent upon the help provided by others can be so reluctant to move, why they can be apprehensive of the chore of the move to such an extent. Put another way: how they may be reluctant to have to rely upon others and to face their loss of agency. Thus, the loss of physical capacities probably exacerbates the anxiety of the move, the apprehension of being physically capable or not to cope with the move. It shows how ageing, as the loss of agency, as the loss of one’s control over one’s material environment also gets constructed through mobility. It extends the range of the ageing body beyond what Mowl, Pain and Talbot (2000) have called the ‘homespace’. Moving in old age, moving concretely, is then in a sense to abandon oneself to the hands and the cares of others.

### Strengthening relationships

The study of the body is central to the understanding of the experience of place, as Merleau-Ponty’s (1962) work on bodily perception testifies. It is also central to the understanding of the experience of mobility, as Casey’s (1996) phenomenology of body motion or Warnier’s (2001) praxeology of motricity
entails. Works in feminists studies and cultural studies emphasise how, in attempting to understand the body, we cannot bracket the biology of sexuality (Foucault, 1976, 1984; Laqueur, 1990). Sex, for these authors, is not a passive surface upon which differences are created. It is used in the creation of differences. Hence, we cannot ignore the body. Judith Butler (1993), in particular, argues that subjectivity is created through the negotiation of gender relations and sexuality, that the 'I' emerges within a matrix of gender relations. Her work is based upon the study of Drag Balls in New York, which become the template for a theorisation of the role of marginal social groups in defining what could be called 'the normality'. Butler's work is highly relevant for the purpose of an understanding of the experience of mobility in Montreal because it emphasises the notion of performance. For her, gender is performed. It is created and enacted through practices, on occasions like the Drag Balls. Similarly, the move is an event for the performance of gender roles and for the constitutions of these roles just like the Drag Ball. It becomes an occasion to create gender relations, to test one's relations, not to say invent oneself some support. As such, differences are noticeable between men and women's performance of tasks constructed as physical. However, these differences are not due so much, and here I quote Young, "to brute muscular strength, but to the way each sex uses the body in approaching tasks" (Young 1989, 56). I believe that Young echoes Judith Butler on the performativity of the body, on physicality as a norm. As Butler asserts, physicality can not simply be taken as a given on which genders are imposed. Physicality is also constructed. And it is used, as in this case, to maintain sexual and age differences in a normative fashion. Physicality, in other words, is performed. Flo's determination to take part in the handling of heavy things like the refrigerator becomes a refusal to perform according to a given norm; the refrigerator becoming the terrain of the contention of that norm. One could argue, after Young, that the female body existence is inhibited, and that women are usually, not to say often, uncertain of their physical possibilities. But we must be careful not to forget that male physicality also works as a norm. Just as much as women may be uncertain of
their possibilities, it is important to stress that men can not afford to be uncertain of theirs. Especially when the time comes to handle the refrigerator. The notion of a physical sense of possibility is even more relevant when the people who move are elderly people, especially old-old people whose move is more likely to be related to health problems. In these cases, moving is often problematic because it becomes a matter of placing oneself in other people's hands, of losing one's agency. Thus, if we wish to understand the division of tasks and things on the occasion of a move, we should insist on the differences between each sexes' or age group's sense of possibility as socially constructed, constrained and performed.

Except for some elderly people, the people met in the course of this ethnography were often anxious to move, but rarely caught off guard. At least, they prided themselves on not being. I do not claim here that people in Montreal are not worried about moving. Béatrice Forgues was apprehensive of moving day because it materialised the separation with her partner; Sandra Parent was anxious that her help would abandon her to her faith. People were often apprehensive of what they called the chore of moving day, the 'corvée' of the move per se, when they did not simply hate it. Moving day drains energy. It generates anxiety. It entails risks; risks of injury, risks of breaking things, of losing things. Charlotte, a 20 year-old informant, exemplifies this well when saying, "I like moving... once the boxes are moved in. I am always afraid that somebody might get hurt, that things might get broken during the move". Moving day, in other words, is the height of the crisis, especially for the elderly people met, even those who claimed to be pleased to move. On moving day, Mme Debray, a 68 year-old woman living alone, was anxious. She confessed that she was down in the dumps when thinking about the re-installation work awaiting her. Similarly, Mr Richer longed for the move to be completed, whereas Mlle Bolduc simply refused to be on the spot. In this regard, the social support that people receive from family, kin and friends is important. The presence of family, of kin, of friends will often remain important even though
the move is entrusted partly or totally to movers. At least, people use the services of the 'pirates' because it allows kin, family members and friends to play an active role. It reconciles the desire to reactivate the social bond and to construct the relationship without physically or emotionally overloading those one cares for; because not all the things nor all the tasks are confided to the movers; because, also, as we have seen here, the presence of kin, family and friends helps people to cope with the stress of the move. It helps them to go through a difficult move such as the one occurring in the context of a separation or a move into care. It affirms, reaffirms solidarity. As such, financial means are necessary for hiring movers, but they are not a sufficient condition.¹⁸ Thus, echoing Finch's attempt to overcome the simple question of determining whether kinship and family relations are instrumental or expressive, I would claim that it is not so much the relations of delegation or of cooperation that are in the service of moving, but the donation of help that is placed in the service of the relationship. This is supported by many examples aforementioned and it is even more obvious in Mr Richer's case. For him, as we have seen earlier, moving became the opportunity he had been waiting for for so long, to use his own terms, to "re-knit" together the family. It is not a matter for us to determine whether Mr Richer was or was not deluded, or if this wish to re-knit the family was shared by his children, whether or not it worked. Only time will say. However, looking at how Mr Richer was proud to be able to rely upon his children, how he was proud to tell people that "c'est mes gars qui me déménagent", how he perceived this as a form of reconciliation, the least we can say is that the help is in the service of the relationship, which supports my general thesis that moving in Montreal is, above all, socially constitutive. In other words, having the strength to move is often a matter of having people who can give a hand. Because helping people move strengthens relations.

¹⁸ The Bell Canada survey aforementioned reports that the wealthiest households of the sample do not use professional movers more often.
Chapter 7

Things that move

“I am unpacking my library. Yes, I am.” These are the opening lines of Walter Benjamin’s talk about book collecting. It goes on as follows. “The books are not yet on the shelves, not yet touched by the mild boredom or order. I cannot march up and down their ranks to pass them in review before a friendly audience. You need not fear any of that. Instead, I must ask you to join me in the disorder of crates that have been wrenched open, the air saturated with the dust of wood, the floor covered with torn paper, to join me among piles of volumes that are seeing daylight again after two years of darkness, so that you may be ready to share with me a bit of the mood... which these books arouse in a genuine collector. For such a man is speaking to you, and on closer scrutiny he proves to be speaking only about himself...” (Benjamin, 1999, 61).

Benjamin wrote these lines in 1931, one year after his separation, after he moved into an apartment in Berlin (Allen, 2000), while he was settling. At least, this is what we can suppose. As he unpacks his belongings, he describes the souvenirs and the memories that arise. He refers to the places, the people and the events that the contact with these books evoke to him. He who cherished two passions, reading and travelling, moved frequently during his existence. So did his collection. He moved in Berlin, Frankfurt, Munich and Bern for his studies. He had to leave Germany in 1933, however, after Hitler’s
accession to power. He then stayed in Paris transitorily, until he was compelled to flee from the threat of the Gestapo in 1940. He died at the Spanish border of that same year. Despite its tragic character, Benjamin’s case highlights the role played by mobile possessions in securing memory in motion; a role also emphasised by the research on migration, exile and Diaspora. Parkin (1999), for instance, has explored the importance of the things that refugees forced to flight, sometimes from the threat of death, choose to bring with them, and how they use these objects to re-objectify themselves in a new environment. Mehta and Belk (1991) and Belk (1992) have analysed Indian immigration in the United States as well as the 19th Century Mormons’ migration through the possessions that people took with them. For its part, Leo Spitzer’s (1993) biographical account deals with the transmission of relics by uprooted people. Those works are relevant for an anthropological understanding of the constitution of memory through displacements even though moving occurs in less dramatic circumstances, when it takes place within the same city as is the topic of this chapter. I concede from the start that the experience of displacement that I will analyse here hardly compares with Benjamin’s exile or the cases of refugees described by Parkin. Having said that, the people on the move that I have accompanied in Montreal are confronted to the same kind of question, that of determining which books or things they would like to take with them or can take with them.

With this in mind, I will explore ethnographically the relationship between memory, material culture and mobility. I will examine and analyse what people bring with them when they move, what are the things that matter when the time to move comes, why those matter and how they come to matter. I will devote a particular attention to the process of sorting out things which normally accompanies the changes of residence (Desjeux et al., 1998; Rautenberg, 1989). As such, I will try to demonstrate that this process is critical in the experience of mobility inasmuch as it metaphorically relates to the sorting out of relations and memories. Indeed, I will argue that the things
that people move with them are at the heart of the constitution of a memory which often resists displacements. I will go further by emphasising how this memory is constituted throughout those displacements and how it is often transformed, altered and refurbished by the same token. I should say that in Montreal, an apartment or a house is usually not furnished.¹ People move with their things, those things that are used in the creation and the re-creation of a sense of place: their most cherished possessions as well as the more common ones. They move with the tiniest objects as much as the more cumbersome ones like the refrigerator and the cooker. In this respect, the people that I met, especially the tenants, can be said to inhabit their things as much as a place, whereas sorting becomes a mediator of the relationship between people and things, and in turn between people and places. In fact, objects are at the heart of the problematisation of the experience of mobility because while these possessions move in relation to a place, they may represent stability in relation to the people. This is probably why we can often hear people saying that things ‘accompany’ them in their move.

**Travelling in good company**

Many things such as the dishes, the utensils and non-perishable food are brought simply because they are taken for granted. They are brought because “it is obvious”, because “we are not all the same going to leave them there”, because “it is still good”. Many things are brought because they are “despicably utilitarian”, “functional”, not vital or significant. Simply useful. Things of “little importance” are also brought. These are things that people are not really attached to, but that are nonetheless necessary inasmuch as they aid the pursuit of day-to-day activities: the medicine cabinet, the personal telephone directory and so forth. Other things are brought because they could serve, because they could always be useful in the new place, just in case...

¹ An apartment in which a refrigerator and an oven are included is said to be ‘semi-furnished’.
The move is also the occasion to better determine what is useful as in the case of Mme Cabot. She is a 78-year widow who moved from a 3 1/2-room apartment into a single room in residence and who legitimised her choice of objects in functional terms. Mme Cabot surrounded herself with the necessary, only the necessary. She abandoned without any regret all her kitchen appliances and utensils since meals were provided in such institutions. She decided to bring into her new residence what she considered to be “handy”, “practical”, what was “functional”. She brought “just enough to decorate” as she put it. She brought that carpet for “functional reasons”, to “dress the place a little bit”. She brought her armchair that was “faded, but still comfortable”, her sideboard that used to be in the living room of her apartment and in which she stored her silverware. She brought it into her new room where it became a cupboard in which to put her clothes and on which she displayed her numerous family photographs, which illustrates Howes’ (1996) argument that things may be reinterpreted in a different context. Mme Cabot brought it, as she explained, because of its “practical” side. But she used it to conspicuously display her photographs, those photographs that she elliptically described as an “extension of her own life”. She also brought the things that she cherished more: her books that she described as “the companions filling her evenings”, a radio, some cassettes that she used to listen when reading, her lead crystal glasses that came from Czechoslovakia, and so forth. Things are brought because they are important. By being brought, however, they are awarded a greater, sometimes a new importance as a result of the move with and within a smaller amount of things.

Mme Cabot’s case shows how the move is the occasion to classify things and refocus on those things which are perceived as practical, useful or functional. Let us not mistake ourselves with the meaning of ‘practicality’, however. Those useful things are also, if not mostly, mnemonic objects. They are mementoes as Parkin puts it. The armchair, for instance, was purchased at the beginning of her marriage. The glasses were given to her on the occasion of her
15th wedding anniversary. In fact, important things take on their value from their association to events that are constitutive of the person or of the family’s history. They take on their value from their association to important persons as well (Csikzentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, 1981). Things become all the more important when they constitute the sole link with a person, for instance a deceased person: an ancestor, a kin or a close friend. As such, Mme Cabot gave away all her coffee sets on the occasion of the move except the one coming from the Commission des transports where her late husband used to work. She did not keep it as an object of reminiscence as Thomasma et al. (1990) would lead us to think, but as a ‘surrogate’ (Mehta and Belk, 1991) for the person it stands for: in this case her husband. Indeed, elderly people like Mme Cabot often surround themselves by things just as they would attempt to surround themselves with those persons these things relate to. Similarly, Mlle Bolduc brought with her a half-moon table that “had always been” in the family and that had a sentimental value for her. She talked about this table as a table that got through 5 or 6 generations. When she described it, she usually looked at it. And she recalled, obviously with pleasure, how her parents used it while listening to the radio. She used to say that when she looked at it she saw her mother having a coffee or a glass of wine. She got it when her mother moved into a residence. She wished to bring it with her when she herself moved into a residence as if she wanted to move with the remembrance of her mother. In the same vein, Mr. Richer brought the photographs of his children — those with whom he still had relations — as well as those of his grandchildren, only the children of the former into his new residence. Mr Richer brought them even though he was not sure he would hang them. But he brought them because what mattered to him was to have them with him. As such, things provide an important symbolic source of security and cultural identity for the people on the move. Going further, as Rowlands (1993) puts it, souvenirs, photographs and heirlooms have the capacity to evoke and establish continuities with past experience because they connect people with others. If

---

1 Elderly people usually refer to this as ‘casser maison’. See Chapter 8.

158
we were taking Mme Cabot’s case as a canonical example, we would emphasise that when the time came to move she emphasised how those things were important for her. She mentioned, like all the other elderly people that I encountered, that it was important for her to “remain with her things”, which shows the shortcomings of Packard’s (1972) idea of providing “more simply furnished” dwellings in order to ease people’s displacement; dwellings in which everything, except the decorative items, would be set-up permanently. Above all, examples such as that of Mme Cabot’s reveal that ‘loved objects’ do not come alive in a person. On contrary, as Walter Benjamin puts it, it is the person who lives in them.

This brings up the issue of the role played by objects in the creation and the re-creation of a sense of place. This role can be appreciated among the people of all age groups that I met. I encountered home owners who characterised some cherished possessions as their ‘mobile roots’. The central role of objects can better be appreciated, however, among the tenants. This role is all the more exacerbated when objects and furniture are the only tangible assets available in the creation of a sense of home. This is the case of Sandra Parent, a 41 year-old single mother receiving social benefits. Sandra Parent has experienced domestic violence in the past. She went through a separation and was relocated by the Office municipal d’habitation which manages social housing in Montreal. She was relocated to a smaller apartment situated on the same street, a few hundred meters away. This is where I met Sandra. This woman who moved more than forty times in forty years, most of the times within the same Montreal neighbourhood, Hochelaga-Maisonneuve, used to move with all she possessed; the things that she acquired since she ran away from her parents’ home at the age of 16. Sandra ran away with nothing. Only a few objects linked to her past: some cauldrons that her mother gave her on the sly, when she visited her without her father knowing it; a jewel inherited from her mother that she always wore, a photo of her mother that always accompanied her as she put it, that “never left her on her own” or abandoned.
Those objects which all became the bearers of memory became actors, in Latour's (1989) sense, of Sandra's experience of mobility in space as well as in time. For personal reasons, however, Sandra put her childhood behind her. The therapy that she was following when I met her was aimed to help her face that past. In the confines of her own apartment, she was rather trying to invent herself a new one. In this respect, she devoted particular attention to her collection of unicorns. Sandra lived with unicorns. Unicorns were literally everywhere in her apartment. She had duvet, key ring, paintings, photographs, T-shirts even oven mitts emblazoned with images of unicorns; she had jewels as well. Over the years she also built herself a collection of miniatures. Contrary to those important things that take on their value from their association to other persons, few of Sandra's unicorns related to other people. Some of them had been given to her by her son; others by her partner. She acquired the majority, however, by herself. For instance, she used the decoration of a new apartment following a move, even a forced move, as a pretext for buying new unicorns. She did this to please herself as she put it because she knew or she thought that she had nothing to expect from other people. She stressed this as if she wanted to show that she owed nothing to anybody, as if she wanted to be the sole tributary of her past.

The attraction that such a fictional and harmless creature can exert on a woman like Sandra who had been abused is striking. It is not my intention to analyse the symbolism of unicorns. I rather wish to stress that in the absence of enjoying a stable home, Sandra spent a great deal of effort in housing her unicorns adequately. She put them in a case specially adapted by herself for that purpose; a case fitted with a glass that she painted and in which she talked about installing a neon light some day. This case stood at the centre of the living room like a shrine. It nearly took precedence over the unicorns themselves. By sheltering her protégées in this way, and by increasing her collection along with her successive moves, Sandra attempted to transform the
compulsion to move into a constitutive event for her. More importantly, she invented herself a memory.

At this stage, we could say that the things that people take with them, those 'aide memoirs' (Rowlands, 1993), help preserve a certain consistency and continuity. Going further, we would also say that memory may be constituted in motion through the displacement of objects. Bringing things with oneself, then, is to make the choice of remembering.

Heavy memories and cumbersome companions

In the same vein, Sandrine Lambert, a 42 year-old French immigrant who is married to a Canadian citizen and is the mother of 2 teenage children, dragged many objects of memory along her successive moves. She dragged a whole collection of collections throughout the three places that she and her family have occupied over the last 16 years since she arrived in Canada. Sometimes, she moved them without even unpacking them: a collection of books of all sorts, dictionaries, books on animals, domestic guides and encyclopaedias. She had collections of saucepans, China, LPs', miniature furniture, stones, and so forth. She also dragged with her a collection of dolls that she began when she was young, that she kept enlarging since then and that she moved in the prospect of transmitting it one day to her grand-children; those she hoped she would have. She preserved those dolls into a wicker basket in which her own son Patrick slept when he was a baby. She kept them while remembering how she used to dress them with her own children's clothes. Thus, we can probably say that people like Sandrine make themselves the curator of their own memory through their transmission’s project. She also dragged with her a multitude of sculptural and pictorial ornaments of animals of all sorts that she consistently, rigorously, arranged in her homes, move after move, in every rooms she used as if she wanted to mark her territory: “her” bedroom, “her”
office, the dining-room and the kitchen in which she was in charge. She described one particular ornament, that of a sleeping cat, as a “piece” of the house. Not a simple brick, as she put it, but “the soul of the house”. She associated it with serenity. She pretended that she could even hear it purr with pleasure. Sandrine’s case differs from those already discussed inasmuch as she is an immigrant cut from her past. It is worth stressing, however, that many of her possessions were dragged from her childhood if we can say so. While Bahloul (1996, 1999) emphasises the importance of recreating the house for Jewish immigrants coming to France from Algeria, here the stress is on the role of the object as a remembrance of the edifice. The object becomes a metonymy. It contains the house. In this respect, things are at the heart of the creation of a sense of place and of its recreation. Far from only having an instrumental role, they are at the symbolic centre of the house. It is around the things that the home is symbolically recreated and re-built.

Sandrine Lambert’s example also demonstrates how objects of memory may be difficult to move. Her possessions that she had taken care to accumulate and to drag with her since her childhood did not only bring her satisfaction and security. She also often complained that they enslaved her and imprisoned her into the house. Sandrine was working part-time as a clerk. Housework was entirely devolved upon her. She hardly received any help from any other member of her family. On occasions she tried to motivate herself in accepting these responsibilities. She bought colourful brooms to try to make her chore more joyful. She tried to stimulate herself through positive thinking, without success. For she dreamed of a more public life. She did not really want to emulate her mother and her mother-in-law who appeared to her to be ideal ‘interior’ women. She wanted to work more outside, bring money and help her husband pay for the mortgage. Sometimes, she thought that she could reconcile her public aspirations and her domestic responsibilities by attracting people to her house, with her, by teaching at home for instance. In this respect, her books collection, her bookcase and new her office took on a
particular importance. They became the template of her ideal of self-
realisation. They appeared to be central to the constitution of what would
become her workspace, her sacred space. This lawyer's bookcase and desk, as
she called them proudly and that she bought with her own money, had been
concealed up to then under piles of books and paper in the living room. They
had been used as a storage space by everybody in the house. This goes
without saying that for a long time Sandrine stored them at one
acquaintance's place for lack of space. Thanks to the move into a new place,
Sandrine thought that she could give it the place it deserved.

In any case, she realised that she should devote less time to taking care of the
house and to the housework. Belongings require care, efforts and work.
Keeping them calls for attention. She also thought that things took on too
much space, that they were too difficult to keep in order. In fact, she
considered that the house was so overcrowded that it was useless to tidy it
up. She often tried, in vain, to bring her husband and her children to help her
in the domestic tasks. So she came to think that the solution was through a
lightening of the burden of her work and a separation from many of her
belongings. In other words, after failing to transform the social and political
structure of domestic relations that had conspired to disadvantage her,
Sandrine hoped to transform the material structure of those relations. The
Lamberts moved from an apartment into a bungalow house, a place slightly
bigger than the apartment they had up to then. Nonetheless, Sandrine wished
to take advantage of the move to drive things away and empty her
surrounding so that it would be less time consuming to clean. She wished her
new house to be cleared, unobstructed, bare naked. For her, this move was
then important because it bore the opportunity to sort things out.

Getting rid of things was not an easy task, however. It amounted to sacrificing
a part of herself. When confronting to her things at the time of sorting them,
Sandrine often recovered a 'taste of her past' just like Marcel Proust recalled
childhood remembrances when tasting a madeleine. She ended up bringing things for fear of regretting not doing so. She brought things that had not been used for a long time in the hope that they find themselves some new utility in the home. She brought some of her hats hoping that it would be useful some days, for example, in making some costumes for the children, if not for her future grand-children; she brought some pullovers in case they would go camping. Just as much as she brought a outmoded shawl thinking that once it was folded differently it could become a cradle cover. She also brought a 1976 agenda including only one annotation, that of a meeting with friends from France on the occasion of her birthday. She kept it at least for the moment, without really knowing what to do with it. She just said to herself that it did not take up that much space. In the end, she brought almost everything with her and clearly gave the impression of regretting it. For her, things became cumbersome companions. And they appeared as such on the occasion of the move which revealed the weight of their memory. Indeed, moving brings relations and memories up to date and forces people to do the same. It forces people to think about the objects as we will see now.

Repudiating the normal life of things

Moving often gives rise to strong emotions for it proceeds from the need to face every single object, from the first baby hair lock to those things that are re-discovered, those that had been lost, forgotten, or that one would have preferred to forget. Through the sorting, it is also the souvenirs, the memories and the relations that need to be faced. Sorting out, in a sense, is to engage oneself into an excavation of the memory. It requires us to go into the details, to the heart of things for one can not content oneself with an overview. Moving does not permit status quo. It repudiates the normal life of things.
Of course, some people want to take everything with them because they define themselves as some "ramasseurs", namely hoarders. They discard nothing, they keep everything, everything bearing some value, everything that might be useful to someone else. They might also want to take everything with them and keep things at all cost because that is all that they possess as is the case of the poorest people encountered like Sandra Parent. Others are simply incapable of getting rid of things like Sandrine Lambert who worked on it for 3 months before the move and for the whole year following it without the anticipated success. Another case that is worth mentioning is that of Mr Trenet who wanted to keep with him as much things as possible: all that could fit into the new place. Mr Trenet is a 73 year-old musician who resisted the pressure exerted by his successive moves into smaller places in the last 20 years, from a 4 1/2-room apartment that he shared with his mother until she died, through a 3 1/2-room apartment, to a 2 1/2 one. Mr Trenet moved with all his belongings: his piano, his organ, his piles of music partitions, his books, and so forth. Indeed, he refused to discard his possessions even though there was not enough space for them, even though the closets would be full from the floor to the roof. In most of the cases, however, people do not move with all their belongings. They sort them.

Sorting is often perceived to be necessary because of the multiplication of things. It accompanies and punctuates the changes of relations which in themselves often give rise to a move. It responds, as in the formation of a couple, from the desire to avoid the repetitions resulting from the pooling of resources and possessions. It responds from the desire to select what matters to be kept, those things that will define the identity of the new place and of the new social entity as well as the exclusion of those that would be incompatible with it. Sorting out things may engender disagreements. One will wish to keep that wooden fork, that hamburger press, whereas another will want to get rid of it. It calls for compromises. Sometimes, sorting even awakes tensions. Sandrine Lambert recalls how she had to "fight", to use her own
expression, in order to keep her lawyer's bookcase that her husband considered to be space consuming.

Hence the difficulty in sorting out things does not only come from the difficulty of separating from an object that may nearly be considered as a part of oneself, from the difficulty of determining by what to begin with, where to start or which priorities to put forth. It also comes from the fact that a person does not always sort out things for herself, as Sandrine puts it. The extreme case is the rupture. On such an occasion, the most valuable objects like the most common ones such as the measuring cup which have no particular economic or sentimental value easily become the locus of conflict. As Béatrice Forgues who moved in the context of a separation put it, what matters is not so much *what* is divided, but *how* it is divided; how the sorting is performed and conducted. Thus, the difficulty in sorting out things also arises from the sorting out of social relations that build around those things. If we consider that what gets developed through the sorting out of things is a project of self-construction, we can say that people are rarely alone in the construction of their self-narrative.

Some things are donated. Others are abandoned or thrown away. Some are sold in the garage sales which flourish in the moving season. They can also be sold to antique dealers or taken to the flea market. Others, usually those that remain and that nobody wants, are sent to the charity organisations like the St-Vincent-de-Paul society, the Salvation Army or the parish's *bazar*; may it be for a clear consciousness, to get rid of them or to help someone else. Young people and students also often lend or entrust to friends things or furniture

---

3 It is worth mentioning that some antiquarians are especially attracted by the objects that elderly people sell on the occasion of a move in residence provided that these people are often 'forced' to get separated from some valuables. Elderly people's press include numerous ads in the classified in which antiquarians offer to visit people at their own place. For instance, one could read in the *Guide annuel d'hébergement 1999*, Special edition (*Le journal du Bel Âge*): "We buy antiques. Immediate payment for: furniture, lamps, paintings, mirrors, clocks, silverware, Chinas, crystalwares, jewels, etc." It is also written that the service is free, courteous, and that somebody can make a visit.
that they do not need for the moment like the refrigerator, the kitchen set and the couch because their new co-tenant, or their new partner, brings his or her own equipment. As such, Rupert placed some things “in consignment” at some friends’ place: an armchair, some wooden couches, etc. In doing so, he conferred his friends a usage right, but not a right of disposition. He did so forecasting the day he and Marjo would settle on a farm if they ever do so. On that occasion, in that eventuality, these pieces of furniture would be at hand. Other things are consigned to the parents’ care. Kim’s example is instructive here. Kim left her mother’s place at the age of 17 to move into a 5 1/2-room apartment in co-tenancy. After one year, she moved again. This time she moved into a self-catered studio: one room with an alcove; a smaller place. By moving in such a small place, Kim could not take everything with her. She only brought what she said “represented” her, what “corresponded better to her. She took a ‘bureau monsieur’, an antique bed that her mother gave her; things in which she said she was feeling good. The rest? The things that were no more useful, those that were not useful for the moment but that could be useful in the future, in another context, she sent them back at her mother’s place, into her former bedroom. It is in the same vein that Charlotte sent some things at her parents’ place when she moved with Eduardo: some furniture, some children drawings, some school books, some agendas that she “felt would be more secure there” and that she intended to “retrieve some day” when, to use her own terms, “she would be more stable”, when “she would be settled”. It also seems that for the parents, keeping those possessions, even in storage in the basement or in the shed, becomes a means for coping with the children’s departure. It provides the feeling that the children are not completely gone, “that they still need us”. These young people lend, store or entrust those things provided that they may need them in the future. These objects remain important with regard to the potential changes of status, relation or residence, in case it does not work out with the new partner or with the new place; because they know, especially the young adults, that relations are not eternal. As such, Eduardo lent many pieces of furniture to his friend Raul: things he
did not want to separate from; things he was willing to lend, but that he refused to give, things he wanted to be able to retrieve "in case it did not work between Charlotte and himself". After all, Béatrice Forgues who moved in the context of a separation also retrieved some furniture that she had lent "here and there" in the past, along her past moves: a kitchen set, a futon, a rattan wardrobe, etc. So that, after her separation, when she moved alone, Béatrice could rebuild herself an interior easily. In brief, some things that do not matter enough or that do not matter for the time are kept in expectancy, until the right moment, in reserve. People want to keep those objects as an option for the future and keep their options over them.

On the other hand, elderly people moving from domesticity to care, usually into a smaller place, need to separate from many if not most of their belongings irrevocably. This is what is commonly described as 'casser maison'. Things are then discarded for fear of lacking space. They are discarded on the advice of the residence authorities or on those of the health care workers; in order to reduce the amount of obstacles, in the hope of reducing the risk of a fall. Moving into an environment in which one is cared for, where meals are provided as in sheltered housing, also makes some things like the cooker and the kitchen sets useless. Getting separated from one's belongings, however, often equates with getting separated from all that appears to be stable and familiar, everything that could be accounted for and mastered; sometimes all that remains. It confronts the self with the deterioration of the body that gets reflected in the shrinkage of the sets of things and tasks that can be managed by oneself. A 89 year-old single woman declared that she had to move into a residence because she became unable to take care of herself, of her house and of her possessions. "Elle ne pouvait plus tenir son ménage" as she put it. Hence, discarding things becomes a form of rendition. A form of loss. At least, it is often a difficult experience. It is also through the sorting out of the things that

---

4 Among the elderly encountered, the term 'ménage' was also taken to designate the domestic unit, the household, as well as the possessions of the household.
the persons can or cannot take that the moving crisis asserts itself, that
dispossession and the loss of landmarks manifest themselves grievously,
especially among the elderly people. In this respect, finding recipients for
those things that can not accompany a person is particularly important as we
will see in the next chapter. This contraction of the material environment is not
always apprehended grievously. This is the topic of the next section.

The symbolic virtues of detachment

Moving into a smaller place with and within a smaller amount of things is
sometimes seen as a relief: less things need to be remembered, dusted,
managed or worried about. When one gets older, when one suffers from
arthritis as one elderly informant put it, every single task like reaching the
bottom of the sideboard or the top of the cupboard becomes a complicated
one. The symbolic virtues of the separation are not negligible in this respect.
As we have seen earlier with Mme Cabot, it can become a way to focus on the
relations and memories that matters and devote oneself entirely to those.
When pushed to its extreme, discarding things takes on the form of what
elderly people sometimes call a 'clean sweep': a move on which occasion they
abandon many of their belongings in attempting to free themselves from the
burden of their past. As an example, Roger Ricard, a 71 year-old man, moved
out of the house he built himself 33 years ago of which the first 23 years were
spent with his wife prior to her death. Mr Ricard not only moved away from
that house, he also left everything behind him what is unique among the
population met as I have said earlier. Indeed, most of them wish to move with
as well as within their things. Mr Ricard told me that everything in that house
reminded him his spouse: what she had brought in, how she had imbued her
personality into the place, the life she gave to the place, the objects that she
had chosen and that became part of the place, and so forth. Nothing,
according to Mr Ricard, was not hers, nothing was not her. He felt that by
taking the furniture with him he would have uprooted her; that he could not
do. Moving without his belongings, then, was a means of owing respect to the
remembrance of his late wife. As he put it, he cut himself from that place. And
he left all those things he was attached to behind him. Mr Ricard, a former
teacher, had the financial means to start over from nothing. His example is
nonetheless useful because it shows that people may get separated from some
things precisely because these are too important. Because the memories are
cumbersome.

Sorting may result from the refusal to bring everything in the new place if
anything at all or it may result from the ‘pleasure to throw away’ and the
‘habit of not keeping everything’ as Filiod (1999) puts it. It may express the
desire to exorcise the pressure of the abundance of things. It may also respond
from the desire to ‘change skin’ as we often hear. We have seen earlier how
Sandrine longed, wished, hoped to get detached from the things that weigh
upon her, and how this desire to change was related to a self construction
project. Her concrete preoccupation was a lightening of the burden of her
housework. Her rational, however, was an ideal that the people met generally
call ‘detachment’. As such, sorting lies at the edge between the ideal idea of
home and what Clarke (in press) would call its actualisation. Sandrine’s case
is not exceptional. A common motif among the people met in Montreal is that
mobility is related to lightness. ‘Detachment’, understood here as the capacity
not to get attached to things, is valorised among the people who valorise
mobility, often the younger generation. Indeed, moving is sometimes taken to
lead to detachment, as if it were leading to a superior state, nearly a state of
spiritual elevation. Indeed, detachment is said to provide a feeling of being in
control, a feeling of being free to move in the symbolic sense of the term. For
instance, Charlotte explained to me that she did not want to “be stuck with
too much furniture” in her new apartment. She used moving to challenge her
stability and to force herself to become detached. This is made possible by the
fact that the legal and economic conditions of the Montreal housing market
favour displacements as we have seen in Chapter 3. Régine Mercier, a 37 year-old woman working as a health care professional, spoke for her part of her need for not feeling “too much attached” to things. She insisted on the need for her to feel free to go. As such, she admitted she was afraid that “too much materialism” would “retain” her and “imprison” her. By moving, she felt she retrieved her freedom. As a matter of fact, Régine Mercier acquired a condominium: a type of property particularly suitable for transient people.

At first sight, we find in these remarks the functionalist contradiction between wealth and movement as well as the impossibility to accumulate which is fundamental to the mobility of hunters and gatherers as argued by Sahlins (1972); the idea that objects constitute a curb on moving and the corollary that moving easily is to travel light. This is no coincidence. Montreal movers are often compared to nomads. Of course, ‘lightness’ and ‘portability’ are preoccupation sometimes put forward at the time of the acquisition as Desjeux et al. (1998) have noted. However, such a functionalist explanation cannot account for the symbolic importance of the sorting out of things. Indeed, it would be a mistake to bring the issue of the sorting out of things to a matter of weight or volume. Even though they define themselves as detached, people tend to remain attached to those things that are personalised, singularised and that therefore represent the opposite of mere materialism. Let us just remember how Charlotte who liked to feel ‘detached’ sent her very personal belongings to her parents place and entrusted them to her parents’ cares; How Régine Mercier for her part used to move with significant pieces of furniture and family souvenirs that she described as her “mobile roots”; How Marjo moved with the many pieces of furniture that had been inherited from her late mother and her grand-mothers. Thus, the real contradiction lies between different kinds of things: between the mass of things and the singularised ones, the alienable world of things and the inalienable one. Getting detached, in this sense, is to get separated from the material

5 See Chapter 4.
contingencies taken as an enslavement and a burden. It is a way of retrieving or maintaining "a certain sense of priorities" as Marjo put it. It is a way of focusing on what matters as Mme Cabot's example showed us earlier. Similarly, Mr Ricard did not move because he was detached from the things surrounding him; on the contrary. He moved in order to detach himself. This is probably why Sandrine Lambert saw her salvation in the sorting that the move would allow her to achieve; why she saw her move as the occasion "at last" to drive "everything away"; why it had to be the good move. The purpose of sorting is then to impose a symbolic over the accumulation of things and on the material world. To paraphrase Rowlands (1993), we could say that out of the move, out of disorder and chaos, a new unity emerges. The question is now: what kind of principle presides to this new order?

Putting order in one's relations and memories

Considering that things embody relations and memory (Bourdieu, 1972; Chevalier, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1998; Gotman, 1989; Miller, 1987) and that memory is selective, it follows almost logically that the sorting out of things becomes a metaphor for the sorting out of relations and memories. In this respect, when facing the difficult task of discarding possessions, Sandrine Lambert got separated of those belongings associated with the persons she cared the less for. At least, she easily separated from a deep fryer offered to her by her mother-in-law. She also got separated from an animal sculpture and some dolls offered to her by her mother with whom she admitted she had very little affinity. These things were up to then concealed, stored, left behind a chest of drawers. They were out of sight. The move brought them back in front. It forced her to confront them. Similarly, Mme Cabot refocused on the memories that mattered to her when she moved, whereas Mr Ricard needed to leave his past and his memories in place in order to start over again. I could also give the example Béatrice Forgues who moved in the context of a
separation. She admitted that she usually moved house when she changed partner and that she changed bed when she moved house for the bed was the symbol of a relationship for her. As such, since the end of a relationship was far from being the end of her ‘womanhood’ as she put it, she preferred to change bed. A last example is that of Marjo who got rid of objects like a bread box coming from her father’s ex-partner with whom she broke off relations. She left the breadbox behind her when she moved. She left it declaring she hoped that somebody would burn it...

Moving becomes a means to re-shuffle relationships and memories by bringing them back into consciousness, by making them explicit and for deciding which ones to reinforce, which ones to abandon or put on hold. It allows people to keep track of their relationships and memories, keep a map of these and transform this map. In other words, moving allows people to order their relations and memories. It may even become a means for reflecting on one’s self narrative as Giddens (1991) would put it, and for repairing the self. It may provide an occasion for the people to ask themselves, as he says, ‘what do I want for myself?’ Can moving be considered as a therapy in the sense understood by Giddens, that of a continual self-reflexive exercise? Not exactly although the idea that moving may become, in some cases, a process of growth just like a therapy is is a seductive one. I would rather suspect that this confrontation with the self occurs especially on the occasion of disruptive events like the move. Thence, drawing upon Simmel (Frisby, 1992) and Deleuze and Gattari (1986. See also Allen and Pryke, 1999; Doel, 1996) who emphasise how the rhythm, the speed and the pace of movement are central in the formation of subjectivity, we could say that in a context like Montreal, moving frequently even if it were over short distances, may become a means of defining oneself as a subject among the material world. It becomes a means for the people to define themselves via the transformation of the material structure in which they are intimately subjects, as Buchli and Lucas (2000)
argue. In other words, moving frequently provides the opportunity to understand the fluid possibilities of relations and memories in terms of choice.

Moving towards the essential

The empirical evidence suggests that what raises problems on the occasion of a move is less the move _per se_, with the risks of injury, the potential damage or the loss of goods, than the fact that sorting forces objects into consciousness. The apprehension of the move probably hides in many cases an apprehension about confronting things and memories. In other words, the refusal to confront one's history as accumulated in things may feed the fear of the move, not to say deter people from moving. Let us just recall that since he moved in his 2 1/2-room apartment, Mr Trenet, described earlier, refused to move again. He preferred a lessening of his vital space against the accumulation of things even though those things had saturated the place. I would go as far as saying that sorting is so much related to the peoples' velocity that some may refuse to move because of their incapacity or of their refusal to confront their possessions.

Some things matter because of their origin and others matter even though their origin is unknown. Things matter because they have been there "for so long". They have "always been there". People would simply never think about getting rid of them. Other things are all the more valorised than people have always dragged them with them. They are valorised for having "survived", in a sense, those changes of residence, those displacements and those multiple crises as if they could testify to it. In other words, they acquire something of a 'patina' (McCracken, 1988) through their displacements. Conservation, then, takes on a different meaning than the frozen, fossilised meaning of the _théaurisation_ or of hoarding. Conservation takes on its importance despite displacements. It even acquires its full sense through those displacements,
because of them. It would be futile to start from some classification of things in an attempt to understand what governs the sorting process. It would be vain to content ourselves with thinking that what people take with them is what matters and consequently that what they do not does not matter. Possessions are not simply given as mattering from the start. They come to matter through the sorting out. Because in itself sorting classifies. Put differently, a given thing is not only kept because it bears some value, be it economic or sentimental. It acquires value through the sorting process. People take with them what matters. But the things matter all the more when they are brought, once they are brought. By abandoning this thing, by getting rid of that one, a person confers more value on the objects retained. She or he confers upon it some importance it did not possess at the outset. The production of rarity, hence of value, is indeed the corollary of the sorting out of things.

By analogy to the acts of 'drying', 'chopping', 'cutting' and 'burning' which are involved in the building of memorials and monuments (Rowlands, 1993, 144), sorting becomes a way of defining what matters. The 'essential', thus, does not necessarily pre-exist the move. It is something to be achieved, and moving is the occasion to do so. In other words, people get rid of things as if wanting to better remember, in a form of refurbishment of their memory.
The ‘cassermaison’ ritual

Many studies in social and health sciences deal with the move from domesticity to care among elderly people (Allen, Hogg and Peace, 1992; Choi, 1996; Hockey, 1990; Kraaij et al., 1997; Thomasma et al., 1990; Tobin and Lieberman, 1976). Some focus on the possessions that elderly people take with them when moving (Marcoux and Rowlands, 2000). Others emphasise how ‘traumatic’ the separation from personal belongings may be. Thomasma et al., (1990), for instance, note the concern of some institutionalised elderly for the loss of personal possessions. They mention that people who had to give away or sell furniture on the occasion of a move, or those who had to move into a room that was equipped with a ‘hospital type’ bed or dresser, had fewer opportunities for reminiscence after moving. However, few have examined how subjects actually divest themselves from the home environment. This process of divestment from home is often neglected in the research on residential mobility, especially in the case of elderly people. It is neglected when it is not simply denigrated as in the case of Vereecken (1964) who speaks about donation and the elimination of certain objects on the occasion of house moving, but who describes it as a ‘sadico-ana’ destruction.

This chapter seeks to fill this gap by examining the relationship between mobility, ageing and death through the use of objects, of mobile objects. In the
line of Chevalier's (1996) works on the transmission of the furniture in France, this study also examines how people separate from those possessions that they do not take with them when moving into a care environment. This is referred to as 'casser maison'. 'Casser maison' differs from the 'clearing out' of home in Britain which is performed after their occupants' death (Finch and Hayes, 1994). It is a process in which elderly persons actively divest their home 'by themselves'. This chapter thus examines how people separate themselves from their possessions in a ritualised way when moving into residential care. How, in other words, objects are used as a mediator in a context of loss. It will be argued that when the divestment process is performed successfully, the emptying of the home becomes a means of constituting the self, an attempt to reach the status of ancestry. As such, this chapter pursues Belk and Mehta's (1991) work on the extension of the self in mobile possessions as well as Parkin's (1999) work towards a reconsideration of the Cartesian separation of the body and mind in favour of a composite that can be regarded as enmeshed in social trails created by the movement of objects.

Emptying the place

The move from domesticity to care is a move from a situation and a place where a person is on his or her own to another one where he or she is cared for. It is about moving into a care environment which provides services such as catering, hygiene, surveillance, housekeeping and basic medical assistance (CMHC, 1997). Most of my informants who moved from domesticity to care moved from a house or a self contained apartment into a boarding residence, into a bedroom that measured from 23 to 35 square meters. These rooms are often equipped with a private en-suite bathroom and the meals are served in a communal room. What is important for the purpose of my discussion is that this move is also a move into a smaller place as well as into a smaller set of
things. As such, it is a move which forces people to sort out things.\textsuperscript{1} It entails a compulsion for a person to separate from some, if not most, of his or her belongings; what is commonly called \textit{‘casser maison’}, literally breaking the house.

In the popular parlance, \textit{‘casser maison’} is associated with the departure from the family house.\textsuperscript{2} For example, Mme Gaumont, a person met during my fieldwork, sold her house because it ‘became’ too big, too difficult to maintain. She could not take care of it by herself since her husband had been institutionalised. In the grief of this crisis context, she had to abandon the house in which she had stayed for 34 years. What made her decide to sell it and to move, as she explained, is that it is one of her sons who bought it. ‘I was lucky that my son could take the house’ as she said. She could then give him many pieces of her furniture. \textit{‘Casser maison’} is not the prerogative of homeowners alone, however. The tenants that I met often claimed to do so even though they did not possess a house. Let us remember that most of the elderly informants were tenants or people who became tenants on the occasion of their move into sheltered housing or in residential care. We must also say that the housing sector for elderly people in Montreal is almost entirely a renting market.\textsuperscript{3} I would like to suggest that what allows those tenants to claim to break house is the fact that in Montreal possessions are often considered to be at the heart of the construction of the home. Indeed, people in Montreal, especially the tenants, create their sense of place with their possessions. They locate it within those possessions, those possessions with which they move. For this reason, I will argue that people inhabit their things as much as their place. Provided that possessions are important to such an extent in the creation of place and in the sense of a \textit{‘maison’}, it is common to hear among the elderly people in the process of moving, even the owners, that it is the things themselves that make the house their house; and to hear them say that the

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{1} See Chapter 7.
\textsuperscript{2} See the documentary \textit{Casser maison} (1988) presented on the television program ‘C’est la vie’ (Radio-Québec, Gilles Brissette, producer).
\textsuperscript{3} CMHC, 1998.
\end{flushleft}
emptied house is deprived of its soul. ‘Casser maison’, thus, also entails the separation from some of those things that constitute that house; what my informants described as their estate, their patrimoine; what Chevalier (1996) calls the ‘furniture capital’. This includes the inalienable things, those that matter, those with which a person represents him or herself, those that are dear to that person: the inherited objects, the family heirlooms, and so forth (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Chevalier, 1993, 1994, 1998). As such, the divestment process on the occasion of the move into a residential setting can be part of the experience of the move as a trauma or a crisis. It can be compared to the dispossession process concomitant to the institutionalisation described by Goffman (1961) by which a person is stripped from the belongings that help define him or herself and that are at the heart of the constitution of a sense of place. For example, Mme Hébert, a 89 year-old widow who moved into care declared spontaneously at the eve of her move, almost in a strikingly grievous manner, that she was attached to “all” the things surrounding her: her family heirlooms, the souvenirs of her husband, the sole souvenirs of her late husband in fact. Mme Hébert did not so much regret moving into an institution as she put it as much as the obligation, in doing so, to part with her belongings and mnemonic artefacts. I wish to insist on the fact that ‘casser maison’ also calls upon an extended notion of the ‘furniture capital’. It entails the separation from the mundane, day-to-day artefacts that constitute the idea of a ‘proper’ home, of what it is to be on one’s own, such as the broom, the dishes, the micro-wave and the Tupperware that the person will not need anymore.

‘Casser maison’ produces anxiety. It is sometimes feared. It can even delay the move, not to say restrain a person from moving. The emptying of the home itself is often a difficult experience. Mlle Bolduc, for instance, a 89 year-old single woman who moved in residential care simply refused to attend to the emptying of her place, of that apartment where she had lived for 10 years. She felt incapable to assist in the emptying of her apartment and to move into a
new one that would be empty as well. It is the 'peur du vide', a fear of emptiness which prevented her from doing so: the bodily scare of losing her familiar surroundings and of becoming alienated, the fear of losing oneself when the place disappears. Mlle Bolduc went to stay at her sister's place, Mathilde, for one week while Mathilde took charge of the emptying and cleaning of the old place. During that week, Mathilde also moved her sister's belongings into her new room, organised it and decorated it. She hoped to save her sister the shock of having to face the empty surroundings. She hoped to 'smooth' her sister's move and to give her the impression that there would be no move at all.

People often attempt to transform this compulsion to empty the home into a constitutive event, however. In other words, the emptying of the home is often used to create the self. In this respect, 'casser maison' challenges the common idea that people take what matters to them when moving. Not only will it be a matter of deciding what to bring and what to leave behind, it will also be a matter of transmitting, donating, 'placing' those other things. 'Casser maison' will be a matter of constructing oneself in the family's memory through the transmission of those things that do not accompany a person. As such, 'casser maison' raises the importance of what Chevalier (1996) calls the people's 'transmission project', namely the ways in which they wish to transmit their estate or patrimoine to their descents. In some cases, it will even consist in inventing some descents for oneself. "Where to start? By what to start?" are tokens that we can often hear among the people facing the obligation to separate from their things. If we lend a cautious ear, we can also perceive: "Where will the rest end up?"
Giving of oneself by giving one's things

The transmission project is sometimes elaborated a long time in advance, before deciding to move, without even thinking about it. Mr Richer, for instance, a 81 year-old man living alone in a 3 1/2- room rented apartment, had prepared his transmission a long time before moving was an issue. This blind man really inhabited his possessions as I have argued earlier. He knew the localisation of every single object in his apartment. He knew the place of all his cups. At least, he used every cup he knew how to localise. Mr Richer knew what hung on the wall of the living room: photographs of his daughter, of his grand-daughter Isabelle, of a birthday card sent by Isabelle, a card written in hieroglyphs, beside a postcard representing Champollion, a postcard sent by Isabelle as well. He knew that other framed photographs were on the green dresser, a piece of furniture that this bricoleur did by himself out of a humidifier. But he was unaware of the fact—or maybe it simply did not matter to him—that these photographs were often askew, that sometimes they were upside down, or simply back to front, facing the wall. He saw them in his mind. He could describe them. He could pick them up and handle them.

When I first met him, some 6 months before he moved, Mr Richer was thinking about staying put. He hoped not to have to move somewhere else, that is in residential care. However, he had already performed the partition of the things of his apartment. In his view, the day he would leave that place, he would have passed away or moved away into an institution; he would not require those things anymore. He allocated his 'furniture capital' among the children and grand-children with whom he still had contacts. Mr Richer who got divorced 14 years before had relations with only 2 of his 6 children and their offspring. These were the persons concerned by his transmission project; the others were excluded at that time. The living room set, the only souvenir of his wedding, was intended for Lucie, one of his daughters. It took on a special meaning for him. It mattered that Lucie got it. The chest which he had made
himself was intended for Véronique, one of his grand-daughters. The chest of drawers was intended for Isabelle, another grand-daughter. The sideboard was intended for Thierry, a grand-son. The kitchen cupboard as well as a small bookcase were intended for Claire, one of his daughters. The clock was intended for a friend of his. And so forth. In fact, Mr Richer intended to bequeath nearly every piece of furniture of his apartment to the children and grand-children; nearly all of them because he never really expected to move anywhere else. Mr Richer had kept those things with him for years. But he was not simply keeping them. He lived into those things even though, for him, they already belonged to those recipients. In this particular case, it could probably be argued that the transmission project helped Mr Richer to orient himself. Orientation refers, in the health care professionals’ colloquial discourse, to the ‘three spheres’ of time, space and social relations. In this sense, one would say that a well oriented person, a person that is ‘well in his or her three spheres’, does not suffer from any dementia and is able to situate him or herself in time, in place and in relation to others. It is through the elaboration of a transmission project that Mr Richer situated himself in space, in his own material environment. By the same token, he oriented himself in relation to others. And it is through its reactualisation, its reassertion, its narration that the project was kept alive and that his memories were maintained alive as well.

In other cases, when the imminence of the move asserts itself, when the decision to move is taken or the need to move imposes itself with acuity, people invite the children and the family members or any other potential recipients together or separately, one after the other, to let them choose among their things. For example, when Mme Cabot moved into a non-profit Catholic residential care setting, her children split her belongings between themselves. Laurence, her daughter, picked up the mahogany table, the mirror and the lamp that Mme Cabot had inherited from her own mother. Marie, her other daughter, chose the couch, two tables and the lamps. Other things, the cut glass and the silverware cabaret, the dishes and the sweets dishes as well as
the plates, Mme Cabot's wedding gifts, were divided among her two daughters. The appliances, the dining room set, the linen, the sheets, the pans and the saucepans went to her son's religious community. She simply explained that it would be useful for them. This allows us to think that the transmission of the things is gendered as Gotman (1988) puts it. Some things are particularly intended for women, others for the men. Gotman reports that jewellery, linen, sewing instruments and so on, "all the objects ennobled by the domestic works of the past" (Gotman, 1988, 164) are more likely to be predestined to women, daughters and grand-daughters. This appears clearly in the case of Mme Cabot, who transmitted to her daughters objects that she herself had inherited from her mother. Those objects are not only gendered in any simple sense, however. Their transmission rather helps to create the idea of gender within the family. In fact, as it appears in this ethnography, gender is also constructed through the transmission of certain objects from the mother to the daughter, and then, as it is expected, to the grand-daughter, which highlights the role of women in the transmission of memory; a role already stressed by LeWita (1988) in her study of the bourgeois culture in France.

Mme Cabot knew too well that with her, many things would disappear: the card games that she and her mother used to play, the cooking recipes, the narratives that her mother used to recount about their life in Saskatchewan when she was young, a difficult life as she emphasised. This is probably why Mme Cabot was happy that the division went well. "What suited one, did not suit the other, and vice versa". She was happy that her daughters took her family heirlooms with them, that they took those things that she herself had inherited from her mother a long time ago and that stood as important to her. Above all, she was pleased that those things could remain within the family. She was pleased that it was not 'strangers' who got those objects and items of furniture. She even admitted that she would have preferred to sell them if her daughters had not taken them. She cared for what she called the "continuity"; and, the transmission of her belongings provided her with such a sense of
continuity. In fact, as it appears here, the donation is embedded in a set of expectations. The divestment is expected to maintain the relation alive and to become a form of investment. What is striking in the case of Mme Cabot is that those things that mattered more to her were transmitted to her daughters who themselves had children. The other things were given to her son’s religious community which constitutes, in a sense, a ‘dead end’.

House movers may also attribute selected things to particular people. Mme Debray, to take her example, gave her things in a form of *pre-mortem* inheritance, “*de son vivant*” as she put it, which I translate here by ‘giving of one’s living’. Mme Debray, a 68 year-old widow twice married who could be described as coming from a bourgeois family, moved from a private residence for retired people in Outremont to a private residential care setting in Outremont as well. On that occasion, she gave, as she explained, all the things that could not fit into her new place; everything from the family heirlooms to the silverware set and the souvenirs of her late husband; her cherished things like her books, things that this woman of letters considered important, “what I have to offer” as she said. The thing in history (Weatherill, 1988) or the historical patterns of transmission of that thing, as well as the thing’s own historical biography (Kopytoff, 1986) are equally important here. Mme Debray searched for the children’s and the recipient’s interest; the recipient who is better related to a given object. Among the books, the ‘Célines’ were for one recipient, the ‘Baudelaires’ for another “because he is romantic just like me” as she put it. Adding, “I know what their tastes are”. People make personal statements through the donation of mobile objects. What prevails here is then the quality of the object, not its financial value. There is a parallel, here, with the garage sale in North America and the preoccupation of some people to transfer their possessions to those who will ‘really’ appreciate them (Herrmann, 1997). The garage sale is an occasion on which people may lower the price of certain items when they are sure that the person really wants them.

---

*The legal expression is gift *inter vivos.*
The transfer of the object is then compared to an ‘adoption’ by a suitable owner. It is accompanied, as in the case of Lois Roget described by McCraken (1988), by instructions on how to use it, how to keep it, how to care for it. The donation takes the form of an ‘apprenticeship’ of the objects. People learn on themselves by learning on the objects; because what is created through this apprenticeship, what is nourished and constituted is the relationship between a donor and a recipient. Going further, Mme Debray’s example shows us how ‘casser maison’ may relate to the desire of a person to control the ways in which he or she will be remembered; it translates a certain desire to push oneself through time; it becomes a means of objectifying future memories as Rowlands (2000) puts it in his study of time capsules; a means of controlling future memories. In the case of ‘casser maison’, it is important to control the dispersal of objects, to make good ‘placements’, to find the person that will be the most appropriate for such a piece of furniture or such an object. It is a matter of appealing to different people in different ways; to give things according to their specificity more than their financial value which is what a partition through a Will would entail.

Mme Debray is another example of self-realisation. She emphasised that she enjoyed being able to make people happy, but also that giving things of her living had been a relief. Mme Debray was relieved because the distribution was equitable. I would be more inclined to think, however, that she was relieved because she felt that she had not imposed her belongings on her recipients. She was even delighted when one of her son asked her for a particular dish, the one that she used in the past to prepare leek and potato soup. She recalled with pleasure that when she wanted to bring calm into the house, when things were not going well, she used to prepare a leek and potato soup which “ramenait les enfants à de meilleurs sentiments” what we can translate by “bringing the children to better feelings”. Being asked for a particular object, an object that was otherwise ‘condemned’, in this sense, is like being desired; as if people and things merged; as if they were experienced as an undifferentiated whole.
Giving the cherished thing, in the spirit of Mauss (1923-24), is then to donate of oneself, namely ‘se donner’.

The separation from certain things felt to be important may, nonetheless, be experienced with difficulty. Mme Debray admitted that she felt a twinge of sadness when her children chose two very particular items, things that were significant for her: the iron-made candlestick made for her by her late husband as well as a cross that her mother gave her in the past; things that she cherished and that became inalienable for her; things that contained the memory of cherished persons. As a matter of fact, she described the separation from these mementoes as an ordeal. People do not necessarily accept to give everything, however, as we have seen in the previous chapter. Mme Debray, to take up her example again, refused to give one of her son a lamp that he asked her, that lamp made for her by her first husband. She considered that lamp as a ‘presence’ as she put it; a lamp “that really talked to her”. She wanted that lamp to “accompany” her into her new place, as if she wanted to move with her former husband. She was not willing to separate from it, “yet”. To insist, as she did, on the fact that she was not ready ‘yet’ shows how the divestment is progressive. It demonstrates that the divestment goes smoothly, as if peeling oneself along the successive moves.

Parting and repeating

Interestingly, in contrast with the situation prevailing among the people living in France that Chevalier (1995, 1996) studied, the estate or the ‘furniture capital’ is conceived independently from the fixed asset, from the house. It can be transmitted separately from the family house. Also, in contrast with France, the patrimoine does not take on its value from its ‘assemblage’. It can be split without threatening its commemorative value. Even though, at first sight, the divestment of the home gives way to the dispersal and the scattering of objects that stand for the self and that are important to the constitution of selfhood,
when it is performed adequately, when a person is able to transmit him or herself to those who will care for them, a feeling of preservation and wholeness emanates from it. This is the paradox of ‘casser maison’. The multiplicity of acts of donation should not be seen as a decomposition of the estate, even less of the self, but as repetitions. Those are repetitions aimed at achieving mastery or, as we will see further, the ‘good death’. Things can then be parted without risks of dispersal for the self because it is the transmission project in itself rather than the collection of things as a collection that embodies the donor’s selfhood and the potential of realisation for the self. Consequently, the divestment of the place and the scattering of things associated with the self are reminiscent of the deliberate sacrifice of the Malangan-sculptures of New Ireland; those sculptures that are conceptualised as ‘skins’ which replace the decomposed body of a deceased person and that are ‘killed’ in a ceremonial exchange in an attempt to control the construction of memory of the deceased (Küchler, 1987; 1988). The objects that are divested on the occasion of ‘casser maison’ do not so much embody memories of past events. Just like the Malangan-sculptures, they become in themselves embodied memories condensed as thing, as Küchler would put it. In other words, they stand for the person and for the person’s survival in the memory of others. This becomes evident in the case of an incapacity to donate of oneself.

The death of the thing, the demise of the subject

‘Casser maison’ can also be experienced grievously because of the incapacity to donate things and find heirs. This is the case of Mlle Boltuc, a childless single woman who invited her brother and sisters, her nephew and her nephew’s children to choose among her belongings at the eve of her move in residential care. She expected that her belongings would interest someone. After all, as she stated, these were still useful things; they were in good condition. She was confident that someone would take those articles like her sideboard that she described as part of her life, her complete diner set ornate with 18K gold; a set
that she bought for herself as a treat. In fact, she hoped that those things would interest someone because these mattered for her; they had a ‘vécu’. Contrary to the rolling stone that gathers no moss, they had gathered experience through the passage of time. They were also part of her life and of herself. But nobody came to choose them. No one responded to her invitation. Hence, Mlle Bolduc gave her sister Mathilde her stacking up tables as was already written in her Will. Another set of tables that Mlle Bolduc associated with a late friend of her were taken by the daughter of her nephew who put them in storage. She had offered these to her other sister. But that sister refused them because they could not be carried in her car. Mlle Bolduc did not offer to deliver them, however. She refused to beg the reception of her belongings. As if it were better, as I have said earlier, to have the objects asked for and to be able to feel desired. Otherwise, Mathilde’s grand-daughter considered to take her bed — a ‘queen size’ bed — but she changed her mind after measuring it because of a lack of space. Mlle Bolduc had to give it to the St-Vincent-de-Paul charity organisation. She gave that same charity organisation many other things as well: a lot of cloths as well as her favourite sideboard. Mlle Bolduc was hurt, according to Mathilde, that no family member took her belongings. She spoke of the pain she felt when incapable to donate what she cared for to the people that mattered to her. She confessed to me that she would have liked someone to take these things. For her, these things went “everywhere”. But she had no idea as to where they had gone. One understands the difficulty for Mlle Bolduc to see all those things which she had lived in until then “leave her”, “disappear”. One understands why she spoke about those things that she brought with her into her new residence as those things that she had been able to “rescue”. ‘Casser maison’, then, provides a picture of the extent of one’s relations, those who will or who could remember. It forces one to take the measure of one’s isolation. Mlle Bolduc’s case is in fact that of an imperfect divestment. A form of material divestment that does not result in any form of re-investment in relations.
As these examples show us, things do not cease to be important when people separate from them. What mattered for Mme Cabot was to be able to “place” her things among close people. What was important to her was that people accept them; that the people who would accept them be those that could instil in them a second life and care for them, a process that in turn would instil her a longer life. Entrusting one’s belongings is thus somehow like entrusting oneself. The capacity to place the things stands as a guarantor for the survival of the subject, of his or her memory. Even though she described herself as ‘detached’ from her belongings, Mme Cabot admitted that she was not detached to the point of being indifferent to their beneficiaries. It is probably because she could place those things among significant relations that Mme Cabot could claim to detach herself so easily from them. Put another way, drawing upon Weiner (1992) who examined the paradox of giving while keeping, that is how giving is a means of retaining, Mme Cabot never really had to detach herself because she could give her belongings to significant others. Another example is that of Mme Hébert who confessed that she was able to “condition herself to the idea of getting rid of her things”, to detach herself from the souvenirs of her husband she cherished inasmuch as she was able to transmit them, as much as the recipients of her belongings wanted them and would care for them. In fact, what distinguishes Mlle Bolduc from Mme Cabot and Mme Hébert or even Mme Debray is the possibility of placing or not those things that do not accompany the person in the move. This brings us back to the issue of inequality between the elderly persons with children and those without; an issue raised by Déchaux (1996) when discussing the caring of the elderly persons. More broadly, it relates to the availability of heirs and the ability to surround oneself in old age. In the absence of recipients, the inalienable thing like Mlle Bolduc’s sideboard falls escheat as Gotman puts it. For my part, I would assert that the object actually dies. And its death relates to the symbolic demise of the subject. This is probably why the incapacity to give one’s possessions, to give of oneself through the donation of things, relates to a form of exclusion or isolation. This is probably why it corresponds, in the
end, to sterility in its most complete form. We could probably go further by saying that 'casser maison' raises the broader issue of reproduction, fertility and the negation of discontinuity. As such, 'casser maison' pertains to funeral, not to say pre-funeral practices among which, following Bloch and Parry (1982), fertility has a considerable prominence. More than a simple reassertion of life in the face of death, as Bloch and Parry argue, mortuary rituals themselves are the occasion for creating society. Death becomes a source of life, an occasion, in a sense, to liberate the agency contained in the thing.

At this stage, I would argue that 'casser maison', donating oneself though the donation of one's things, testifies of the desire to reproduce oneself through one's children: namely extend oneself in one children; the child being seen as the self (Miller, 1997). As such, Gotman would probably say that 'casser maison', inasmuch as it pertains to the giving of one's living to one's children, is a prodigiously ambiguous gesture: a gesture in which the will to dominate, as we will see later, approaches that of submitting oneself and make oneself the child of one's child. This narcissistic act is not selfish in any simple sense, however. It amounts to an act of love and of sacrifice. It figuratively testifies to a desire of the parent to die for the children.

Giving of one's living

This reflection should be situated in a broader discussion on the legal and anthropological aspects of inheritance in relation to social structures. It poses the question of the relationship between things and persons and that of the alienability or inalienability of property. For instance, Mauss (1923-24) argued that in Melanesia things were never completely separable from the persons who exchanged them; subjects being transformed into objects, things becoming parts of persons and persons behaving in some measure as if they were things (Munn, 1970). The inalienability of the relationship between the persons and
things is central to the understanding of the devolution of property. For instance, in Kangra, in the North West of India (Parry, 1979) where the Mitakshara system is in force, ancestral property is held in common by a man and his descendants as co-sharers, and any one of them can demand partition at any time. The Mitakshara system distinguishes, in fact, the self-acquired property over which a man has full rights of ownership from the ancestral one over which heirs have rights from the moment of their conception. In other words, the members of the senior generation are trustees rather than absolute owners of the joint property. They have no right to sell or to give away the joint capital to the detriment of the other shareholders. In contrast, the devolution of property in the Province of Quebec relies upon a ‘modernist’ distinction between person and objects (Rowlands, 1993), not to say a modernist illusion (Latour, 1994). Furthermore, it responds to a limited testamentary freedom of British inspiration; a system of property inheritance being consistent with a society’s general orientation to individualism (Finch, Hayes, Mason, Masson and Wallis, 1996; Macfarlane, 1978). In English Law, the basic principle of testamentary freedom is that each testator

is free to dispose of his or her property entirely on the basis of individual choice. The testator alone decides how his or her estate is to be divided, and who will receive it, and the law upholds the right of each individual to do that, however eccentric these decisions may seem to other people. In its purest form it implies the absolute right of the individual over property, in death as well as in life (Finch et al., 1996, 21)⁶

This principle of testamentary freedom was introduced for the first time in the context that I study in 1774 after the British conquest of the Nouvelle-France in 1759 through the Quebec Act.⁷ In 1801, the Quebec Province Law was revised and some legislative limitations were brought (Carisse, 1970; Zoltvany, 1971) so that, contrary to the situation prevailing in Britain, only legal and natural

---

⁵ Another principle set out by the Smritis is the Dayabhaga system which holds that a man’s heirs acquire their rights only by virtue of his death. (Parry, 1979).

⁶ Although, as Finch et al. (1996) put it, testamentary freedom without restriction has been the exception rather than the rule in England, existing if at all, between 1833 and 1938.

⁷ Quebec Act, 14 Geo. III, ch. 83.
persons can inherit by testament. Since the Civil Code reform of 1994, a ‘reserve’ principle of French inspiration in favour of the surviving spouse has also been introduced. In fact, the Quebec Law distinguishes the partition of the family estate from the succession. Half of the net value of the family estate is devolved to the surviving spouse. In other words, a donor can not bequeath the totality of his or her belongings to a third person other than his or her spouse. The surviving spouse has right over half of the family’s estate. These include: the main residence, the secondary residences intended to the family and, what is relevant for the purpose of our discussion, the furniture in those residences. It also includes the cars intended for the family and the rights over a retirement scheme accumulated during the time of the marriage or any other retirement saving plan. Once the spouse has received half of the family estate, if there has been a Will, the succession will be shared according to the will of the donor. Otherwise, if there is no Will, the succession will be shared according to the cases determined by Law.

‘Casser maison’ appears to be a particular case of donation of one’s living or gift inter vivos which is itself related to inheritance. But it raises and exacerbates the need to distinguish the legal aspects of inheritance from the anthropological ones. It is sometimes intended to take the place of the Will or compensate for its absence. Mr Richer, for instance, had written a Will some 10 years before. But he wished to rewrite it in order to distribute his belongings differently. However, Mr Richer moved before he had the chance to do so. As such, the moved forced him to enact the Will he had in mind. ‘Casser maison’ is also a

---

8 The French legal tradition of inheritance is based on the idea that certain family members, especially the children, have the right to an equitable share of the parents’ property (Finch et al., 1996; Gotman, 1988). For instance, the French Law forbids a donor to disinherit his or her children. The ‘legal reserve’, the portion of inheritance that cannot be withheld from legal heirs, depends on the number of children. It consists of half of the inheritance when the donor has only one child, two thirds when the donor has two children, three-quarters when there are 3 children or more, etc.

9 Régime enregistré d’épargne retraite (REÉR).

10 Ministère de la Justice, 1999.

11 Legal succession or ab intestat.

12 The Law determines the persons who have a right to inherit, the order in which they are susceptible to inherit as well as the share that they can receive.
matter of donating the tiniest things, those that are not even part of the Will, those mundane, day-to-day objects that bear in themselves the trace of their occupant. In other words, 'casser maison' is a matter of performing the inheritance before time, of preparing one's death.

The perils of the gift of one's living

In her analysis of inheritance in France, Anne Gotman (1988) admits that giving of one's living may have exorcising properties; that it can become a way of divesting oneself, of casting oneself before being constrained by others or by death. In other words, it can become a means of liquidating cumbersome things. Gotman insists on saying that in an egalitarian inheritance system such as that prevailing in France (a system itself inherited from the Revolution), giving of one's living is also an act of authority, a way of 'buying' others. In the line of thought of Mauss (1923-24) for whom to give is to make sure to receive later, Gotman argues that the donation of one's living empowers the donor.

The perception of the donation as an authoritarian act could explain why some of the recipients of my informants were so reluctant to accept the things intended to them. Their refusal could indeed probably be seen as the refusal to become indebted towards the donor. There are limitations to the application of Gotman's thesis to the situation analysed, however. Her thesis rests on the obligation, in the anthropological sense, for the recipient to receive the inheritance. This is what Gotman calls the 'duty of reception' of the heirs. In the cases observed in the course of my research, this obligation to receive does not always prevail. Recipients often dodge, evade and parry for not accepting things. In practice, indeed, things do not always go as expected. Mr Richer's sons took the living room set that was intended for his daughter Lucie as we have seen earlier; a set that she could not take because she was living in Europe at the time of the move. Mr Richer's son took it for his partner's son. Afterwards, when Mr Richer realised what happened, when he realised that
the things would not remain within the family, he admitted he was angry. He even talked about reclaiming those things, about ‘*dédonner*’, until he resigned himself, to use his own expression, to kiss the whole day goodbye. His sons also brought the kitchen utensils and the cauldrons in order to store them, saying that “those who may need it will only have to help themselves”. There are examples in which the children perceive the emptying of the home as a good opportunity to seize as it appeared during this ethnography. A professional social worker confided to me how the children of one informant had not been involved at all in helping their parent to move, how they had simply shown up when came the time to distribute the “gifts”. It is also plausible to think that a recipient may accept a gift in order to make the right impression, to improve his or her position in the subsequent Will’s division. Inversely, there are examples of recipients unwilling to accept the things intended for them as a refusal of the parent’s death, a refusal to lose faith in the person or to tempt fate: “You have too much to live” is a common token. Children may refuse to talk about any eventual disposition as well. They think, as Lois Roget declares, that “we are going to live forever” (quoted in McCracken, 1988, 47).

Goody’s view on the power of the donation of one’s living differs from that of Gotman. In his discussion on the relationship between inheritance and power, Goody (1962) holds that giving of one’s living may become a form of ‘social euthanasia’ before the physical death. Using the cases of the transfer *inter vivos* over chiefship and land rights among Nyakyusa of Africa and Irish farmers passing control of farmstead at the time their children marry, Goody suggests that this form of donation may improve the condition of the younger generations but that it also weakens that of the older. By giving one’s inheritance, by renouncing to his or her rights, Goody argues, one can be expected to lose his or her purchase power over the younger generations. This form of transmission which reminds us the practice of ‘parental endowment’ in
the Province of Quebec\textsuperscript{13} illustrates the importance of not giving too soon when giving of one's living; a topic at the heart of many literary works such as King Lear (Shakespeare, 1606), La terre (Zola, 1887) as well as Trente arpents (Ringuet, 1938) to name only few.

Interestingly, Goody's discussion raises the importance of transmission strategies more particularly in the case of valuable assets. In a context like Britain, for instance, the decision to divest and sell the house could be related to the wish to organise the financial aspects of the transmission. Indeed, under the Inheritance Tax, gifts *inter vivos* are subjected to a preferential regime in Britain when made 7 years before the death (Finch *et al.*, 1996). In Canada, even though the federal and provincial governments do not levy succession rights on legacies, giving of one's living remains a means of reducing income tax on the future appreciation of assets inasmuch as it may reduce the administrative fees of the succession.\textsuperscript{14} This might be important in the case of the homeowners. Most of my informants, however, were tenants. They did not possess important assets like houses whose future appreciation could be taxed. As a matter of fact, it is important to recall that the elderly people housing market is a renting market. In Goody's line of thought, this senior generation of tenants could indeed be expected to be weakened. It is even plausible to think that the fear of losing one's power, or more simply one's 'attraction' once divested, might add to the explanation for the reluctance to move on the part of elderly homeowners. Nonetheless, I would argue that one's financial position may affect the ways of approaching the divestment. At least, it should point to differences between social classes, between the wealthiest people, those with assets behind them or those with highly valuable things to donate like Mme Cabot who could approach the divestment with

---

\textsuperscript{13} Under the auspices of the *Coutume de Paris* which prevailed in Nouvelle-France from 1664, parental endowment was a contract by which a donator, usually an elderly person, transmitted rights over the land and gave him or herself at charge until death (Postolec, 1992; Martel, 1979).

confidence, and those for whom divesting the place is the only means of being remembered. Take Mr Richer for example who had nothing of value to transmit. He had to think of a cunning way of emptying his home and place his things. He donated the items that made up his personal environment — the things bearing his mark — to people who successively came to give him a hand in moving. Mr Richer gave Marcel, one of his friends, some chairs, few planks of wood he had collected but that would be useless now, pots of screws he kept for his little works, pots of paint, turpentine, tools as well as a book. This fairly experienced bricoleur offered 'his' tools with pride to one of his sons who refused them, however. He also hoped that he could help Judith, a young friend of him, and her partner who were just about to settle into a new house. He hoped they would accept his kitchen set, a chest of drawers that he had made himself, neons, a fan, a pastry plank, a barbecue oven, even the remaining food and drinks in the refrigerator; things that he refused to waste. In fact, Mr Richer tried to attract people to help him by offering small gifts to them, for he obviously did not want to leave anything behind him. But these people did not come for the things he had to offer. Rather, they accepted those things to please him. In any case, money is not an issue here. Mlle Bolduc's sideboard, her double bed or Mr Richer's living room set, contrary to money, are things that take place. Mathilde, Mlle Bolduc's sister, told me that her grand-children were not willing to get rid of their own pieces of furniture to put those of their aunt. These objects are objects that leave trace. These are objects that bear memories and the presence of the person. These are objects that have the potential to stand for the person because these have a presence and a materiality. Imposing these objects can be like imposing oneself. In fact, in the context described here, it is not the act of giving of one's living which is an authoritarian act, but the act of giving a particular object. In the other words, some articles may be perceived as authoritarian.

This emphasis on power, however, probably leads us to underestimate the symbolic importance of the transmission. Inheritance may take on its
importance at the social and symbolic levels independently from the marginal value or utility of what is transmitted. Going further, 'casser maison' will be perceived to be all the more important when the person will have nothing else to transmit than the 'furniture capital'. As Miller (1994) emphasises, many disputes over inheritance in Trinidad only apparently relate to control over important resources. Rather, they are often related to the sense of family descent. In this line of thought, while Goody emphasised the perils of giving, I would rather insist for my part on the perils of not giving. I would suggest that 'casser maison' can be perilous when a person is incapable to donate his or her home, to donate him or herself and to make the things circulate (Godbout and Charbonneau, 1996; Godbout, 1998). This becomes clear in the case of Mlle Bolduc who could not achieve her transmission project. In any case, in the context under study, an individualist society characterised by the absence of lineage (Godbout and Charbonneau, 1996), a society where people's identity is weakly defined by inheritance as is rather the case in India (Dumont, 1980), the donor is hardly in a position of doing favours on the occasion of 'casser maison', left alone of using the donation as a generous symbolic gesture or an authoritarian one. In the best cases, the donor can request that others accept his or her offering; that they make some place for those things and for him or her in the décor of their domestic environment and among the relationships that are acknowledged as Chevalier (1998) would say. It is difficult, then, to talk about the donation of one's living as an authoritarian act. It would probably be the opposite. Let us recall that one of Mr Richer's son considered the possibility of not accepting the furniture intended for him. But he changed his mind when he realised that his father would probably be too disappointed. He decided to accept these things to "leave him this pleasure" as he said and to give them to someone else later on. As this example shows, it is the act of receiving that becomes an act of generosity; the donor falling, in a sense, at the mercy of his or her recipients. It is the recipient who is doing a favour by being willing to accept the belongings. In the last instance, it could probably be argued that what is in peril is the gift itself.
Giving of one’s living in a ritualised way

The passage from domesticity to care whereby a person on his or her own becomes a person who is cared for is considered to be accompanied by a change in status; in some cases, a loss of status (Finch, 1989). And yet it has to be administered by that same person. In other words, it requires that the person takes charge of the process. I have mentioned earlier that there were often discrepancies between the donor’s expectations and those of the recipients. Perhaps, the most important discrepancy relates to the fact that the former acts as if he or she were administering the succession before time, whereas the later often considers the event as a simple mundane donation. Indeed, from the donor’s perspective it is important to give to this move a special significance. I would even argue ‘casser maison’ responds to a form of ‘ritual longing’ as Arnould, Price and Curasi (1999) would say. It testifies to an attempt, from the elderly person’s point of view, to ceremonialisie and to ritualise the metaphorical and material transition that accompanies it. ‘Casser maison’ can probably be understood as a rite of passage in the sense given by Van Gennep (1909) and Turner (1969) inasmuch as it is intended to mark a rupture in the critical moment of an individual’s life. ‘Casser maison’ is a rite aimed at putting an end to the mourning entailed by the separation with a known environment, with the belongings constituting it and with an aspect of the self left behind. It is also, in Gotman’s words, a matter of divesting from the things that are not strictly speaking part of the succession: the person’s personal belongings, the food in the refrigerator, the frames on the walls as well as the hooks that hold them. Adopting the ritual analysis’ vocabulary, we would then say that the ‘casser maison’ ritual’s efficacy relies upon the emptying, the cleaning, the symbolic ‘killing of the place’. It is aimed at exorcising the move into residential care; a move sometimes associated with death (Hockey, 1990). This clearly transpires from the case of Mme Hébert who refused to acquire any new things or clothes after emptying her home because she did not know how long she could use them. At her age, as she
declared, “it could happen very fast”. ‘Casser maison’, in this respect, is aimed at exorcising a move which can prefigure death, not to say lay the conditions for it. It is an attempt to control death and its unpredictability.

To a certain degree, ‘casser maison’ is thus aimed at achieving some level of mastery over the arbitrariness of the biological occurrence (Bloch and Parry, 1982). It is aimed at achieving the ‘good death’. As such, Mme Debray who had already given almost everything of her living and who used to say that her Will would be short clearly gave the impression that by divesting her home and placing her belongings somewhere else she had been preparing her own death. In fact, she died less than two weeks after the move. But, as she repeated it, she was happy to have been able to give of her living. She felt she was “blessed”. On the other hand, the incapacity to donate one’s things and to donate oneself enjoins the risk of a ‘bad death’, that of not being remembered.

Re-creating the self as an ancestor

‘Casser maison’ reiterates Seale’s (1998) claim that in Modern societies death is actively socially constructed while at the same time psychologically negated. Seale challenges the thesis that modern societies are ‘death denying’. He argues that the modern social organisation of death is, “remarkably active” (Seale, 1998, 3). Seale acknowledges, however, that at the psychological level, the problem of death is evaded. As such, ‘casser maison’ is probably one of those attempts that he describes as

attempts to transform death into hope, life and fertility... which combine to ‘kill’ death and resurrect optimism about continuation in life in spite of loss and certain knowledge of one’s own future death (Seale, 1998, 3)

‘Casser maison’ starts from a compulsion to detach oneself. It evolves into an appropriation of the move as a constitutive event. Indeed, subjects divest
themselves from their belongings not simply by separating from them or from the place that these belongings stand for and mediate. They try to place them, to donate them and to donate themselves. Put differently, 'casser maison' is an attempt to use the emptying of the home, the purging of the place, for constructing the self, nearly another self in other people's interior and memory. It is an attempt to survive one's own physical presence, to accede to a form of transcendence and to renegotiate one's status. In this respect, 'casser maison' can be seen as a ritual, a secular ritual (Moore and Myerhoff, 1977) nourished by a belief in a sort of transcendence to take up Segalen's (1998) expression. 'Casser maison' does not so much rely upon a promise of continuity but on the desire for continuity: the desire to perpetuate oneself. It goes along the acceptance of a loss of status in order to reach another higher status: that of a quasi-ancestor. It becomes an attempt to invent oneself as an ancestor should we say, to make oneself an ancestor.

The 'casser maison' ritual contrasts with the construction of ancestors by ritual experts through funerary ceremonies along the descent lines as in the case of the Paiwanese (Tan, in progress). It is an act of auto-ancestralisation. It also differs from the redistribution of role and property of the deceased among the LoDagaa of Ghana (Goody, 1962) inasmuch as it takes place before the physical death of the person. But this only reasserts the point made by Hertz (1960) and by other anthropologists (Bloch and Parry, 1982) that death does not occur at one instance, but is the result of a lengthy process. This is an idea that the metaphor of the 'journey' (Bloch, 1993) exemplifies well just as much as that of the 'move' as it appears here. 'Casser maison' is not only a means for managing the move. It uses mobility to construct the self in old age and to construct one's death. As such, it is a divestment process performed with a view towards the future: that of being remembered. It is a form of divestment which translates the will to control how to be remembered. It is a form of investment in relations.
In the end, 'casser maison' reminds us how the individual is engaged in a combat against his or her own death and what I would call 'forgetfulness'. As such, if we were to paraphrase Joachim Dubellay (1558), the 16th century French poet, we would say happy is she who, like Mme Debray, can give of one's self; she who, like Mme Cabot, can "place" her belongings, find them a place and find herself a place. Happy is he or she who can donate things for he or she can donate him or herself.
Chapter 9

Just a matter of time

In a conclusion, and in order to consolidate my argument, I will now examine the relationship between ideology, structure and practices. My concluding discussion will open, however, on a topic that I have not yet addressed: that of temporality.

Ideology, structure and practices

An understanding, perhaps also a misunderstanding, of the relationship between mobility and the distribution of political, economic and moral power in a context like the City of Montreal has its roots in the classical model of civil society inherited from 17th Century English philosophy and the works of Locke. As I have shown in Chapter 2, this perspective which classifies and hierarchies social groups through modes of tenure, through ownership and tenancy bears, in itself, the seeds of an ideology of stability; an ideology which stigmatises tenants as a residential class on the basis of their lack of attachment, their lack of concern. In brief, their ‘lack of stability’.

In the context under study, the City of Montreal, mobility has historically been considered to be a tenant phenomenon, not to say a tenant problem. As such,
tenants have long been considered 'second class' citizens. They only acquired the right to fully participate in the city's democratic life in 1968, even though they had traditionally outnumbered owners. The parallel between the stigmatisation of 'unstable' and 'abject subjects' is evident here. Just as Foucault (1975) or Butler (1993) argue that the 'outside' is a constitutive part of normality, I would contend that the stigmatisation of tenants as the 'unstables' is a constitutive part of the idea, the ideal and the ideology of stability; an ideology which is particularly manifest at the level of home. The coming into force of this ideology can be situated alongside the historical development of the home (Davidoff and Hall, 1987, 1995; Hall, 1985; Frykman and Lofgren, 1987; Marcus, 1999). It goes along with the creation of the idea of home and is driven by the idea of home. As such, it is enacted through the very notion of home, of the stable home; through the ways of conceiving domestic life and the ways of constructing houses concretely. I do not imply that this ideology is shared by everybody in Montreal. This ideology is, however, particularly prominent among the owners that I have encountered in the course of my research. In my opinion, the discourse on 'tenants' mentality discussed in Chapter 2 is a good example. Let us just recall that a rhetoric on the quasi-existential quality of owning is pervasive among the people that I have met in Montreal. It is a rhetoric which holds that 'owning' pertains to comportment traits that one has or does not have. Hence, the glorification of the 'soul of the owner'. In fact, this rhetoric is almost exclusively noticeable among homeowners. It is hardly shared by tenants until they accede to ownership, until they finally meet their fate and achieve what they appear in retrospect doomed to become: a homeowner. From there, there is only one step to make before concluding that modes of provision give way to particular relations with culture. Making such step would be forgetting that the 'tenant's mentality' and the 'owner's soul' are taken to be comportment traits. As such, some property owners are sometimes said to have a tenant's mentality. When, for instance, they do not invest a sufficient amount of money in their property, when they do not seem to care. At least apparently. What
is important here is that this rhetoric nourishes the view of tenants’ lack of care, lack of reliability and lack of stability. It does not condemn mobility per se; the owners advocating it are themselves probably, potentially, mobile. They invest, for instance, in certain types of properties like condominiums which allow a certain degree of mobility. This rhetoric allows them, however, to understand their own displacement under the light of a teleological form of progression. It provides them with a sense and a direction. In this light, tenants’ displacements appear to them to be at the least irrational; a form of wandering.

The belief that has pervaded from Defoe’s (1719) *Robinson Crusoe* to Jack Kerouac’s (1955) writing that tends to see remaining in place as a form of imprisonment, a belief prevailing amongst my informants, who also valorise mobility, probably constitutes another form of ideology. Moving is indeed constructed as a disposition which is particularly prominent among tenants who count among the least advantaged groups (Bourdieu, 1979); this appears clearly when we consider that remaining in place is institutionalised as a tenant’s right and that the legal system in force favours residential stability. Under the impulse of a therapeutic discourse on the moving crisis, remaining in place was indeed established as a normative domestic and familial institution in the 1960-70s, as I have shown in Chapter 3. In the context of the Province of Quebec, this gave way to institutionalisation and to the legalisation of the tenants’ right to remain in place through the adoption of a ‘stability policy’ in 1973-74, to that of a ‘stay-put’ policy aimed at helping elderly people to remain in place in 1979; and, since then, to the development of *in-situ* transformation programmes. What is particular, however, is that among tenants the ideology seems to emerge from practice.

In the introduction of the thesis I argued that Bourdieu (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) was right when insisting on the fact that subjects who construct reality do not construct the categories of that reality by themselves.
In other words, as Bourdieu would put it, we should not ignore the historical fundamental values, meanings and politics of a form of experience such as that of tenants’ mobility in space as well as in time. The structure is thus relevant. But it is not relevant in any deterministic fashion. It is relevant inasmuch as it provides the conditions of possibility for the experience of mobility. Indeed, tenants in Montreal are not ‘mobile’ because the context dictates it. Nor are they mobile because they are tenants. For them, moving is rather a means of taking advantage of renting. At least of making the best of it. As it appears in Chapters 3 and 5, an analysis of the legal conditions of mobility and of housing provision in Montreal reveals that moving in Montreal is at least normal, probably understandable, not to say rational under some circumstances. People like the tenants in Montreal work within a given spatial and temporal structure. They also try to make these structures work for them, although their margin for manoeuvre is thin. Put another way, the structure or the context is essential as a condition or a means of objectifying, not to say liberating, the desire, the need, or the habitus to move. This desire, need or habitus is constructed socially. We can probably even talk about a pressure to move. As such, it is important to recognise that the constitutive dimension of mobility only appears when considering the micro-processes in operation. This has been one of my major concerns. This is why Chapters 4 to 8 are mainly devoted to ethnographic description and analysis of practices.

Nonetheless, moving in Montreal is usually apprehended as a crisis, as I have discussed in Chapter 4. But it is often a crisis that is taken to be worth going through. Despite the progressive normalisation of stability that I have discussed extensively, people still move. Despite the fact that remaining in place is institutionalised as a right for tenants, that the ‘need’ to move understood as compulsion or obligation has been attacked by the 1960-70s reformers, moving in Montreal is still a popular practice. This points to the need to understand how people move, how they use mobility and how they cope with the crisis. For instance, I have shown in Chapter 6 that people in
Montreal are usually able to move themselves, thanks to the help of kin and family members as well as friends. People 'use' these relations in a mixture of duty and affect, obligation and affection, as Finch (1989) would say, to cope with the moving crisis. In turn, these relations become realised in motion, through successive moves. As such, people often use mobility to strengthen their relationships. The ways in which the people encountered in Montreal 'use' mobility or manage to be mobile recalls in many respects that of nomadic populations, as I have argued in Chapter 4 (Burnham, 1979; Gulliver, 1975; Ingold, 1986; Rapoport; Rodman, 1985; Woodburn, 1968, 1972); changes of place accompany changes within the domestic sphere as well as beyond the household. I also emphasised how people in Montreal use movement across space to construct themselves and to construct their relations. The move may testify to the desire for stability, for staying still, for maintaining not to say reinforcing relations. It can translate the will to change as well. I have discussed how moving may accompany transformations within the domestic sphere. I have also shown how it could become a means of transforming those relations, whether it be a relationship of love, a contract relation of co-tenancy, or tenancy, a neighbourhood relation or a client-relation with a CLSC. Hence, moving may frequently reflect changes of company. It may also help to provoke them. Far from being an alienating experience, moving bears the potential for being a socially constitutive experience.

We should not underestimate, however, how moving may be used as a strategy even among those who can hardly afford it, especially among the tenants. In a socially segmented and segregated housing market such as that of Montreal, people may move with a very limited margin of manoeuvre. But they may use that limited margin to create themselves subjectively and socially. The ethnographic evidence presented in Chapter 5 reveals how moving may be empowering, how it may counterbalance people’s, especially tenants’, sense of powerlessness. It demonstrates how people may assert or attempt to assert their agency even when conditions force them to move or when things run out
of control. Thus, it challenges one of the fundamentals of the ideology of stability (see Chapter 2): the idea that owning one’s place is the only means of realising one’s aspiration for the appropriation of space. This is why I have argued that moving in Montreal is a meaningful practice which is at the same time banal. And that this practice may be symbolically profitable. There is, nonetheless, a tension underlying the Montrealeans’ experience of mobility in general. It is a tension between the need to remain in place and the desire to leave; a tension which gets expressed in the short distance moves that are so frequent. This tension is also a tension between permanence and transience.

In search of permanence

The ideology of stability melds permanence into steadiness as becomes apparent in Vereecken’s remark which implies that to settle, to make one’s home and to dwell is to search for a “fixed point against the flow of time” (Vereecken, 1964, 621; Italics added). As such, it considers the number of moves to be the measure of instability. Likewise, Western philosophers such as Attali (1988, quoted by Choko, 1993) consider owning as providing a feeling of roots, of security, of duration. They consider property as hiding the fear of death, as providing a way to Be-in-the-world, to last and to delay death. The ethnographic evidence presented in Chapters 5 and 7 rather shows that in Montreal — a City characterised by its vast proportion of tenants — people create their sense of place through displacements. They constitute themselves through their investment in a place, through the investment in a succession of places as well as by investing themselves in change. The different places someone has occupied become part of a person’s identity inasmuch as the creation of home may be, the changes of place becoming as important as the places themselves. In other words, this ethnography shows how movement is part of dwelling, how people inhabit a succession of places; and how people’s experience of mobility is intimately related to that of things.
In a tenants' society like Montreal, objects, the mobile objects that people take with them when moving (Belk, 1992; Desjeux et al., 1998; Mehta and Belk, 1991; Parkins, 1999), are at the heart of the search for permanence. Indeed, people on the move can be taken to inhabit their possessions as much as a place or a succession of places. They move with as well as within their belongings, as I have shown in Chapters 6 and 7. Things' mobility is thus central to the problematisation of people's mobility; especially for the tenants. Things are at the heart of the constitution of home. This is what the expression 'on est chez soi dans ses affaires', literally to be at home in one's stuff, translates well. Things also preside at the creation and re-creation of a sense of place and of a sense of home throughout displacements. They act as landmarks, provide people with a certain familiarity and help them to relate to others, to situate themselves in space as well as in time. In this respect, things allow people to experience a certain dose of mobility.

People do not simply move their things, however. They often sort them out on the occasion of the move as discussed in Chapters 7 and 8. As such, they sort out the relations and memories for which objects stand for and in which they exist as subjects. People, in other words, constitute themselves in motion through the definition and redefinition of their environment; through the definition of what they are, and the definition of the structure, as Buchli and Lucas (2000) would say, in which they are intimately subject. Moving, then, makes relations and memories appear to be fluid rather than fixed. And moving frequently becomes a means of re-shuffling relationships by sorting and bringing them back into consciousness, by making them explicit. Similarly, in attempting to better understand the moving crisis, we need to take into greater consideration the role of possessions, a role too often overshadowed, as I have argued in Chapter 7. In fact, the therapeutic discourse on the prevention of the move solely emphasises the importance of the house at the expense of that of possessions; those possessions that are still at the heart of the creation of the home. This therapeutic discourse does not distinguish
between the house and its belongings. It relegates belongings to an instrumental role when it does not simply scorn them. Hence, it testifies, in itself, to the limits of our understanding of the experience of mobility and of the moving crisis. In order to assess to what extent house moving may become a crisis, one must rather take into account each person’s life history and that person’s belongings, which constitute a backdrop to the experience of dwelling. In fact, when conceiving the home through the things, when considering that it is the things that constitute the home, house moving in Montreal recalls in many respects the ‘walking houses’ in Lankawi, Southeast Asia; those dynamic entities endowed with spirits and soul which possess animate qualities, which seem to acquire legs when lifted by men and walk or run to a new site (Carsten and Hugh-Jones, 1995). Just as much as the ‘walking house’ of Lankawi, the Montreal homes, conceived through the constellation of things that move, redefine the opposition between the permanence of the house and the impermanence of the people. This becomes evident when examining how elderly people who move from domesticity to care divest themselves of some of their belongings, what is commonly called ‘casser maison’, and how they attempt to do so in a ritualised way in order to achieve the status of ancestry, as I have shown in Chapter 8. This ethnography dismantles, in other words, the search for permanence in that of rootedness and in the fact of remaining in place. It conceives permanence through the circulation of things that move with people and independently from them.

Up to now I have mainly recapitulated my argument. I have stressed how structure, ideology and practices come together through the spectrum of the experience. I have emphasised that structure is essential as a condition of possibility for the realisation of the experience of mobility, as a means of objectifying, not to say liberating the desire, the habitus or the need to move; a preference which is grounded in ideology. As such, I have tried to show that the constitutive dimension of mobility only appears when considering the micro-processes, or practices, in operation. In the backdrop of this
recapitulation, a new dimension of the experience of mobility slowly emerges: the temporal dimension of mobility. Up to now, I have put time in brackets and I have concentrated on the issues of space, place and movement. Such a separation is artificial, however, as the works of Harvey (1989) or Munn (1992) reveal. For space, place and movement cannot be separated from the duration of their enactment. Indeed, I would argue that temporality is essential to give sense to the experience of displacement and to the search for permanence.

Spending time when consuming places

The ideology of stability and the discourse on ‘instability’, ‘unrootedness’ and the ‘lack of attachment’, applying most often to tenants as I have shown in Chapter 2, relies upon an ontological conception of duration as dynamic, commonly called the A-series conception (Mellor, 1981; Gell, 1992). Such a conception of duration underlies 19th Century evolutionist thinking, Marx’s theology of a ‘March of History’, not to speak of Heidegger’s Da-sein. As Ingold (1993) puts it, it is a conception of duration which encompasses a pattern of ‘retensions from the past’ and ‘protensions for the future’ and which considers time as immanent in the passage of events. In this respect, the ideology of stability attributes values, not to say virtues, to the length of time spent in a place. This becomes evident in Heidegger’s phenomenology of dwelling as central to the uncovering of the truths of human existence, as we have seen in the first chapter.

Against the dynamic conception of time, advocates of a B-Series conception of time like Mellor (1981), Gell (1992) and Ingold (1993) argue that, “time is not the least dynamic; it is we, on the contrary, who are” (Gell, 1992, 173). The B-series is a conception of time which challenges the ontological character of time, and the idea that time brings change. It challenges the idea that
pastness, presentness and futurity may be real characteristics of events. In attempting to define change, advocates of a B-series view distinguish between events and things such as people, animals, plants and material objects. For them, things and events extend in time and space but only events have temporal parts. Put another way, things extend in space and have properties that change from place to place but not in time. They do not have temporal parts and no temporal characteristics or temporal structure at all. Only events have temporal attributes. That is to say that, although things change, events do not change; they themselves are change, namely changes in things. For the advocates of a B-Series view, events have dates, i.e. 'intrinsic' and 'fundamental' properties that are permanent (Mellor, 1981) and that determine their time-boundedness (Gell, 1992). What is important, then, is to determine a 'scheme', for example a calendar, for relating events to one another; for categorising them as to whether they occur earlier or later than one another. Once the temporal order is defined by means of causation, the issue of the direction of time can be addressed. For Mellor, the direction of time is not to be understood as the difference between past and future but between earlier and later, like the temporal difference between cause and effect (Mellor 1981, 10), whereas the flow of time, which is relatively straightforward, is to be explained by the accumulation of successive memories.

That is: first I have an experience; second I remember having it; third I remember remembering it...

And since memory — what is remembered — is always later in time,

the successive memories of memory can only accumulate successively later, not earlier; this is why our sense of time has the direction it has (Mellor, 1981, 10).

---

1 Advocates of the A-series as well as the B-series view emphasise that we cannot return to the past in the same way that we go forward in the future.
The B-series view is taken to represent 'real' time since it provides a schema for relating events with one another; a schema that exists independently from the position and the role of any observer. It is arguable, however, whether 'reality' is really at issue or if it is not rather 'reliability'. In any case, such a view implies that people are simply in time. It fails to account for the ways in which people like the tenants that I have met in Montreal construct their time. It fails to recognise that time is not a simple container for action. It is no longer a simple resource that can be saved and wasted, what Benjamin Franklin expresses well when saying that, 'Time is money' and 'To waste time is to waste money'.

Drawing upon the works of Munn (1992, 1986) on the Kula exchange, I will contend that we need to recognise how people construct time in the particular kinds of relations they form between themselves and the temporal reference points which are also spatial forms. Just as much as Munn considers action as a symbolic, meaningful and meaning-forming process in which people ongoingly produce both themselves as spatio-temporal beings and the spatio-time of their wider world, I will argue that people in Montreal move in time when they move in space and that they construct duration when doing so. The people met in Montreal, the tenants as well as the owners, usually move into a certain place while being aware that this will not be their last place. These are not 'house builders' nor people who dream about transmitting their house from generation to generation (Gotman, 1999; Chevalier, 1996) when they acquire it. Their moves are typical examples of the consumption of space; consumption understood here in the sense given by Miller (1987) as the appropriation of a materiality that has preceded their cognition of it. Gérard Lambert, for instance, talked about staying in his newly acquired house for at least 10 years in order to take a breath, to take time before moving again. Mira Filipovic talked about remaining in her new condominium until her retirement, in 10 to 15 years, in order to save on the moving costs; until the time she would have paid for her house in full. After that? She would see. Hence, a
place works, but it works for a time only. Gabriel spoke about staying in his loft for 5 to 10 years. He said that he did not see himself bringing up a family “in there”, clearly implying that this form of accommodation suited him for the time being, as long as he was single. When the time would come to raise a family, a new place would impose itself. Otherwise, people simply see their place as part of what Desjeux et al. (1998) calls a ‘broader settlement’ project, a step, just a step towards the realisation of a dream, in Marjo and Rupert’s case that of settling one day on a farm, when they do not simply dream about ‘escaping’ a place that has been imposed on them; when the move is constrained, as in the case of Sandra Parent.

It is also in relation to the anticipated duration of relations that the time people expect to stay in one place is assessed. Régine Mercier saw her condominium as ideal for her, ‘for that time’. But she refrained from considering it as an end in itself because living alone was not an end for her. She used to describe her attachment to a place by emphasising how a place became a part of herself through the organisation of furniture and objects, the hanging of travel photographs, the organisation of the hi-fi and discs. She used to say that the place she inhabited became so much a reflection of her that it appeared difficult for her to even imagine sharing the place with anybody else. She admitted that if she were to meet somebody, she would reconsider staying there. It was not that Régine Mercier refused to share her space, but rather that she refused to share that place. Régine recalled how, when she moved in Laval on the North shore of Montreal with her partner of the time, Thierry, “at Thierry’s place”, there was no place for her. She explained how she could not find an exclusive territory there, a territory where she could retrieve herself mentally. She explained how she felt strangled, how she needed some space, her space, but could not find it there, “at Thierry’s place”. Similarly, Charlotte’s decision to move with Eduardo into a new place is described as a way of building a relationship; whereas for Béatrice Forgues one does not go and dwell at somebody else’s place; people dwell together,
hence they have to settle together, decorate together, create a new space together.

Consuming the marriage with a place

At first sight, what emerges here is a conception of the self that creates itself in the places it invests, a conception of the self that is so strongly embedded in place that changes of relations cannot but go along the changes of places. A place for the self, a change of place for the other. Beyond this first impression, I will contend that the self is constructed in a series of compromises, of temporary compromised accommodations, the word accommodation being used in both senses: that of a place or a dwelling and that of a form of adaptation, of small adjustment. I use the term adaptation here not in the functionalist sense of Rossi (1955, 1980), but in attempting to highlight the role of agency, in attempting to stress its affective component. Indeed, people talk of other people in the way they talk about other places. They behave, through their successive moves, as if they were searching for the ‘perfect’ place or relation, as if they were dealing with a relationship. A place may suit them for the moment. It may not be the perfect place. It may not even suit them totally. But it is temporary. At least, they find in that place what can satisfy their needs and desire at the time. It may not be the kind of place where one would like to spend his or her whole life, it may not be the kind of place one would like to get married to if we were to adopt that metaphor, but it is suitable for a while. When Régine Mercier explains that if she were to meet somebody she would “start over again”, “start from the beginning” in a “neutral place” to save the other the burden of “arriving in her stuff”, she is clearly implicitly confounding the two: the place in which she lives and the person with whom she lives in that place. Place and places are not complete or autonomous in themselves. In this respect, changing place can be understood as part of a broader self-construction project.
The metaphor of the marriage with a place is powerful inasmuch as it clearly highlights that the normative aspect of relationships between people also applies to that between people and places. It allows us to understand in a different light why people may desire not to move, provided that they may have found, or believe that they have found, the perfect place; whereas others may be searching for it, or simply prefer not to constrain themselves to a single place one. In many cases, people, especially younger people, try dwellings and relations as well through those dwellings. They often give themselves time to see how the relationship will go. They give themselves a year, which shows how they do not simply use time and the temporal structure of the housing market with the leases customarily signed up for one year, but construct themselves as subject in relation to others in time and in space. Kim, a 18 year-old student, took an apartment alone. She did it by giving herself a year. She said that she would see after that time whether she preferred to take another apartment with a co-tenant or remain alone. Eduardo, for his part, admitted that he was worried to take an apartment with his girlfriend. He said that he was all right on his own, alone. However, he was willing to try. Try it for a year. Try it, at least, for the experience. Similarly, Caroline and Céline agreed to take an apartment together for a year and to see after that time... The short period becomes a means of coping with risk. It shows that moving is not simply in itself risky as Desjeux et al. (1998) imply, as seems to be the case among the people that they met in France. Moving becomes a strategy to handle life and the risks in relations. It becomes, in some cases, a means of attempting to handle life’s uncertainty or the uncertainty of relations. More than the reflection of some ephemeral relationships, transience and short stays thus translate carefulness. Those mobile people are not emotionally or relationally unstable or devoid of values, they are careful. They try their relationships slowly, in tiny doses, one year at a time. They give themselves a year, wait and see. They try places with people. And through these places, they try people as well. Moving, in this respect, becomes an interplay between people and places. This is why distances matter so little.
Perhaps I should say that this is why it is so unimportant to move over long distances or that it is so important to move, but to do so over a short distance. It is also the reason why the mode of tenure loses its importance from a phenomenological point of view; why, however, the type of accommodation becomes important. Some types of accommodation like condominiums provide owners with a relative freedom of movement.

**Moving is to die a little**

If there are differences in the ways of conceiving permanence and change, these are not so much between the owners and the tenants, but between the age groups. These differences relate to the capacity or the desire to project oneself in the future and in other places.

Most of my informants knew that this move would not be their last, excepting only the more elderly. Most of these elderly people were happy with their move. Most saw their situation as having improved with the move, even though this move was experienced as a crisis, but none of them, with the exception of Mr Richer, wished to move again. Most of them hoped that their new place would be their last, the ‘last resort’ (Hockey, 1999). Some even expressed the wish to die there. Mlle Bolduc confessed that this would be her last residence. “I am not going to move in 5 or 6 months,” as she explained. Mme Debray for her part declared on her moving day, in prophetic fashion, that this would also be her last change of residence and that she would die there. As we have seen, the difficulty of moving, the fear of losing one’s landmarks and the need to put oneself in other people’s hands particularly weigh upon elderly people. As such, the ‘next move’ is apprehended among this group not so much or not only because of the threat it may represent in itself, but because of the materialisation of the imminence of death that accompanies it and that would lead to it. Elderly people know too well what
would be associated with the ‘next move’, the one towards the institution and
the social death accompanying it (Hockey, 1990, 1999). They know that such
a move would be associated with a further deterioration in their health,
another stay in hospital maybe. This is probably why the change of residence
among the elderly people living in residential care is so silenced, why it is such
a taboo topic. Hence, refusing to move, refusing to even consider the
possibility of moving again becomes a refusal of the future; a certain future, at
least.

The wish to remain in place appears to be an expression of the desire, not to
say the hope, to stop the passage of time, to negate the passage of time. Mr
Richer’s case is worth an additional discussion here inasmuch as he offers us
an exception. At the time of moving into his new residence, Mr Richer had
nearly lost the will to live. He saw no point in going on. After a few weeks,
when he had recovered, once his financial worries were sorted out, once he had
started to get involved again with the charitable organisations that he had
neglected for a while because of his bad health and his incapacity to go out, he
began alluding to moving again. And yet, Mr Richer always refused to define
himself, as he said, as a ‘sportsman of the move’ or as a ‘déménageux’. Mr
Richer rather gave the impression that he was pleased with his new residence;
which his fast recovery testifies. I believe that he talked about moving again
because he felt that he could afford it when he felt he had rediscovered his
youth. Hence, it is does not matter whether Mr Richer was serious or not.
What is important, what such a project translates, is Mr Richer’s belief that by
moving away from the residence one could obtain some distance from death,
from the other ‘old people’; reverse the process that the changes of place
objectifies; reverting, through the change of place, the direction of time;

2 Although the move into a residence is often presented as ‘the last choice’, it is usually
recognised that the turnover rate among such residences is high (CMHC, 1997). The president
of l’Association des Résidences pour Rétirés of the Province of Quebec confided in me that
this turnover rate might average 25% on an annual basis and be due to moves into an
institutional setting, the death of residents and the desire of some of them to simply change
residence, to move into a better located residence, etc.

217
counteracting its anisotropy. Hence, an avoidance of moving, namely remaining in place, becomes an attempt to suppress the passage of time. Because moving is to die a little.

Achieving permanence through change

What emerges here is a conception of duration strongly associated with spatiality. It is a conception of the passage of time that gets materialised in these changes of places. It is also a conception of permanence which leaves a place for the idea of change and relies on the idea of change. Indeed, successive moves become part of people’s biography, part of the creation of identity, part of the writing-up of one’s history. The specificity of the Montrealers’ experience of dwelling in space and time appears more fully when compared to the transmission of the ‘family house’ in France from generation to generation which is taken to provide a territorial anchorage in the long run (Gotman, 1988, 1999; Chevalier, 1996). What also emerges here and what pervades Rossi’s (1955, 1980) work on urban mobility in Chicago more generally, is a conception of the dwelling diametrically opposed to that which has traditionally prevailed in France according to Bonvalet and Merlin (1988) and for which dwelling is valorised, more than for its use value, as a primary element of heritage transmitted from one generation to another. It reveals an opposition between the succession of people between places and the succession of people in place; a conception of dwelling built up metaphorically around displacements and in which movement and the change of place play an integral part. Put another way, Montreal people move in time when they move in space. When doing so they construct duration. As such, moving in Montreal forces us to reconsider the very notion of dwelling and that of the creation of place through change, as a mode of appropriation. In itself, it appears to be a way of dwelling. Far from being a measure of somebody’s instability, as the medical discourse might easily lead us to think,
far from being a symptom of a society's instability as Packard (1972) would probably claim, the number of moves becomes part of people's identity. In the end, as this ethnography reveals, against Heidegger's philosophy of dwelling, there is no abstract idea of permanence. Because, for the people in Montreal, moving is just a matter of time.

The Montreal case is in fact highly singular. The 'regime of mobility' prevailing there is so specific that it hardly lends itself to comparison. Yet, this great specificity actually plays in favour of this research. It reveals in a striking way the complexity of the relation between stability and mobility. And beyond that, it reveals the relation between people and place. Having said that, it would be interesting to extend such research to other urban contexts that share similarities with Montreal; I am thinking here of the City of New York which counts a high proportion of tenants just like Montreal does. Such a comparison would allow us to build on a better understanding of tenants' condition in North America. It would also be interesting to extend the research to other groups of people whose lifestyle is characterised by transience. I am thinking, now, about the management of vacant houses in London, and more particularly the housing Co-ops who obtain the right to occupy vacant houses provided that their members agree to move away at any time, with short notice, as often as necessary. Such a comparison would allow us to better understand how people cope with transience and the constant 'threat' of moving and how they create their own sense of stability. Of course these are only few examples of possible avenues to be explored. Nonetheless, they show the need for a broader anthropological investigation of mobility through its multiple forms.
References


Progress in Canada since 1945, Resource paper no. 2, INRS-Urbanisation, University of Toronto, Centre for Urban Studies, Société Canadienne d'hypothèque et de logement.


Confédération des syndicats nationaux (1968) Procès verbal de la 43ème session du Congrès de la CSN. Québec.


McMurray, C. (1996-97) "Les règles particulières au bail d'un logement", in Obligations, contrats et perceptions. vol. 5, 225-244.


Ringuet (1938) Trente arpents. Montreal, Fides y.


Thibault-Robert, L. (1974-75) "Les organismes et les recours crées par la Loi pour favoriser la conciliation entre locataires et propriétaires", in Formation permanente, cours 51, Montréal, Barreau du Québec, 30-57.


Magazines and newspapers


Bel Age, May 1989, “Déménager... tout en se ménageant”, by G. Girard.

Canadian Living, March 1987, “Moving Without Tears. Prepare Your Children for their New Home”.


Chatelaine (Eng. ed.) April 1986, “How to Take Misery Out of Moving”.

Chatelaine (Fr. ed.) July 1981, “La déménagite aigue”.

Children Today, May/June 1987, “Helping Children Adjust to Moving”.

Consommation, le magazine d’information et d’action d’Option consommateurs, Spring 1998, “Déménagement. Pour éviter les mauvaises surprises”.

Consommation, le magazine d’information et d’action d’Option consommateurs, Spring 1997, “Changer d’adresse, ça coûte cher”.


Good Housekeeping, August 1986, “Moving? This can make it easier”.


Justice, April 1984, “Déménager sans se faire embarquer”, by J.D. Lamoureux.


La Presse, 8th January 2001, “Nous déménagerons moins à l’avenir “, by M.C. Malboeuf.


La Presse, 22nd November 2000, “Forum”.

La Presse, 17th November 2000, “Moins de taxes pour 86% des Montréalais, promet Bouchard”, by D. Lessard.

La Presse, 17th November 2000, “Forum”.

La Presse, 17th November 2000, “Un vote pour le Bloc est un vote pour les fusions forcées”, by D. Lessard.


La Presse, 5th February 2000, “Une île, une ville: un débat qui touche toute la société québécoise”, by S. Gosselin.

La Presse, 10th July 1999, “Des frais inévitables reliés au déménagement”.

La Presse, 2nd July 1999, “Le déménagement, un sport populaire”.

La Presse, 2nd July 1998, “Le Grand Dérangement, version 1er juillet...”.

La Presse, 17th June 1998, “Saison de la bougeotte”.

La Presse, 2nd May 1998 “Conseils d’experts”, by S. Morin.

La Presse, 31st May 1997, “Un déménageur compétent et fiable détient d’ordinaire un permis validé par la Commission des transports”.

La Presse, 29th June 1996, “Haro sur les déménageurs au noir”.

La Presse, 18th October 1995, “Pour faciliter le déménagement”.

La Presse, 30th June 1994, “La grande migration du 1er juillet”, by P. Bergeron.

La Presse, 29th June 1993, “Déménager sans se faire rouler, un art qui demande de la préparation”.

La Presse, 30th June 1992, “Quand le déménagement vous démange, il faut savoir à qui s’adresser”.

La Presse, 6th June 1992, “Il est important de choisir une entreprise de déménagement fiable”.

La Presse, 28th May 1992, “Déménagements: une année record”.

La Presse, 30th June 1991, “Quelque 150 000 Montréalais déménagent”.


La Presse, 22nd June 1991 “La location d’un camion de déménagement”, by F. Bernard.
Parents Magazine, April 1994, “Good-Bye House”.
Parents Magazine, June 1992, “Adjusting to a Move”.
Parents Magazine, May 1986, “Moving to a New Home”.
Parents Magazine, April 1986, “Smooth moves”.
Parents Magazine, June 1983, “Moving Day. Here’s Advice on Helping your Family Adjust to their New Home”.
Parents Magazine, April 1979, “Moving Day: You Can Get There From Here”.
Parents Magazine, February 1971, “Moving made easy”.
Prevention, September 1989, “On the Move with your Cat”.
Protégez-vous, April 1982, “Les déménagements”.
Protégez-vous, April 1979, “Les hauts et les bas du déménagement”.
Redhook, July 1977, “Moving”.
Science Digest, December 1976, “How to hurt a kid”.
The Gazette, 16th July 1969, “Moving day ‘bugs’ are ending”.

Memoirs submitted to the Civil Code Revision Office

Association des locataires de la région métropolitaine de Montréal, Montréal, Québec, 19th September 1969.
Association du camionnage du Québec, Montréal, Québec, 17th July 1969.
Association féminine d’éducation familiale, Montréal, Québec, 16th September 1969.
Baillargeon, J.B., express, Montréal, Québec, 17th July 1969.
Bank of Montreal, Montréal, Québec, 24th September 1969.
Banque provinciale du Canada, Montréal, Québec, 29th September 1969.
Banque royale, Montréal, Québec, 9th September 1969.
Bell Canada, Montréal, Québec, September 1969.
Canadian association of movers, Ottawa, Ontario, 26th September 1969.
Cercle Codere, Sherbrooke, Québec, 23rd September 1969.
Challies, G.S., Juge en chef adjoint, Cour supérieure du Québec, Québec, 22nd August 1969.
Chambre de commerce des jeunes du district de Montréal, Montréal, Québec, 8th September 1969.
Comité consultatif de parents Paroisse St-Paul-Apôtre, Québec, Québec, 15th September 1969.
Confédération des syndicats nationaux, Montréal, Québec, 29th September 1969.
Diocese of Montréal, Montréal, Québec, 7th August 1969.
Fédération des unions de familles, inc., Verdun, Québec.
Hahlo, H.R., Director of the McGill University, Institute of Comparative and Foreign Law, Montreal, Québec, 16th July 1969.
Hill de Mover, Montreal, Québec, 30th July 1969.
Lavergne express enr., Shawinigan, Québec, 18th July 1969.
Lettarte, P., Cour supérieurs, cabinet des juges, Québec, Québec, 25th August 1969.
Ligue des propriétaires de Montréal, Montréal, Québec, 29th September 1969.
Ordre St-Jean, Montréal, Québec, 24th September 1969.
Ouimet, R., Cour supérieures, chambre des juges, Québec, Québec, 29th August 1969.
Parish of Chaleur Bay, Port Daniel, Québec, 5th August 1969.
Perrier, H., Cour supérieure, chambre des juges, Québec, Québec, 1st October 1969.
Résidents de l’est de Montréal, Montréal, Québec, 22nd July 1969.
Suburban agents, Montreal, Québec, 17th July 1969.
Institute of Real Estate Management, National Association of Real Estate Boards, Montréal, Québec, 15th August 1969.
Westmount Moving and Warehousing limited, Montréal, Québec, 18th July 1969.
Appendices
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Profile</th>
<th>Moved from</th>
<th>Moved into</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kim G.</td>
<td>18 year-old</td>
<td>5 1/2 room apartment rented in co-tenancy in</td>
<td>Studio rented on the Plateau neighbourhood,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>the Hochelaga-Maisonneuve neighbourhood, Montreal</td>
<td>Montreal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Single</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Canadian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>French as mother tongue</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marie-Sol T.</td>
<td>18 year-old</td>
<td>5 1/2 room apartment rented in co-tenancy on</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>the Plateau neighbourhood, Montreal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Single</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Canadian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>French as mother tongue</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte D.</td>
<td>20 year-old</td>
<td>5 1/2 room apartment rented in co-tenancy in</td>
<td>4 1/2 room apartment rented in couple the Petite-Patrie neighbourhood, Montreal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>the Petite-Patrie neighbourhood, Montreal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In couple</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Canadian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>French as mother tongue</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eduardo</td>
<td>25 year-old</td>
<td>4 1/2 room apartment rented in co-tenancy in</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deliverer</td>
<td>the Côte-des-Neiges neighbourhood, Montreal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In couple</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chilian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spanish as mother tongue</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caroline P.</td>
<td>24 year-old</td>
<td>4 1/2 room apartment rented in co-tenancy in</td>
<td>4 1/2 room apartment rented in co-tenancy in the Hochelaga-Maisonneuve neighbourhood, Montreal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Horticulturist</td>
<td>the Sud-Ouest neighbourhood, Montreal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Canadian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>French as mother tongue</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Céline P.</td>
<td>25 year-old</td>
<td>Parents' home in the Cartierville neighbourhood, Montreal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Single</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Canadian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>French as mother tongue</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabriel T.</td>
<td>26 year-old</td>
<td>4 1/2 room apartment rented in co-tenancy in</td>
<td>Owned-occupied loft in the Hochelaga-Maisonneuve neighbourhood, Montreal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social worker</td>
<td>the Hochelaga-Maisonneuve neighbourhood, Montreal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Single</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Canadian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>French as mother tongue</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anne R.</td>
<td>27 year-old</td>
<td>Co-tenant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social worker</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Researcher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Single</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Canadian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>French as mother tongue</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julie T.</td>
<td>27 year-old</td>
<td>3 1/2 room apartment rented on the Plateau</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social worker</td>
<td>neighbourhood, Montreal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Single</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Canadian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>French as mother tongue</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>Living Situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rupert R.</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Municipal employee</td>
<td>6 1/2 room apartment rented in co-tenancy on the Plateau neighbourhood, Montreal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marjo S.</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Community worker</td>
<td>6 1/2 room apartment rented in co-tenancy on the Plateau neighbourhood, Montreal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Régine Mercier</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Assistant chief nurse</td>
<td>House owned in joint-ownership in the Ahuntsic neighbourhood, Montreal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rivera family</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Receive social benefits</td>
<td>4 1/2 room apartment rented in council estate in the Ahuntsic neighbourhood, Montreal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gigi Tremblay</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Receives social benefits</td>
<td>3 1/2 room apartment rented in the Ahuntsic neighbourhood, Montreal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandra Parent</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Receive social benefits</td>
<td>6 1/2 room apartment rented in council estate in the Hochelaga-Maisonneuve neighbourhood, Montreal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs Blackburn</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Owned-occupied house in I'le Bizard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Béatrice Forgues</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>6 1/2 room apartment rented in the Ahuntsic neighbourhood, Montreal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1, Continued**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Housing Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lambert family</td>
<td>47 year-old electrician; 42 year-old sales-person</td>
<td>Married couple; Two children: aged of 17 and 15 year-old; Canadian and French; French as mother tongue</td>
<td>7 1/2 room apartment rented in the Ahuntsic neighbourhood, Montreal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mira Filipovic</td>
<td>49 year-old Engineer</td>
<td>Single; in charge of a 12 year-old child; Serbian; Serb as mother tongue</td>
<td>5 1/2 room apartment rented in Ville St.Laurent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Legrand</td>
<td>63 year-old</td>
<td>Receives social benefits; Divorced; Canadian; French as mother tongue</td>
<td>2 1/2 room apartment in council estate in the Ahuntsic neighbourhood, Montreal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mme Debray</td>
<td>68 year-old</td>
<td>Retired; Widow; French; French as mother tongue</td>
<td>3 1/2 room apartment rented in a private sheltered housing in Outremont</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mme Baptiste</td>
<td>69 year-old</td>
<td>Retired; Divorced; Canadian; French as mother tongue</td>
<td>??? apartment in council estate in the Petite-Patrie neighbourhood, Montreal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Ricard</td>
<td>71 year-old</td>
<td>Retired; Widow; Canadian; French as mother tongue</td>
<td>Owned-occupied house in the Ahuntsic neighbourhood, Montreal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Trenet</td>
<td>73 year-old</td>
<td>Retired; Single; Canadian; French as mother tongue</td>
<td>3 1/2 room apartment rented in a private sheltered housing in Outremont</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mme Cabot</td>
<td>78 year-old</td>
<td>Retired; Widow; Canadian; French as mother tongue</td>
<td>3 1/2 room apartment for retired people rented in the Côte-des-Neiges neighbourhood, Montreal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Richer</td>
<td>81 year-old</td>
<td>Retired; Divorced; Canadian; French as mother tongue</td>
<td>Room rented in non-profitable residential care in the Notre-Dame-de-Grâce neighbourhood, Montreal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1, *Continued*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Housing</th>
<th>Accommodation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mme Hebert</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>3 1/2 room apartment</td>
<td>Room rented in private residential care on the Plateau neighbourhood, Montreal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Widow</td>
<td>rented in a private sheltered housing in Outremont</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Canadian</td>
<td>Room rented in private residential care, Longueuil</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>French as mother tongue</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Mlle Bolduc | 89  | Retired | 3 1/2 room apartment | Room rented in private residential care, Longueuil |
|            |     | Single  | rented in Ville Mont-Royal |                                             |
|            |     | Canadian|                                             |                                             |
|            |     | French as mother tongue |                                             |
Table 2 Mobility status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CITY OF MONTREAL</th>
<th>Non-movers</th>
<th>Movers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Int. migration</td>
<td>Ext. migration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population over 5 years-old</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 years before</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>452 125</td>
<td>317 990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>443 725</td>
<td>313 940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>461 905</td>
<td>341 975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>443 870</td>
<td>349 235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>513 355</td>
<td>377 910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population over 1 year-old</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 year before</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>796 645</td>
<td>134 277</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CENSUS METROPOLITAN AREA OF MONTREAL</th>
<th>Non-migrants</th>
<th>Migrants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population over 5 years-old</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 years before</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>1 713 885</td>
<td>725 910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>1 474 865</td>
<td>695 885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>1 312 800</td>
<td>709 620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population over 1 year-old</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 year before</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>2 765 805</td>
<td>277 785</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Statistics Canada

\(a\) Non-movers are the persons who, on the census day, lived at the same address than 5 years ago (in the case of the population aged over 5) or 1 year ago (in the case of the population aged over 1).

\(b\) Movers are the persons who, on the moving day, lived at a different address.

\(c\) Non-migrants are the persons who, on the moving day, lived at a different address within the same municipality.

\(d\) Migrants are the persons who moved into another municipality.

\(e\) Internal migrants are the persons who moved into a different municipality in Canada.

\(f\) External migrants are the persons who come from outside Canada.
Table 3 The evolution of the patterns of housing tenure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CITY OF MONTREAL</th>
<th>Owned dwellings</th>
<th>Rented dwellings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>27,2%</td>
<td>72,8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>26,5</td>
<td>73,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>25,6</td>
<td>74,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>22,0</td>
<td>78,0*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>18,5</td>
<td>81,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>19,2</td>
<td>80,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>17,5</td>
<td>82,5*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>11,5</td>
<td>88,5*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>14,5</td>
<td>85,1*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>14,8</td>
<td>85,2*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>15,0</td>
<td>85,0*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>15,0</td>
<td>85,0*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>15,0</td>
<td>85,0*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>14,7</td>
<td>85,3**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>18,2</td>
<td>81,8**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1847</td>
<td>31,6</td>
<td>68,4**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CENSUS METROPOLITAN AREA OF MONTREAL</th>
<th>Owned dwellings</th>
<th>Rented dwellings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>48,4%</td>
<td>51,6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>46,7</td>
<td>53,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>44,7</td>
<td>55,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>41,7</td>
<td>58,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>38,2</td>
<td>61,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>35,3</td>
<td>64,7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Statistics Canada
* Census data reproduced from Choko (1987)
** Hertzog (1985)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighbourhood</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Average income (1995)</th>
<th>Proportion of tenants</th>
<th>Movers</th>
<th>Rate of unemployment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parc Extension</td>
<td>29 820</td>
<td>23 007$</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>51.1%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hochelaga-M.</td>
<td>53 740</td>
<td>26 107</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>59.6%</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petite-Patrie</td>
<td>49 445</td>
<td>27 529</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>56.3%</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St-Michel</td>
<td>57 430</td>
<td>29 175</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>46.5%</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villerey</td>
<td>54 690</td>
<td>29 304</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>52.5%</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosemont</td>
<td>62 010</td>
<td>30 061</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>53.0%</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sud-Ouest</td>
<td>69 910</td>
<td>31 948</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>51.0%</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plateau Mt-Royal</td>
<td>99 745</td>
<td>32 198</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>62.3%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ville-Marie</td>
<td>66 440</td>
<td>32 261</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>64.6%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Côte-des-Neiges</td>
<td>97 675</td>
<td>35 943</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>58.0%</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mercier</td>
<td>52 200</td>
<td>37 819</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahuntsic</td>
<td>77 680</td>
<td>39 924</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>47.1%</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cartierville</td>
<td>45 430</td>
<td>40 176</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>45.0%</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nouv. Rosemont</td>
<td>37 350</td>
<td>42 249</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>41.3%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.D.G.</td>
<td>63 110</td>
<td>42 784</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>50.9%</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riv-des-Prairies</td>
<td>46 505</td>
<td>43 884</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>32.4%</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pte-aux-trembles</td>
<td>53 155</td>
<td>45 347</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>43.2%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Profil socio-économique, Ville de Montreal