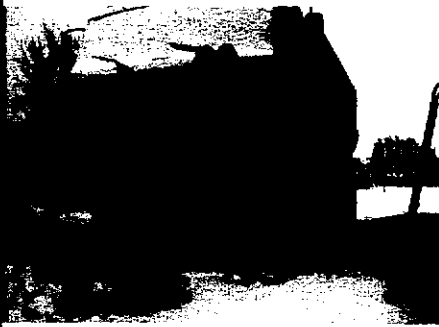


# **FAMILY, KINSHIP AND STATE IN CONTEMPORARY EUROPE**

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**Vol. 2**  
**The View from Below:  
Nineteen Localities**  
Patrick Heady,  
Peter Schweitzer (eds.)

**campus**

## Introduction

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The French team chose to study a district in Nanterre, a large Parisian suburb, Dole, a medium-sized town located in the eastern part of the country, and Monhiolas and Atignac, two agricultural villages eighty kilometres from Toulouse. There were two reasons for this decision: firstly to present a selection of sites reflecting the social diversity of France, albeit they have no claim to being representative, and secondly, to base the KASS project on areas already under investigation, thereby providing contextual knowledge before starting with the questionnaires and ethnographic observations.

A study of kinship relations was carried out fifteen years ago in the "Liberté", a building located in the "Parc" area, as part of an extensive fieldwork project in Nanterre. It was helpful to have the history of the building and the "quartier" at hand, and contacts were renewed with an influential local association still led by people who were interviewed at the time. Previously industrial, Nanterre is now becoming a white-collar area (with a large section of migrants from the Maghreb). Thus the selected site provides access to a middle-class, suburban, mobile population. The building's 500 apartments (rented or owned) are home to 2,000 people. Salaried employees, such as engineers and civil servants working in the education sector, usually work in Paris, which is well serviced by the RER system.

Although no previous ethnological research had been carried out in Dole, a medium-sized town of 25,000 inhabitants in Franche-Comté, the fact that the two researchers teach (and/or) live there provided them with social and historical background knowledge, local connections, and initial contacts with administrators and associations that led them to their informants. Dole still retains some industry and is surrounded by farmland. Its social and economic transformation is representative of small and medium towns in provincial France. De-industrialization and the development of

services, especially tourism linked to the creation of heritage areas (e.g., city centres, buildings, landscaping) to the detriment of small industry, has led to a higher unemployment rate than the national average, an ageing population and the growing presence of outsiders.

The study of Monhiolas (180 inhabitants) and Atignac (120 inhabitants) provides an indispensable rural dimension and with it, a striking example of solidarity based on the family. Both villages are situated in an area that was fully explored some years ago in a study of the "house-oriented system" based on an inegalitarian, non-partible inheritance pattern. Here a single heir and successor inherits the property, the "house", a social entity composed of material and non-material goods (farm, land, tools, symbols, name, status). The result is the formation of "stem family" households, which are a source of intergenerational solidarity. The two villages are currently part of a doctoral research project that is examining the future of this system in the face of far-reaching transformations in the rural areas of France. Two opposite trends can be discerned: whereas farming has undergone radical change and land has been abandoned, English and Dutch newcomers have settled there during the last decade. Yet geographical isolation somehow helps to maintain traditional social relations. The two villages embody these trends in their different ways: Monhiolas has retained its dynamism, today with a small but valuable core of young farmers, while Atignac is in precipitous decline.

The investigations were enriched by the fact that the villagers' genealogies had already been collected before KASS got under way.

## Kinship network between affective

*Martine Segalen and Van*

The French urban KASS lower- and middle-class sociability are enmeshed. building with the imaginative mixed suburb of 80,000 graphic growth during the industrial centre that was 1936. Immigrants, mainly who had left their tiny horticultural development and population crisis. In the 1960s, Nanterre "bidonvilles", where new immigrants in miserable conditions were introduced to provide them

Many "cités" are now with the rest of Nanterre, and third-generation migrants row streets reminiscent of 1830s. After a period of decline, it retains shops, cinemas, markets, the price of which is constantly rising. A large camp was erected on a large camp

Past a large avenue, a "cité", with massive apartment buildings were constructed through urban development, which Parisian business headquarters the Arc de Triomphe began

## Conclusion

Referring to the original hypothesis of contrasting north and south European countries with regard to KASS, the Nanterre Liberté residents present a mixed picture. On the one hand, strong kinship networks, and on the other, generous state benefits, making it difficult to discern whether state services encourage or discourage family support. Assessing comparative European surveys related to the study of intergenerational relations in an aging world, Howard Litwin (2005), in view of the complex results, stresses the "filial maturity of women who are willing to help as dependent upon psychological resources, and specifically upon their sense of attachment with their own offspring". In other words, and this is quite illuminating in relation to the variety of patterns encountered in the Liberté, the extent of the relationship is linked to relations of affection that have been built up over the years between the generations. Vertical ties appear binding. On the horizontal side, relationships are elective, with some very strong and others entirely absent. An additional dimension to the pattern is the residential proximity observed in the Liberté, a vast building transformed over time into a small-scale village, with strong neighbourly groups ready to provide help and information. The relevance of two parameters – residential proximity and elective relations could thus enrich the variety of solidarity models.

## The spatial anchorage of kinship: the Dole case study

*Sophie Chevalier and Laurent Amiotte-Suchet*

### The town of Dole

Dole is a medium-sized town located in eastern France between Paris and Besançon, and could be described as a typical French "provincial" town, with some industry and agriculture in the surrounding areas. In contrast to other towns in Franche-Comté, Dole is not close to the Swiss border, which means that the workforce stays in the area and does not have to commute to Switzerland (see Dole's web pages<sup>1</sup>). In the course of the twentieth century, traditional industries (blast furnaces, smelting works and large mills) gradually disappeared, giving way to chemicals, ceramics, electronics, electrical appliances, textiles and food processing (biscuits and cheese). Its pattern of social and economic transformation is representative of small and medium towns in provincial France. This includes de-industrialization and the development of the services sector, especially tourism linked to the creation of heritage sites (e.g., buildings, city centre, landscaping), a process that has pushed small industries to the outskirts of the town. The result is unemployment (the rate is higher than the national average), an ageing population and a growing presence of outsiders. The last census (1999) counted just under 25,000 inhabitants.

The ageing of the Dole population, a process that began thirty years ago, has influenced town council policies. More emphasis is now placed on security and on cultural resources for the elderly. The local police force, for example, has been reinforced and systems of video surveillance have been installed<sup>2</sup>. In the cultural domain, the Art Museum has organized special

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.dole.org/sitedole/default.htm> and

<http://www.dole.org/sitedole/PRESENTATION/presentation1.html>

<sup>2</sup> Between 1984 and 2004, the number of municipal policemen almost doubled (see [http://www.dole.org/sitedole/HOTEL\\_DE\\_VILLE/CADRE\\_DE\\_VIE/police\\_municipale\\_bas.html](http://www.dole.org/sitedole/HOTEL_DE_VILLE/CADRE_DE_VIE/police_municipale_bas.html)).

exhibitions for elderly visitors; the multimedia library raised money to buy books with larger print and organized a system that brings books to people in their homes. Dole has a well-established child-care system run by the town council; one official stated that there was "no shortage in this domain". There are two public child-care centres (*crèches collectives*), a day nursery (*halte-garderie*) and a centre that combines professional and parental care (*crèche familiale*). Parents can collect the necessary information in a certain place (*relais parents*). The town has twelve state nursery schools (children can start school when they are two years old), two private nursery schools and a total of ten after-school clubs. There is also a school catering system and two leisure centres for children and teenagers. According to the town council authorities and the informants we met, the inhabitants of Dole are quite satisfied with their public services. We will see later if and how they use these public facilities and resources.

### Family profiles

In this section, we attempt to find out what some of our informants have in common and will outline a number of profiles to highlight key aspects of mutual assistance between kin.

We interviewed twenty people in all and would like to add more relevant information on these households;

- There are almost as many single female parents as there are couples with children; the former are more likely to need support from their family network; they are also the worst off financially.
- Most of our informants are natives of Dole and the surrounding villages.
- The occupations of our informants varied considerably, but the majority is of peasant or working-class origin. The few professional mothers were nurses or schoolteachers. There is no informant of genuine "bourgeois" origin as in the Nanterre case. Most informants enjoyed modest upward social mobility, especially those who became professionals during the "three glorious decades" (*trente glorieuses*, the post-war period between 1945 and 1975). It is more difficult for younger informants to gain a foothold in professions.

- Younger informants rented their accommodation, while older informants owned their houses. Around a third of our informants had access to a second house, either without ownership rights or because they owned or more often co-owned one with their kin (see the inheritance system and examples, 138).

It is clearly not possible to establish any one explanation for the link between kin relations and mutual help, and this would in all probability be frowned upon by theorists. Nevertheless, based on life histories and statistical data collected in the KNQ, we can identify certain family "profiles" or ideal types according to genealogy, geographical fixity and the frequency of interaction. These profiles are not an end in themselves, but they help us to extract and highlight specific and interesting aspects of our ethnographical data.

#### 1. The Franc-Comtois integrated family

Ego's grandparents were born in Dole and lived there or in the surrounding villages of Franche-Comté. A family farm habitually lies at the core of the network and is used as a meeting place. The family is large and the majority of its members still live in or around Dole or in Franche-Comté. Interaction between members is frequent due to geographical proximity.

#### 2. The Franc-Comtois dispersed family

These families originally come from Dole and the surrounding villages, but the living members of the family are settled far from Franche-Comté (but in France). This is especially true for elderly people. A number of same-generation kin live in Dole or nearby, although many have died, and the younger generation has left the area. As a result, their surviving relationships are focused on infrequent interaction with their children who live elsewhere.

### 3. The dispersed family

As a rule, ego's family of origin is not native to the Jura region, but elsewhere in France. S/he is not greatly familiar with the genealogy, but this is less significant than in the case of the first two profiles. Relations between family members are less frequent and people tend to meet at annual family festivals. Ego's kin relations are confined to the nuclear family. Interaction is frequent and primarily takes place via phone calls.

### 4. The broken family

These families share features with the last group but are deeply marked by conflict, either a recent personal dispute or an old feud transmitted from one generation to the next. It could, for instance, be a sequence of divorces in a linked pattern. Ego often organizes his/her life story around this conflict, using it to justify most answers on family relationships. As a result, the genealogy is split into two groups, one of which ego knows well and maintains relations with, while the opposite is true of the other group. This division might be objectified as ego losing his/her access to the "family house"; or, for example through selective attendance at family festivals after a divorce.

From these profiles we can now move to a more detailed description and analysis, firstly of genealogical knowledge and secondly of patterns of kin relations.

### Patterns of kin relations and mutual aid

If we examine how many persons ego can name in building up his/her genealogy, two opposing patterns emerge:

- Stéphane names 138 people. He is a twenty-nine-year-old student who lives with Caroline (a self-employed nurse) and their child (Téo). Both come from Dole. His parents were working-class and his grandparents, peasants. He has contact with his entire family, most of whom live close to Dole.

- Thierry from Marseille is able to name only thirty-four people. Of middle-class origin, he came to Dole as a schoolteacher. His father was an engineer and his mother an accountant. He came there because of his girlfriend, Jessika, whom he first met on a beach in the south of France. The relationship did not last and he now lives alone in Franche-Comté. He has cultivated friendships, but his kin live far away, and his relationship with Jessika did not last long enough for him to establish relations with Jessika's family.

Regardless of the size of the collected genealogies, they were always quite extensive. Apart from the extreme figures cited above, the mean size was eight-eight relatives. The fact that people are able to name members of their kin, however, does not necessarily imply that they have contact with all of them. We found significant differences between known and useful kin in the response to the question (on the KNQ) *How many contacts did you have over the last month?* We are aware that answers to this question will obviously differ according to the time of the interview (Christmas and the summer holidays are peak periods for contact with relatives) and the geographical distance between kin. It can be said, however, that on average people had recent contact with 20 per cent of their known kin. Not surprisingly, a higher percentage of contact is found among young people, i.e., those who have good relations with their kin (e.g., no divorce or serious conflict) and those whose kin live in Franche-Comté. Older informants tended to report a lower percentage: a substantial part of their genealogy was no longer alive and some had health problems, thereby reducing their contacts. These figures suggest that people are only in contact with approximately a quarter of their kindred, with the exception of specific occasions (e.g., weddings, funerals, special family gatherings).

We will now distinguish between two groups of kin to whom people could turn for mutual aid: intergenerational kinship and same-generation kin. It is also important to distinguish regular patterns of help in everyday life as well as those associated with crisis or exceptional difficulties.

### Intergenerational kinship

This first pattern of mutual aid is widespread and more common. Without exception, all informants mentioned intergenerational mutual aid. It is "natural" to ask your parents or children for help; it does not require justi-

fication. Even in families marked by conflict, parent-child relations were rarely affected. Mutual aid between generations is linked to stages in the life cycle. We found numerous instances of people looking after their grandchildren to help daughters who were working mothers. It is less common for parents to look after their young children without any help from their own parents. When the latter are older, they frequently require assistance from their adult children or even their grandchildren. We also found instances of weekly, if not daily, help given to elderly parents by their children. Nevertheless, the flow of help is more common from parents to children than vice versa.

Mutual intergenerational help is not limited to taking care of children or the elderly. It extends to financial support and the exchange of services and labour. Informants often mentioned that they had either received or given money, sometimes quite a substantial amount. Annie, a working-class forty-one-year-old divorcee, said that she had given her daughter 4,500 euro (several times her monthly income) to help her buy a car. Lucienne, Annie's mother, helps her daughter by minding her younger children; by doing the shopping for her, Annie also helps her mother. Annie belongs to the "pivot generation" that has the twofold task of helping their children to a good start in life and at the same time taking care of their own parents if they are still alive. Another member of the *pivot generation* is Christine, who helps her children by giving them money (for food and clothes) and taking care of their children (she looks after her two grandchildren at least twice a week). Christine also helps her father, an eighty-two-year-old widower. She visits him every week and helps him to stay on the move; she also shops and cooks for him and does his housework.

In fact, child care is the most common task of grandparents. Based on our material, we even argue that people prefer to solve the issue of child care within the kin network than to avail of professional services. Our informants do not consider professional care or help from neighbours an adequate substitute for care given by kin. Valérie's son, for example, lives with his grandparents in a village outside Dole; Valérie prefers this solution to a childminder or a child-care centre in Besançon or later on in Dole (although as a single mother on a low income she is entitled to this). She thinks it is better for her son's education to be with his grandparents.

"I was made redundant by my company and had to go and live with my parents from 1993 to 1994; it was difficult for me. When I'm teaching I always say that we are part of a sacrificial generation, that we're a hinge between two big generations.

I had to apply to the IUFM in Besançon. I was living alone with my small baby in a tiny flat. It wasn't easy. I left Marc (her son) with a girlfriend when I attended lectures [...]. Marc was three when I lost my job in 1997 at the institution where I was a trainee. I decided to give Marc to my parents. During the week he lived in Pèmes (her parents' village) and went to school there. I visited them at the weekend. My parents raised him and still do. I owe them a lot. Thanks to them, I was able to continue my training at a consultant agency in Dijon (Valérie)."

In these practices of mutual aid, all the parties are aware of their indebtedness and endeavour to maintain a measure of reciprocity. Nevertheless, for those of our informants who were in difficult financial circumstances or personal crisis, dealing with this debt was far from easy. Arnaud feels guilty about leaning on his parents: his girlfriend is still a student and receives very little support from her own family, while his income as a computer shop assistant is low. Consequently, he is obliged to ask his parents for assistance in paying bills and the rent. Arnaud, on the other hand, is good with his hands and helps his parents and sister as often as he can in whatever way is needed.

Intergenerational kinship as the primary source of mutual assistance was crucial to our informants. Relationships are robust and can only be damaged by an exceptional event. Even lack of reciprocity in exchange does not constitute a reason for parents and children to go their separate ways. Mutual aid among intergenerational kin was a "natural" occurrence for our informants, although it could occasionally be a heavy burden. This does not apply to kin of the same generation.

#### Same-generation kin

In contrast to intergenerational kin relations, mutual aid between same-generation kin is less frequent and more fragile. We heard numerous accounts of conflict between brothers and sisters, usually in the context of inheritance. Odette H., for example, fought with her brothers and sisters over inheritance, and because they had left her to take care of her parents alone.

The best example of mutual aid among same-generation kin was Sandrine, who came to Dole from the Loire valley to be close to her sister.

"I never really liked school. My father was very worried and put me in a religious school with strict discipline, where the nuns taught sewing. I didn't want to sew,

but I did it and finally got a diploma and my first job as an apprentice [...]. My father remarried (his first wife left and took the children with her) and I met Jean-Michel, my step-mother's brother. Yes! We lived together for six years, from 1990 to 1996, and then our two daughters were born (Sabrina and Jessica). Jean-Michel and my step-mother were from Guadeloupe. In 1996, he left me and went back to live there. After that I lived with my two daughters. He is now married again and has three more daughters [...]. I have always worked in the sewing industry, mainly in leather. In 2000, the firm I worked for went bankrupt and I was made redundant. My older sister had just settled in Dole, because her husband had moved there. There was nothing holding me in Maine et Loire anymore, so I left because I needed a change. I came to live close to my sister and found a flat in the same building. I tried to find a job in the sewing sector and enrolled with a temporary agency. But my branch of work has not developed in Dole, so I took what I could get. I worked a lot in the farm-produce industry on production lines! Now I work in a thermoplastic factory, but I'm still a temp (Sandrine)."

Financial aid between brothers and sisters was not common; only Valérie and Arnaud mentioned that they had received money from their siblings. Brothers and sisters tend to exchange services such as childminding, gardening and do-it-yourself. This type of mutual aid among siblings is not related to a particular age group.

Our informants also mentioned their first cousins as same-generation kin. Although they rarely have regular contact, they enjoy meeting them at family gatherings (e.g., weddings, anniversaries, festivals). Christine mentioned her participation in *cousinades*, a party that brings first and second cousins together. In her case, these meetings objectified family conflict by excluding a whole group of kin.

Same-generation kin are not the first to turn to when it comes to mutual aid. Parents and children take precedence. However, they do play important role in supporting each other at all stages of the life cycle. It could be argued that mutual aid and contact to same-generation kin is selective, and less "natural" than that between intergenerational kin. There is an even more selective category of kin, which we choose to call "adoptive".

#### Adoptive kin relations

By "adoptive" kin we mean the people our informants choose to emphasize as kin for a variety of reasons, usually their partner's family network: either because they have never known their own kin or have been separated from them, or because they are in conflict with their own family or

relations have been disrupted by divorce. Ludovic, who is now sixty-two years old, hardly remembers his mother, who died when he was six. Nobody was prepared to tell him who his father was (Ludovic is convinced he was a German soldier). He was brought up by his maternal grandmother. When he got married to Raymonde, who comes from a Dole shopkeeper family, they built their house next to that of his parents-in-law. He and Raymonde now take care of her father, who is a widower. He has an excellent relationship with his father-in-law and they spend a lot of time gardening together. Ludovic feels traumatized by his childhood; but instead of claiming to have adopted his in-laws, he tells us that entering this family made him lose his independence and that they had in fact taken over his life.

Sometimes the choice of in-laws ends in disaster, especially in the case of divorce. Christine, who never had a good relationship with her own sisters, was close to her husband's family (brothers and sisters) because they lived in the same village. After her divorce in 2003, however, she was completely cut off from this group of kin. She moved to Dole to be close to her daughters.

Informants with "adopted" kin did not feel they had a choice, since for various reasons ties with their own kin were severed. Even in such extreme situations, it seems that people need kin to operate in society.

#### Where are these kin relations embodied?

In this section, we would like to examine how kin relationships and mutual aid are embodied or, in other words, to find out the concrete conditions for kin relations and mutual help. We have already shown the significance of geographical proximity. Our informants rarely used e-mail but tended to call faraway kin by phone. However, their contacts and exchanges were primarily based on face-to-face relations.

More accurately, the kin network is embodied by the family home, which is a place to meet and frequently to exchange services: "the pivot house". Our informants were not usually the owner of such a house, but in their view this place embodies their family. Even if they had not inherited the house, they were not and did not feel excluded from the place. They always – except in a case of conflict – retained a right to return, to visit and



sometimes to stay in the house. When people are forced to sell a family house, like Odette H., it is always painful.

Patrick does not own the family house, which was his grandparents' farm, but goes there often to meet his uncles. For René, the whole village is his family home, because a number of houses belong to his family, where he is always welcome and feels at home. Annie speaks about her mother's sister's holiday home, where she goes every summer with her three children. As a family house it gives her the opportunity to meet other members of her kin on her mother's side. Hence a house can also embody the separation of two lineages<sup>3</sup>. As we mentioned in Section 2, in the case of conflict (e.g., divorce) informants adhere to one branch of the lineage and cut themselves off from the other. They then only visit the family house on the side of the family to which they still feel a sense of belonging.

In Léon's case, the family farm belongs to his brothers, but Léon is entitled to go there whenever he wants (every weekend). He considers himself an occupant with the same status as his brothers and thus feels at home there. In fact, he has his own bedroom in the house. He helps out considerably with gardening and chopping wood.

"I always wanted to be farmer – that's the way it is! There was nothing I could do because it wasn't possible to stay on the farm with my brothers already there. I looked for a job, there were always jobs, even if you hadn't gone to school. My uncle took me in and I became a wine merchant. I loved the job, we were always wandering around the countryside, stopping at farms, I liked it [...]. Because my brothers inherited the farm, I received some money and bought a flat in Dole. It's fine, but I'm a town person and I don't like staying here for long. I'm on the farm every weekend. I have my own bedroom there with my stuff, and every summer I help them make hay. It's my holiday home in a way! I'm always there. You see people, both kin and friends. It's a very different atmosphere, not like here in town (Léon)."

Kin contacts and mutual aid are embodied in places, especially houses, and – although we cannot discuss it at length here – in family parties. Our informants do not seem at ease with long-distance contacts, or – and here we are making an assumption – probably less than would be normal in a society or group used to emigration and diaspora. Locality is vital to our

<sup>3</sup> We should note that a breakdown between lineages could also be expressed and embodied in terms of money: the side of the family with which people are in conflict is always seen as "wealthier" than the side with which ego retains active relations.

informants; it is a point of anchorage for kin networks and the embodiment of contact and mutual aid.

### Kinds of support (solidarité)

Why do our informants help their kin? What kind of discourse supports their practices? We distinguished two groups of informants, based on their explanations rather than their practices, which are often similar in nature. In the first group, ego considers it his/her moral duty to help kin. The aid is mutual, i.e., based on reciprocity. If reciprocity does not or cannot take place in the very near future, the recipient hopes to reciprocate at a later date.

- *Elective solidarity and mutual aid*: This first group explains their mutual aid relations with attachment to family solidarity as a moral value. Nevertheless, as we saw above, people feel better if this help is genuinely mutual and not one-way. Reciprocity can be postponed to the next generation: you do not need to give to your parents what you have received from them, but you can give it to your children. This postponed solidarity operates in the case of intergenerational kin. To merely be the recipient of aid, or above all the only giver, makes relationships difficult and can lead to bitterness and resentment. In this case, solidarity and mutual aid become something you are obliged to do.
- *Solidarity under influence*: If at first sight some informants appear saint-like due to the amount of effort, time and money they give to their kin, their discourses are often quite different. Two informants described themselves as having been under the influence of their kin, who compelled them to take care of elderly or infirm parents. We are dealing here with women who were the youngest of their sibling group: Odette H. (seventy-seven) and René's wife (sixty-six). Younger women were traditionally "appointed" to this task (especially if they were unmarried and had no children).

Odette H. took care of her grandmother and then her parents without the help of her older sister ("I have a lot of resentment and feelings of hate for her because of that"). Odette married Jean and had a daughter, Françoise, who suffered from bad health throughout her childhood. Jean began to

have fits of depression and tried to kill himself. Their daughter got married and gave birth to three children (Loïc, Marion and Amandine). Odette took care of the older boy and partly raised him. A few years ago, Françoise left her husband, taking her youngest child with her, and married again. Her mother was left to bring up the other two children. Finally, Jean contracted Alzheimer's, and then cancer. He died in 2004. Recently, Françoise's second husband was accused of having sexually abused Amandine, the youngest of Françoise's daughters, who then went to live with her father. Odette ended up taking care of two granddaughters, cooking for them and helping them to go to school. She lives in a flat in the same building as Amandine's father, her former son-in-law.

Reviewing the lives of some of our informants, which were destroyed by an excess of solidarity based on moral duty, it seems unlikely that the current young generation will adopt the same attitude, especially since, in these two cases, it was not due to lack of institutional resources.

### Conclusion: models of kinship solidarity

This ethnographic report explored kin networks, mutual aid and family solidarity. We have shown several patterns of kin relations and distinguished between intergenerational and same-generation kin by analysing these patterns. Intergenerational solidarity is experienced as "natural". Occasionally, assistance to the parental generation can be experienced as a burden, particularly if the sibling group manages to "dump" this job on one of their members. Same-generation support is more elective, but the protagonists are highly active regardless of ego's age; symbolic and social links with cousins are enjoyed (e.g., "cousinades"). In certain cases, ego chose a new set of kin, usually his/her spouse's family.

In Dole, the kin network is embodied in places and houses. The traditional inheritance system in Franche-Comté, which was quite egalitarian, allows ego, who did not inherit the family home, to maintain a degree of access to it. This depends on the successor and heir to the house. In theory, every child can inherit. In reality, however, only one or sometimes two siblings do. The choice is made according to the family's reproduction strategies and interactions. The heir is not necessarily the oldest son; it is more commonly the younger (Jacques-Jouvenot 1997). Other children

receive money or their education is subsidized longer as compensation for their exclusion. Because this system, which is based on a familial consensus, is flexible, siblings that have been excluded maintain the right to use the family house (see Section 4, Léon's case). In our case, family relationships are strongly influenced by the geographical dispersal or concentration of kin, and by the degree and type of conflict within the network.

Our informants do not resort greatly to public resources when they need help: mothers prefer to have their children minded by their own mother or sister (or even brought up). The elderly and infirm are cared for at home. The informants are willing to accept money from the state, e.g., allowances for single mothers, but not direct help in the form of care. They exercise choice within rather than outside of their kin network. It would be interesting to investigate whether state provision might have a liberating effect: in this case, kinship relationships would constitute an end in themselves and not merely serve as a means to economic and social security. Our present material merely allows us to pose this question as a hypothesis.

Table 5.1: The share of active kin in the total kin relations of the Dole sample (members of the family ego has contacted – mostly through a meeting or by telephone – during the last month)

Number	Surname	Ratio	Proportion
001	Patrick	122/31	25%
002	Micheline	98/13	13%
006	Sandrine	79/20	25%
008	Valérie	86/21	24%
009	France	81/14	17%
010	René	71/15	21%
011	Annie	54/9	16%
013	Christine	123/18	14%
014	Ludovic	73/23	31%
019	Odette H.	126/9	7%
029	Odette O.	108/8	7%
030	Léon	111/21	19%
035	Matthieu	55/24	43%
036	Jacky	112/18	16%
038	Bernard	115/13	11%
039	Paul	109/22	20%
040	Arnaud	48/25	52%
041	Stéphane	138/31	22%
042	André	36/11	30%
043	Thierry	34/7	20%
AVERAGE		88/18	20%

## The “stem-family system” in rural southwest France: when property transmission determines networks of kinship and solidarity

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The field site considered here is rural, and most people's lives are dominated by agriculture. There are also people living here who commute to work in a nearby city and a number of foreigners (mostly English) who have taken up residence more or less permanently, some of them retired, others taking the advantage of the Internet to work from home. However, the latter remains marginal.

The prevalence of farming families – or families linked to them – has considerable sociological implications. Social life depends to a great extent on the organization and transmission of agricultural farms, which in turn is based on property transmissions, since most farmers in the region own their farms. Family, property and mutual help are related topics.

### The house-oriented system: an explanatory model for kinship and neighbourhood networks in southwest France

The relationship between property transmission and the devolution of agricultural farms is a key issue in the history of French society. It took a very acute form at the beginning of the nineteenth century when the new republican government unified the property law by introducing the Code Civil. Up until then, France was horizontally divided into two vast areas separated by the river Loire: north of this line various partible rules of inheritance prevailed, while south of the river customs were influenced by the Roman law that attributed certain advantages to one child, usually the eldest.

Although customs in existence to the south of the imaginary border did not have a fixed pattern at that time, all of them were governed by the idea