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Labour Market Inequality between Two Generations of Immigrants
The Impact of Public Policies on Life Courses

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Abstract. This article presents a comparison between the biographical life courses of two generations of immigrants, which are distinguished on the basis of the temporality of their respective migration experiences. It proposes to shed light, in particular, on the inequality that affects two generations of economically active immigrants who left their countries to live in France: the first cohort consists of immigrants who arrived at the beginning of the 1980s, the second of individuals who migrated in the 2000s. Analysing life courses ultimately makes it possible to explain the way in which the development of migration policies has influenced life plans, playing a prominent role in access to social rights and in the career development of immigrant men and women in the context of a gradual weakening of salaried employee status.

Key words. IMMIGRATION – LIFE COURSE – INTERGENERATIONAL INEQUALITY – OCCUPATIONAL INTEGRATION – ACCESS TO RIGHTS

Public policies have significant effects in term of access to employment and career development on the life courses of the individuals they target, as well as those beyond their regulatory scope (Ertul, Melchior and Warin 2012). Inequality of access to socio-economic resources is particularly apparent when comparing the life courses of two generations of immigrants, one group having left its countries of origin in the 1980s and the other in the 2000s: the inequality is the result of civic stratification (Lockwood 1996) that became more complex over time following the official closure of borders in 1974 and the adoption of more restrictive and selective immigration policies (Fouteau and Lochak 2008).

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1. The generations of immigrants that are the subject of this study are not necessarily two sub-populations whose members are about the same age, but are instead two groups of individuals that have had the same experience of migration at two distinct historical periods. Assuming that migration is a decisive experience for all these individuals, we advance the hypothesis that the members of the two groups share a certain number of practices and representations that are useful for exploring the question of inter- and intra-generational inequalities. In other words, we propose a reading of socio-occupational inequality where the period effect takes precedence over the age effect.
Labour Market Inequality between Two Generations of Immigrants

A comparison of biographical life courses makes clear the manner in which the institutional context and its policies affect life plans, while playing a prominent role in the process of occupational integration and in the careers of male and female immigrants. This research reveals how certain public policies can represent constraints on the development of individual plans, while taking into consideration both the segmentation of the French labour market and the phenomena of the declining status of foreign workers. It shows the impact that problems with the recognition of foreign qualifications can have and the importance of social networks (Bidart, Degenne and Grossetti 2011) in the context of a redefinition of the terms of access to the legal status of having rights 2 and the increasing insecurity of this same status (Morris 2003).

This article presents a comparison between two generations of migrants, distinguished by the temporality of their migration. It provides an original perspective on the intergenerational inequality that affects, in particular, two generations of economically active immigrants that left their countries to settle in France: the first cohort is made up of immigrants who arrived at the beginning of the 1980s, the second of individuals who migrated in the 2000s. While sociology is rich in comparisons between generations that arrived before and after the official closure of borders in 1974, the choice to compare two “post-1974” generations allows us to go further in explaining the effects the current upheavals in the labour market and reforms in immigration policies have on the life courses of individuals. Through use of a comparison of two profiles that is attentive to the specificities of male and female experiences of integration, this research sets out to demonstrate the significance of intergenerational inequality for access to socio-economic resources.

The process-based (Mendez 2010) and biographical (Zimmermann 2011) approach adopted is based on the reconstruction of 26 life courses and on identifying sequences and bifurcations (Bessin, Bidart and Grossetti 2010) observed at certain key moments, before and after emigration (Sayad 1999). This approach reveals the effects of changes in the institutional context on life courses, while showing that migrants are able to marshal different types of resources with the aim of improving their conditions and those of their families. By analysing six life courses in more detail, we offer two levels of results for discussion: firstly methodological, concerning the contribution of biographic analysis; then, substantive, illuminating the new inequalities suffered by protagonists in international mobility.

Civic stratification and immigration

This article aims to enrich the debate on inequality resulting from the contemporary process of civic stratification (Lockwood 1996), which affects immigrant populations in particular. The case of immigration lends itself to the analysis of the processes of emergence and reproduction of intergenerational inequalities in different areas, such as social integration (Schnapper 2007; Richard 2009;
Safi 2006) and occupational integration (Waldinger and Lichter 2003; Silberman and Fournier 2006, 2008; Meurs, Paillé and Simon 2006; Tucci 2010). These studies have endeavoured, for the most part, to compare forms of participation in the labour market between generations of parents, who left their countries of origin, and their descendants’ generations, born in the host country. There have been fewer studies looking in-depth at the normative context of the birth and reproduction of inter- and intra-generational inequalities of access to socio-economic resources. A few studies directly tackle the issue of institutional inequality but always from a perspective of comparing two generations of individuals, the first of which left its country of origin and the second of which was born in the country its parents settled in (Kasinitz, Mollenkopf and Waters 2002).

However, the proliferation of social and legal statuses that has characterized the management of immigration in Europe for the last thirty years has made upward socio-economic mobility more uncertain and, for foreigners, has made gaining and above all maintaining a legal status more complicated (Brun 2008; Morice and Potot 2010).

Research on civic stratification has been concerned with the levels of immigrants’ membership of society, as a function of their legal and social status. This status, in large part determined by national policies in each host country, grants more or less wide-ranging access to socio-political rights depending on criteria such as nationality of origin, length of residency and status in the labour market. Civic stratification thus refers to a hierarchical system based on statuses and on the relationship between different categories of individuals and the state in accordance with the rights associated with (and/or withheld by) each of these statuses.

This trend grew in the 2000s (Morris 2002, 2003; Kofman 2002, 2008) in response to two very different approaches: the first emphasizes the undisputed power of the nation-state to define the boundaries of citizenship and the terms of access to social rights for nationals and non-nationals (Brubaker 1989, 1992); in contrast, the second sees the new conditions for migrant mobility as evidence of a “post-national” society (Sassen 1999), where individuals benefit from transnational rights granted to them and which could be asserted in legal spheres that transcend the borders of nation-states.

Work on civic stratification distances itself from these two trends by concentrating on the variety of statuses, and thus on the hierarchization of groups with unequal rights, which calls into question the nation-state’s powers of inclusion and exclusion. This approach is particularly critical of the trend that supports the idea of transnational citizenship: in contrast it emphasizes, on the one hand, the weak effectiveness of the human rights that immigrants formally enjoy, and on the other hand, the difficulties the European Union (EU) has with collectively regulating issues relating to individuals’ mobility. According to Lydia Morris (2002), the EU has instead contributed to making civic stratification more complex through the creation of new categories of migrants: the creation of the Schengen area has introduced a fundamental distinction between “Europeans” and “third country Nationals” (TCN) who are not entitled to free movement within the Union; while each member state defines the limits of categories of legal, irregular and illegal migrants in accordance with residency and work permits and the circumstances of external border crossing.
The tightening of legal conditions for entry and residence (Boswell 2011), as well as increased checks at the EU’s external borders (Guiraudon 2011) have notably increased the gap in terms of rights between legal and irregular migrants, increasing the number of the latter (Brun 2006; Morice 2011). Moreover, despite attempts at harmonization, each member state has retained the power to define its own migration and immigration policies (Hammar 1985), which has accentuated the diversification of statuses between migrants depending on their member state of residence.

The decision to compare two generations based on period of migration (1980s and 2000s) aims to show the evolution of socio-occupational inequality in the French politico-institutional context. The significant historical facts (migration, adoption of a new law on residency or employment of foreigners, regularization, etc.) reappear in the discourse as time markers, as major events shaping the retrospective and reflexive construction of the experience of migration and the ongoing process of occupational integration.

We advance three major hypotheses: 1) the institutional context of the host country contributes, in a decisive way, to fixing the limits of a generation of migrants, defined more by the legal conditions that regulate their residency and status in the labour market than by their ages; 2) the effect of the progressive tightening of migration policies has been to weaken legal statuses and to fragment foreigners’ access to social rights, making intergenerational inequality between the two groups studied more evident: foreigners who migrated in the 2000s experience longer periods of integration, which are characterized by job insecurity and lower social status (Peugny 2009); 3) there remains intragenerational sexual inequality between members of the same generation.

**Life courses, capabilities and inequality:**

**The methodological stance and materials**

The combination of process-based (Mendez 2010) and biographical (Zimmermann 2011) approaches aims to demonstrate the impact of changes in the legal and institutional context on the development of individual life courses (Ertul, Melchior and Warin 2012). The process-based approach makes time an indispensible element in the understanding of bifurcations, breaks, redirections and the regularity of life courses. Both accepted meanings of time are taken into account. Whatever the process, whether it is the experience of occupational integration, or building a home, takes time. This means that a linear time exists that marks the beginning and end of a process, but within this chronological time there are also discontinuous, heterogeneous social temporalities. Thus, within the temporal framework that can be associated with an immigrant’s career development, there is the time his children spend in education in their home country or also public policies that alter his residency conditions.
The research on which this article is based (2007-11) examined the construction and social uses of immigration categories at different levels of public action (European, national, regional and local) by making a comparison between official categories and operational categories. It seeks to show that public action has the power to influence the individual life courses of migrants (in particular foreigners). 124 semi-directed and biographical interviews were carried out in order to collect the accounts of different types of actors: representatives of the state and its decentralized services, regional organizations, associations, occupational sectors, trade unions, companies, employment organizations, training centres, migrant workers and jobseekers. The 26 biographical interviews with migrants and the fieldwork observations were carried out between 2008 and 2010, at the interviewees’ places of work or within their families. This corpus enables us to compare the role played by public action in the process of occupational integration in very gendered sectors such as construction and home help, at two specific historical moments, the 1980s and 2000s. Six life courses are presented here as examples of the intra- and inter-generational inequalities that play a part in integration in the labour market and influence career development. These six life courses, despite their respective specificities, can be considered ideal-types: all the 26 life courses studied can indeed be grouped together, on the one hand, depending on time of migration and settlement, but also, above all, depending on the six particular combinations of contextual elements, of resources and constraints, of terms of access to work and statuses granting more or less stable rights, of which the cases studied are representative. The two life courses associated with the “1980s generation” and the four life courses representing the “2000s generation” take into account the existence of “generational unities” (Mannheim 1928 1952) that reproduce the complexity of situations experienced and individuals’ representations, despite sharing the same striking experience (migration) in the same historical period. The two first life courses seem more stable than the latter four, reflective of the socio-occupational progress of individuals who migrated in the 2000s. This aspect should be considered, in our opinion, not as the result of a selection bias (the people who migrated in the 1980s are migrants who have permanently settled, and so their experience is necessarily one of a “successful” life course) but rather in light of what “having access to employment” means depending on the period in consideration. In other words, what makes the two groups comparable is the role employment plays as a stabilizing element – or otherwise – in their biographical life courses: whereas access to employment led to a stable position in the labour market and therefore also provided access to associated social protection for foreigners who immigrated into France in the 1980s, in the 2000s the types of employment immigrants had access to (atypical, insecure.../...
and casual), are unable to play the role of a “stabilizing” element in life courses (no longer guaranteeing legitimacy of residency in the long term, access to social rights or familial reunification, etc.). In such a way, more recent life courses are more complex, unstable and reversible. The processes of occupational integration and the careers of immigrants have been reconstructed by considering five temporal spheres (Longo 2010): the past, characterized by work experience, education, social and family origins; the future, made up of desires and plans, which can concern employment but also families and homes, etc.; the current place of settlement context, which includes the state of the labour market, but also employment organizations or also authorities regulating immigration; current social relations, made up of friends, work colleagues, compatriots, neighbours, partners and any children; and finally the sphere of the relationship with work, which indicates the changing position of individuals vis-à-vis employment and occupational activity. These spheres combine depending on context components and key people who create opportunities or erect obstacles. The attention given to the interweaving of the five temporal spheres reveals the way they are out of touch with the typical life courses laid out by public action, which constructs ideal progressions and standard transitions.

The biographical approach is based on the principle that life courses are the fruit of the consistencies that are revealed by discourse (Demazière and Dubar 1996; Grossetti 2006). This articulation reveals the detours, changes, forks and impasses that characterize individuals’ paths: “From the point of view of the individual, in all his singularity, the directions he chooses for strategic reasons lead him to select among the objective possibilities he has at his disposal, resulting from his position on the social spectrum, and the constraints that are imposed on him (values, norms, rules, etc.) by the surrounding society.” (Ertul, Melchior and Warin 2012: 8). The concept of life course has the advantage of restoring continuity to progressions marked by periods of inactivity, of changes in direction, illness, interruptions, etc.: “The life course highlights the possibility of a non-linear path, creates cross-roads and changes in direction, without, nevertheless, effacing the importance of social and institutional structures for its development.” (Zimmermann 2011: 86).

A comparison between life courses reveals the unequal capabilities of individuals to overcome challenges, and thus their abilities, themselves unequal, to improve their positions in the labour market. The concept of “capability” emphasizes an individual’s power to act and to choose, in the face of public measures intended, through regulation, to guide life courses. As a complement to the concept of “skills,” the concept of capability refers to the opportunities and the means for action that an individual is capable of grasping, especially in terms of access or non-recourse to rights (Warin 2009). This concept considers both what a person knows how to do (his skills) and the opportunities he has to develop his skills through public measures and more informal social support such as networks: “The concept of capability implies a latitude in individual choices, of opportunities for achievement and a power to act aided by collective support, even to overcome unequal distribution.” (Zimmermann 2011: 111). The individual does not employ his potential capability in isolation, since “social opportunities, collective services, and individual facts interact in producing an experience … The quality of
the experience and the skills likely to give rise to it cannot be attributed to the worker alone” (ibid. 79). Public services can, therefore, be seen as a collective support, conveying rights and providing both material and symbolic resources, which individuals take up in an unequal way. This analytical framework links the macro, meso and micro levels, which are traditionally disconnected in the social sciences, by considering “the individual characteristics of migrants, the structure of opportunities and the constraints of international migration, and the use of resources (social network)” (Martiniello and Rea 2011: 7).

Immigrating to France in the 1980s: The closure of borders and the labour market

Until the 1980s, immigrants were still seen as individuals passing through whose rights to stay in a country were temporary. The crisis at the beginning of the 1970s and the emergence of mass unemployment provided European governments with justifications for officially putting a stop to economic immigration from 1974 onwards (Laurens 2008), entailing a redefinition of the tools for managing immigrant labour (Viet 1998). This choice had partly unanticipated effects: while the number of foreign workers declined, family reunifications increased. The typical immigrant increasingly became female, younger and settled at the residential level, without, however, revolutionizing the social stratification of French society in which immigrants were overrepresented in the working classes (De Rudder, Poirot and Vourc’h 2000; Tripier 1990). However, between the 1980s and the end of the 1990s, access to employment still granted access to basic social rights through arrangements in which employers were the main protagonists (Jounin 2008).

“To be like the others”: employment as the “leveller” in Ali’s (Comoros) life course

Ali is from Moroni (Comoros), he is 39 and has lived in France for twenty-nine years. At the age of 17 he decided to join his uncle in Marseille. His large and modest family supported him financially to achieve this objective: “I wanted to leave, my family helped me, I left school to take a chance and help them.” He arrived in Marseille with a temporary visa and was quickly integrated within the large Comorian community in Belle de Mai, a working-class neighbourhood close to the city centre: thanks to his compatriots, he found casual one-off black market jobs as a street trader and then in construction, which provided him with a more or less regular income. When his visa expired, and he therefore became irregular, he turned to the construction industry because “it was relatively easy to find work for a day or even for a few weeks as a replacement.” In 1990, he met his current boss. After having worked for him illegally for thirteen months, Ali signed his first work contract at the end of 1991: “It was a twelve-month CDD [contrat de travail à durée déterminée–fixed-term employment contract]; my boss went to see the Direction Départementale du Travail, de l’Emploi et de la Formation Professionnelle [Departmental Directorate for Labour, Employment and Work Training], then I was soon able to get my first work permit.” With his administrative position
regularized, his application for social housing was successful towards the end of 1992 and Ali and his partner moved to Savine, a social housing estate in the north of Marseille. Ali has worked for the same small contractor specializing in demolition for nineteen years. Indeed, when the latter set up his own business in 1995, Ali was employed on a permanent contract [contrat de travail à durée indéterminée—CDI] and he has held a renewable residence card since 1997.

Ali is not married and he is the father of four children, all born in France. He still has family in Comoros, notably his mother to whom he regularly sends money. Ali speaks about his “duties as a father and as the eldest in the family” associating these with the fact that it has been impossible for him to achieve his plans to return home: “There’s nothing better than home but… you’ve got to feed your children and when you’ve got children things change, you’re committed; you also have to send money home.” These constraints limit his plans, but security of employment and access to rights associated with his residency status mean he considers his situation to be “normal: I have rights and responsibilities like everyone.” Ali often refers to the role played by his employer in the development of his life plans, and the clash between his attachments to France and his family in Moroni. The stabilization of his legal and occupational situations has been decisive: when he arrived in Marseille “the (Comorian) community did a lot for [him], [it] helped out, housed [him] and everything,” but it was his employer that enabled him “to learn a trade, even though [he had] no education.” On the administrative side, his boss was involved in his process of becoming legal, which quickly enabled him to obtain a temporary right of residence and then his residence card. Ali also feels grateful for his recognition as a professional and as a “human being”: “I’m now a bricklayer like any other because he trusted me. For others, the whites, you’re always a foreigner, but when your boss considers you to be the same as everyone it’s OK.”

The public authorities as well as administrative procedures do not explicitly feature in Ali’s story and yet his life course bears witness to the typical fundamental legal transitions of life courses of foreigners who immigrated to France in the 1980s. Arriving in France legally with a tourist visa, he then went through a period of administrative irregularity, when ethnic networks enabled him to wait for a change in situation by providing undeclared work. This change was made possible by the willingness of his employer to regularize his work relationship, and his ability to seize opportunities created by flaws in the administrative system of the time.

In sum, integration through employment and the social protection ascribed to it (Castel 1995), certainly functioned less well among immigrants, but it is still true that stable employment nevertheless enabled many of these workers to secure the principal attributes of social citizenship over time. Faced with this particular political context, employment represents the main route to social rights through case-by-case regularization. In the political context of the official closure of borders, mechanisms of “interested solidarity” (the boss, by retaining a good worker, established his own business) could be created with a view to overcoming administrative situations that might have prevented a foreign immigrant from having
access to other resources (for example social security). With this business sector being a mostly favourable one, and in the absence of a strong system of control and sanction against undeclared work by foreigners, the forms of regional regulation of the labour market allowed contractors to regularize workers without the process proving too costly in terms of time and resources for either of the two parties.

**Settling without working: Aisha (Morocco) and family reunification**

Aisha is Moroccan and 47-years-old, she moved to Marseille to join her husband Idriss twenty-three years ago. They were married in Oujda in 1988 and have three children: the eldest, Miriam, was born in Morocco in 1989, two boys were later born in Marseille. Aisha came to France in 1989 once Idriss’s situation was regularized, thanks to a family reunification visa. Idriss had, in fact, arrived illegally in 1981 and worked in agriculture, before finding undocumented work as a bricklayer and later being taken on by his boss in 1988. Aisha has no qualifications, she learned embroidery and made that her career, but after arriving in Marseille she no longer worked: between 1990 and 2006 she looked after their children at home. During this settling period, Aisha built ties with neighbours, in particular with Laila, a younger compatriot who worked as a family home help for a domestic services company.

Aisha’s decision to look for work in the domestic services sector was dictated by a disruptive event: in 2006 another company took over the company her husband worked for. Her husband would have had to make frequent long journeys in the region, meaning he decided to resign and set up on his own. But “it was not easy; for three years he [had] little work, then nothing … It [was] not going well, he [was] worried, he [slept] badly. Last year, we couldn’t go back (to Morocco) on holiday.” Idriss’s fluctuating income became insufficient. So Miriam suggested her mother look for work as a home help “like Laila (the neighbour).” Aisha was initially hesitant: “I’d never worked here, I didn’t know where to look, how to do it,” Laila then acted as a provider of suggestions, information and contacts. In fact, it was as her replacement during her holidays that Aisha got her first cash in hand experience in the sector. It was not, however, the beginning of a career plan. She did not choose domestic services, but working as a domestic help seemed the only work possible: “I couldn’t see anything else I could do. An Arab woman does the housework!” Her relationship to work is instrumental: “I’m not young anymore, but I want to help my husband while my children are not working.” This is why she did not envisage getting any training or applying to any specialist employment services. Domestic help seemed the natural sector to turn to. Her friends, in particular her neighbour, defined the limits of her searches. It was, indeed, at Laila’s suggestion that Aisha wrote her first CV with the help of her daughter.

The institutional context of migration policies was not decisive, since Aisha arrived in France with a right of residence for family reunification, and then received a ten-year residence card. Initially, her husband’s stable employment provided Aisha and her children with access to the status of foreigners legally settled in France. Work was not part of her daily life since, until 2006, she could dedicate herself to her family. It then became something she wanted to do at a difficult time from the point of view of financial resources. With Idriss’s employment security...
undermined by the vagaries of self-employment, it was the local environment and above all Miriam’s encouragement and Laila’s example that guided Aisha’s decision to work in domestic service.

Neither the public employment services nor training organizations played any part in her life course. The significant ingredients in her local environment are therefore personal acquaintances (Laila and her network). These acquaintances are not a guarantee of legal job opportunities, but this does not, however, deprive Aisha of the rights she is entitled to as a legal resident. Aisha obtained her residence permit for family reasons, which means her right to stay is not dependent on her status in the labour market, as is the case for foreigners with temporary work permits. The latter have to provide proof that they have legal employment in order to renew their right to remain resident. French migration policies and forms of regulation of the labour market have changed rapidly, altering the room for manoeuvre for employers and for immigrants who have arrived in France more recently.

**Immigrating to France in the 2000s:**
**Temporary employment, temporary status**

The 2000s were characterized by difficult socio-economic conditions, due to mass unemployment (Demazière 2006) and a fragmentation of employment through the commonplace use of temporary, flexible and part-time contracts (Castel 2007). The French government then proceeded with a series of reforms seeking, on the one hand, to allow immigration of foreign labour that more closely matched the needs of the national labour market, and on the other hand sought to link the validity of residency permits to the length of work contracts.5

In this section we will examine, through the prism of tightening conditions for entry and residency and the casualization of employment available to immigrant workers, the process by which the administrative status of legal resident has been made less secure and its consequent impact on the careers of migrants. Fighting against illegal immigration, reducing the number of “private and family life” permits, facilitating entry to those fulfilling French labour market needs in sectors “under pressure” and increasing the number of bilateral accords with emigration countries are the four fundamental objectives of this stance (Lochak 2007; Fouteau and Lochak 2008). These legal tools have gradually given rise to a “selective immigration policy” that has reinforced the dependent relationship between right of residence and employment, in an economic context of casualization of employment (an increase in temporary work, CDDs [fixed-term contracts], sub-contracting, etc.).

5. France has recently adopted its sixth immigration law in seven years. Since 2003, intense legislative activity in France has produced: the law relating to the control of immigration, residence of aliens in France and nationality (law no.2003-1119); the law relating to asylum (law no.2003-1176); the law concerning deportation (law no. 2004-735); the law relating to immigration and integration (law no. 2006-911); the law on immigration, integration and asylum (law no.2007-1631); and the recent law relating to immigration, integration and nationality, the so-called “loi Besson,” adopted on the 11th June 2011 (see Table 1 in the Appendix).
Changing status: 
*Abdel (Morocco) and the difficult transition to the status of worker*

Abdel is 35-years-old, he is Moroccan, originally from a working-class neighbourhood in Casablanca and has lived in France for seven years. In 2005 he received an economics degree from the University of Casablanca and obtained a student visa for a master’s degree at the University of Montpellier. He passed his year and therefore became the holder of a French degree, which enabled him to feel he was “at the same level as [his] friends from here.” Abdel’s plans were not, however, just to study, but to find a job. Studies did not really interest him and his student visa was just a way of receiving a residence permit. However, obtaining a French degree was essential in his view since, according to him, “Mohameds like [him] can have the highest and most prestigious degrees but if [they are not] French they count for nothing.” His first year in France passed without any particular difficulties: “I took my course, I had a visa and managed to get a room on campus, it was perfect.” To live, Abdel worked for cash in hand in a restaurant in the city centre as a washer-up and kitchen assistant.

The transition between obtaining his master’s degree and finding work or an internship in his chosen field (computing) was, in contrast, very difficult. His initial search was unsuccessful: “I looked everywhere, even for unpaid internships. Nothing.” In the meantime his visa expired and he soon had to find a “stopgap” solution. The only option Abdel could see was to enrol at university a second time, to renew his right to residency. He, therefore, enrolled in a master’s programme, this time at the University of Aix-en-Provence, which he saw as a constraint, since only by enrolling was he able to justify requesting the renewal of his right to residency. As for his accommodation, in 2006 Abdel turned 28, which meant he was no longer a young student. The CROUS (Centre Régional des Œuvres Universitaires et Scolaires–Regional organization providing student bursaries, university halls of residence, and student restaurants) therefore considered that he was no longer a priority when it came to assigning rooms in student halls of residence. This caused him administrative problems, because without the financial resources to find private accommodation, Abdel had to quickly find someone willing to provide him with proof of accommodation to enclose with his request for a renewal of his residence permit. It was his French girlfriend who gave him the document. The waiting time for dealing with cases was very long, Abdel only received his visa eight months later. The threat of possible deportation is a recurrent feature in his account and the authorities, whose coercive power is frequently mentioned, representing obstacles to overcome or even circumvent: “Over there (in the sub-prefecture) they’re just waiting to send me home!”

Abdel was thus driven to rely more and more on his network to reduce the debilitating effects of the insecurity of his status and his economic situation. His affective relationships were expected to play an important role. He tried to convince his partner to enter into a PACS (*Pacte civil de solidarité*—civil solidarity pact) with him: “You know, for an immigrant, when you’re in a PACS with a French woman your case goes better, you also have a better chance of finding work.” In the meantime, he had to quickly find a source of income: he had debts and was expected to share the rent with two compatriots. For a few months he dealt cannabis in the university halls of residence. But his housemates did not want to take...
the risks his dealing entailed, neither did his partner, who decided to leave him. In this critical context, Abdel got to know a “cousin,” Mohammed, who worked as a bricklayer in the construction business. The latter suggested Abdel help him from time to time on construction sites. Abdel thus discovered the building trade by working occasionally as a cash-in-hand labourer. Mohammed suggested he look for jobs in the interim; Abdel therefore decided to start looking for jobs with a specialist construction work agency. At this point, Abdel, whose status was that of student, faced difficulty looking for legitimate work. Firstly, he had not received his visa, seven months after filing his case he was only in possession of the receipt. Then, as a student, he was only formally authorized to work up to 60% of annual working hours: an employer could only employ him after obtaining a provisional work authorization. In addition, before providing him with a contract, the temporary work agencies asked him for a proof of residence of at least three months. Abdel was in trouble and was demotivated, eventually giving up. He emphasizes his feeling of not being at home: “I’m too old for university, I’m not like the other students. As for the others (the temporary work agencies and public authorities), I’m a student and not a worker. So, then, what am I?”

In August 2006, Abdel retrieved his student visa and began to realise the difficulties he would have renewing his residence permit and above all converting it into a work permit: “Uni was just to get my papers, I came here to work but… but getting work papers is going to be difficult…” His anxiety was heightened by administrative time restrictions. The visa he received in August would expire in October of the same year. In September 2006, Abdel left Aix-en-Provence, leaving nothing behind. He was the holder of a “quasi-status” and felt doubly illegitimate, as a student because he was no longer young, on the one hand, and as an employee on the other hand because he was still considered a student. He dreaded any contact with the authorities, which he considered to be an obstacle to his plans. Thus, his networks of acquaintances were his supports; they were constantly called on when needed. The precariousness of Abdel’s legal status had a significant impact on the development of his relationship to work. During his time as a student, he considered his life course and aspirations to be “normal,” because he wanted to find work appropriate to his degree. During his time as a student, he considered his life course and aspirations to be “normal,” because he wanted to find work appropriate to his degree. This ambition lost its meaning when he realised that his qualifications were not enough for him to make the transition from student to worker. His life course is characterized by a legal rift: Abdel is called upon to violate the compartmentalization of statuses and life cycles fixed by public institutions, which make the transition from education to employment complicated for foreigners.

**Issa and Obame (Gabon), or when degrees count for nothing**

Issa, Gabonese, lives on a social housing estate in Marseille. A social worker and then civil servant in Gabon’s Ministry of Social Affairs, she defines herself as

6. Art. 9 of law no.2006-911 of 24 July 2006. Since 1 July 2007, temporary work permits for foreign students are no longer mandatory.

7. Here we refer to the sociological concept of “life cycle” which means “the way in which society defines and structures the succession of ages” (Van de Velde 2010). Typically, policies and public services (for example, housing assistance for students) are based on an ideal sequence of well-ordered familial, occupational and social stages through which an individual progresses throughout his life in society.
a “brain fleeing to a white society.” Aged 47, Issa is the mother of eight children, although she only lives with four of them whom she had with her current husband, Obame. Aimé, her third child, aged nine, has Down syndrome. Issa first arrived in France in 2000 for Aimé to receive medical treatment: she received a short stay visa in order to see a specialist at the Specialist Early-Years Healthcare Centre (Centre d’Action Médico-sociale Précoce) in Montpellier, which referred her to the Hôpital de la Timone in Marseille. Having returned to Gabon with her children, she returned to France in 2001 to join her husband. The latter, a cardiologist, had obtained a temporary authorization to work in France as an intern, “he has more melanin than you, you see!” explains Issa.

In 2001, Obame obtained a CDD at the Hôpital de Marseille. He was housed for free by a hospital colleague, in the hope that he could make the necessary financial savings to bring his family over. To this end, he sought help from an organization supporting the rights of foreigners to help him prepare a case for family reunification. However, his application was unsuccessful because Obame could not meet the criteria relating to housing set by the authorities. In 2001, Issa and the children joined him on a tourist visa that would expire three months later. In 2002, Obame’s contract was renewed for a year and he was also provided with housing from a social housing association. Obame could not put together a case for family reunification, but in the meantime Issa and his children’s residency status had become irregular, as they had remained in France after their tourist visa expired. This situation complicated the procedure and delayed examination of the case. The intermediary organization and the prefecture began a long negotiation process that resulted, eleven months later, in the regularization of Issa and her children, which was the consequence, in particular, of the treatment and care that Aimé needed.

However, their residence permit was temporary, because it was linked to the length of Obame’s contract. But his hospital contract came to an end in 2003 and the transition period he needed to look for a new job was accompanied by financial uncertainty and a fear of having to leave the country: “Financially, it wasn’t easy, happily we received benefits for our children, the four we were looking after. But the worst was not knowing when they might send us back.” Then the situation was alleviated thanks to the support of a campaigning association that enabled Obame to get locum work at the hospital with the aim of preparing for the competitive exam for training as a nurse: “From a professional point of view, it was like taking a step backwards, but we had no choice.” In this particularly difficult context from an administrative point of view, Issa had difficulties finding work. Her Gabonese qualification as a social worker was not recognized. She would have liked to work as such in France, but resigned herself to not doing so: “I could only find work as a chambermaid in a hotel, I didn’t even get a permanent contract, anyway that’s all blacks are considered good for. But I had a back problem and I had to resign.”

Following this she trained to become a care assistant (auxiliaire de vie sociale—AVS) paid for by the Regional Directorate for Health and Social Affairs (Direction

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8. Medical qualifications from outside the European Union are not automatically recognized. Doctors arriving before June 2004 have to pass an exam and obtain at least the average mark, while practising for at least three months in France under the supervision of a senior doctor. Those arriving after June 2004 have to pass a competitive examination with limited places open only to practitioners with specialities that are “in demand” (Déplaude 2011).
Régionale des Affaires Sanitaires et Sociales–DRASS), then did some training in a retirement home in Marseille, and finally worked as a month-long replacement in another retirement home. She worked as a care assistant to an elderly lady, paid in service employment cheques (chèque emploi service), doing house- work and preparing meals. A nurse from the retirement home she had worked in had recommended her to the person who then employed her: “It went pretty well. I was not thrilled but that’s how it is. After two months the lady no longer needed me so I’ve been looking for work ever since.” She wanted to enrol for training so that she could work as a social worker again, but she could not afford to do so. The administrative situation relating to Issa and Obame’s residence permit is now relatively stable. The local environment had an important role to play in providing access to the status of foreigner legally resident in the county. Then public bodies were able to allocate specific aid (Caisse d’allocations familiales–CAF [family allowance fund]) or fund training (DRASS), intervening by providing financial resources and individual opportunities when there is a valid residence permit. This does not mean that Issa’s professional life is fulfilling. Her relationship to work illustrates the frustrations that result from not being able to exercise one’s profession in France. Her qualifications and experience in Gabon are not recognized. The context, resulting from legal constraints, redefines her horizons as narrowly as possible. Issa turned, by default, to the personal care services sector, in which she can only aspire to a poorly qualified and remunerated profession, or to being retrained. Familial and institutional contexts contribute to experiencing a downgrading in social status (Peugny 2009) or to developing a negative relationship to work.

**Julieta: “I will finally be European!”**

Julieta is Bulgarian, she is 35 and has a degree in agronomic engineering. At 25 she married the man who, a year later, would become the father of her son. After her divorce in 2005 she faced a period of financial difficulty: “My husband drank. After Ivan was born things got worse. We divorced when Ivan was 2 … my husband left. It was very difficult, I was working part-time in a supermarket, my mother looked after Ivan, but my wages weren’t enough.” Julieta thought about leaving: a former university colleague told her about employment opportunities in Italy, directing her towards a travel agency that organized tourist coaches for prospective immigrants. Julieta hesitated but then went to the travel agents. She decided to get in touch with a cousin, who was a builder who had left in 2002 to live in the French Alpes Maritimes, who told her he would ask his friends about employment opportunities. Three months later, in June 2006, she took Ivan to his grandmother’s and left for Nice on a tourist coach with a visa. She went on to work twenty hours a week for cash in hand for an elderly aunt of her cousin’s foreman, an old lady needing a home care assistant. Julieta lived with her cousin pending a more stable financial situation.

She did this job for the first ten months of her stay and regularly sent money to her mother who continued to look after Ivan. In the meantime, her tourist visa expired and she found herself in an irregular situation: at the time Bulgaria was one of the European Union’s candidate countries but its membership had not yet been formalized, which meant that immigrants from these countries were foreigners who were not authorized to move and work freely within the Schengen area. In January
2007 Bulgaria joined the European Union. For Julieta, this marked a significant change because “[she] could receive a new identity card, [she was] European! For [her] that meant free movement, which meant being able to leave her cousin’s to move somewhere else and look for another job.” Julieta’s career would indeed develop, but not in the way she hoped. On the one hand, her employer did not want to declare her employment, on the other she realised that this would not be possible since, although from 2007 Bulgarian immigrants had the right to settle within the Schengen area, they did not automatically have the right to work. Indeed, France decided to limit access to the labour market for immigrants from the new EU member states to 150 occupations identified as facing “shortages” and in the case of Bulgaria and Romania to adopt transitional measures (which remained in place until 1st January 2012) requiring verification of employment status.

Julieta found herself caught between two legal stools: her new status put her in the same position as any other European immigrant from the point of view of the right to free movement and residence; while in the labour market, the distinction between the new and old European states made her a foreigner who was not completely European; she would only become so in 2012 when the transitional measures ceased to be in force. This temporary “quasi-European” status had significant implications for her family and career plans. On the one hand, in the short term, she gave up her plans to reunite her family in France with her son and her mother: the latter would have been able to join her but Julieta would have needed to earn a bigger salary in order to rent a larger apartment than the furnished room she had been living in since she stopped living with her cousin. On the other hand, from a career point of view, she had to deal with the implications of her “quasi-European” status for her opportunities to find declared employment: “When I obtained my new identity card I had this idea: I’d open a bar. I told myself: French people manage bars, why not Bulgarians … Europeans? Then I realised that it would be complicated, and that even finding declared work in personal care services wouldn’t be easy.” Moreover, the two spheres were inextricably linked: to be able to find an apartment to rent, Julieta needed to prove that she had a job and thus a regular income; while, to sign a work contract, her employer had to prove that Julieta’s profile corresponded with the post’s profile and that there were no other French job seekers available to fill the post.

In April 2007, Julieta lost her undeclared job and the change was difficult. Then over the summer, a neighbour gave her some crucial information: a personal care services association was looking for staff. Julieta decided to apply to this large service provider. She started working for them, for a trial period, looking after an elderly lady, mostly doing her housework and shopping and preparing meals. After two weeks, the manager proposed she sign her first work contract, a six-month CDD. Her employer had, in fact, obtained the Direction du Travail’s authorization after paying a fine because of her illegal work status: “I think he argued that he needed me because some of his clients spoke Russian and that I spoke Bulgarian … but that didn’t wash, so he had to pay 800 Euros.” Six months later, her contract was renewed, this time without any additional cost to her employer because the 18th January 2008 decree established a list of occupations in which immigrants from European countries subject to transitional provisions could lawfully be employed. The domestic help occupation was included in this list. This event was a turning point and enabled Julieta to re-envisage a family reunification and to plan a future where “[she would] finally be European!”
This life course demonstrates the importance of access to the right to move and reside within the EU, but also highlights a hierarchy of statuses that temporarily limits employment opportunities for immigrants from new member countries. In Juliet’s case, access to declared employment was possible thanks to the intervention of her employer who wanted to deal with the Direction de Travail. However, this procedure proves costly to the employer. Her relationship with work was linked to the formal inequality of rights between Europeans and quasi-Europeans. Since there was no real equality between European citizens, Juliet had to set aside her career plans: “I’ll see later whether it’ll be possible; for the moment I’m happy [with] this work [even though] it doesn’t match my training or fulfil my dreams.”

**Diallo (Mali), or what having no papers means**

Diallo is 29 and comes from a family of Malian farmers. The youngest of six brothers and a sister, he attended a Koranic school until the age of 15, then left school to work in the fields. With the family’s financial situation being difficult, Diallo decided, with the agreement of his parents and eldest brother, to invest their savings in financing the journey that would take him to France. One of his father’s cousins lived in Marseille, having moved there a few years previously. The decision was taken when two youths from his village joined a convoy leaving for Libya: smuggling organizations arranged the trip, arranging the connection between Mali and Libya, and then the boat crossing to the Italian coast.

Thus Diallo, having got together the money needed to pay for the journey, prepared to leave. In 2001, when Diallo was 18, he began his journey, which would take eleven months: swindled by the smugglers, he was left to his own fate along with 17 others on the outskirts of Tripoli. He worked secretly for five months in a warehouse in Libya, before making contact with a compatriot who, like him, was looking for a way across the Mediterranean. In August 2001, they both boarded an old boat that took them to Sicily, where they landed after seven days at sea that had cost the lives of 11 of the 83 aspiring immigrants. Having arrived in Italy, he fled and, deciding not to set foot on another boat, took the train to Naples and then to Ventimiglia and crossed the Franco-Italian border by foot. At Menton, towards the end of October, he finally took a train that would bring him to Marseille. Having arrived at his destination, he could not contact his cousin. With no visa or money, he was admitted to an accommodation centre, where a friend suggested he apply for asylum. His application was unsuccessful, but Diallo had already begun to look for work. Specifically, he met Kader, a construction worker with no papers, who worked as an intermediary for a specialist construction work agency: “He was my master (he laughs); he explained to me that it didn’t matter if I didn’t have my papers …” Indeed, Diallo found a way to get false papers made that enabled him to go to a temporary work agency and get his first job on a demolition site.

From 2002, Diallo thus worked as a temporary worker, and when it was suggested to him, he also did some training: “The agency knew very well that my papers were fake, and I was not the only one, eh! But it wasn’t an issue.” However, his situation, like that of other temporary workers with no papers, was not always easy: “It didn’t always go well: relations with bosses are strained, you earn less than others and sometimes you have to run away …” Diallo mentions, on the one hand, that interpersonal relationships at work are problematic since “temps like...
people know [that they do not] have a choice and [they have to] shut up because [they] don’t have papers and anyway we can be fired whenever [we] com-
plain.” This goes hand in hand with wage inequality, which means that, whatever their experience, someone with no papers will always earn less than a declared worker. On the other hand, Diallo says this about checks: “There’s panic, we have to hide, and for the last few years there have been more and more of them.” In 2007, while he was being put up by a compatriot in the centre of Marseille, Diallo was even arrested by the municipal police following a check a few streets away from the temporary work agency: “They found my fake papers and that caused a lot of problems.” Diallo spent a month in a detention centre and was then released on condition that he left France. Again without papers, he decided to stay in France, and went back to the temping agency. He discovered that the agency had terminated his contract and that they would not take him on again and the same thing had hap-
pended to three other colleagues with no papers: “They told me: ‘Your papers aren’t in order’; I told them this was nothing new, but they didn’t want to take the risk.”

The transition was difficult: Diallo had never been able to put enough money aside to cope with a period of unemployment as his savings had regularly been sent to his remaining family in Mali. After four months, he found a very badly paid part-
time job in a restaurant as a washer-up. Then, in 2008, he began to work for a small building contractor, thanks to contact from a former illegal immigrant colleague. While relations with his boss were acceptable, Diallo says: “I worked a lot, for not a lot, and it was in my interests not to be ill …” Diallo learned that he could become legal and receive a work visa with a promise from his employer to hire him. His boss was nervous. Diallo sought mediation through a trade unionist whom he had met on a demonstration, and in June 2008 his employer decided to sign a promise of employment for Diallo, who became legal in October of the same year. The work visa that Diallo became entitled to, and which originally gave him hope of a major change, was, however, a temporary one, linked to the length of the contract his boss pledged he could sign. In October 2009 “after a year spent working without taking any holiday or anything, in the hope that they would renew my contract,” Diallo was shown the door. Ever since, he has again been an irregular immigrant.

How public policies impact on life courses

Each of the life courses reconstructed here is representative of a collection of particular ingredients and connected episodes. Despite their specificity, in each case the institutional context defines the legal framework of what is and what is not possible. This framework changed profoundly in France between the 1980s and 2000s, which has led us to distinguish between two generations of immigrants who experienced immigration, settlement and occupational integration under sub-
stantially different conditions. The institutional context also influences the signifi-
cance migrants attribute to their families and local environments in each episode.
Thus, the role a family will have in successive emigration episodes will depend on the ability of the immigrant to regularize his/her stay and/or prolong it through employment. When a family finds itself reunited in a country of immigration and when its members’ rights to stay are not periodically called into question (as in Aisha’s case and as with the family reunifications of the 1980s), it often becomes a resource for the immigrant, both emotionally and economically. In contrast, when
Labour Market Inequality between Two Generations of Immigrants

a family stays in a country and an immigrant’s administrative and financial situations are problematic (as in the cases of Julieta and Abdel), it becomes a source of preoccupation, placing heavy responsibilities on them. “Matrimonial strategies” may be contemplated: marrying or entering into a civil partnership with a French citizen can be seen as a way of providing a better chance of gaining a right to stay, to work and to move freely in the country in the context of a tightening of the legal conditions for immigration (Abdel’s case).

Intergenerational inequality in light of the tightening of immigration policies

The 1980s represents a distinct phase in the history of French migration characterized by the official closure of borders, by an increase in the number of family reunifications and regularization of undeclared workers on a case-by-case basis.

Table 1 presents the main elements of the legal framework of the period. In particular, it highlights the fact that, despite a stance that was unfavourable to the entry of new foreign workers, migration policies remained relatively open to family reunification where a foreigner’s presence in the country was already authorized and justified by their occupational integration. Migrants coming to France in this period and finding themselves in positions of irregularity (Ali’s case) were regularized thanks to the legitimizing power of stable employment. This provided them over time with access to social rights, to training, to an occupation and to family reunification.

In a context where case-by-case regularizations are not subjected to strict regulation by the state and where they result from negotiations between the authorities and actors in the labour market, the role of employers is a decisive factor. The latter effectively promote access to a form of citizenship through employment. Migration policies from the 2000s made legal status more temporary and thus reversible in an economic context of generally weakening protection through employment. The conditions to fulfil to obtain a long-term residence permit and for family reunification increased. At the same time, the borders were reopened to economic migration, driven by selective policies favouring temporary or even cyclical labour immigration (Hellio 2008).

In this context of increasingly complex and precarious statuses, it is easy to fall into irregularity: undeclared work seems to be a course that is difficult to avoid. In Diallo’s account, “having a job” meant doing undeclared work, because his status as having no papers did not enable him to envisage anything else. His life course is representative of the risk of remaining imprisoned at the very bottom of the status hierarchy as a result of the difficulty of attaining a legal status through regularization and its uncertainties. In Julieta’s case, while undeclared work also represented an unavoidable stage, Bulgaria’s membership of the EU and the prospect of “becoming European” allowed her to envisage a change, firstly through the perpetuation of her right to stay then, ultimately, her right to work in France.

Table 2 highlights the change in stance in comparison to the previous legislative framework. In particular, a stance that is unfavourable to long-term residency for newly arrived workers in combination with a tightening of the conditions for family reunifications, in a context of a closer dependence between length of work
contracts and length of residence permit. In the case of immigrants from non-EU countries, legal statuses are much more reversible, residence permits are closely linked to the needs of the national labour market. The legislation of lists of occupations “open” to immigrants, moreover, institutionalizes a hierarchy of countries of origin, creating different immigration conditions depending on whether immigrants come from the European Union or not.

Changes in the labour market contribute in turn to making the relationship between employment and the right to stay more complicated: the increasing number of insecure and temporary contracts, in particular in sectors that have historically been open to foreign labour, reduces the chances of retaining a legal status, while the risk of descending into irregularity at the end of a contract increases (Issa’s and Diallo’s cases).

The procedures for issuing or renewing residence permits, such as temporary residence cards for family reasons, require applicants to prove they have sufficient incomes and they meet the housing conditions defined by law. In comparison to the procedures that regulated immigration in the 1980s, those from the 2000s put in place a selection based on money and therefore contributed to excluding the disadvantaged.

The local environment and its actors thus become the crucial regulators. They often play the leading role in the emergence of opportunities to unblock deadlocked situations. Associations and solidarity networks seem to be the key actors in migrants’ stories, conveying valuable information. A locale and its resources are an essential space for the acquisition of social rights and for participation in the labour market, which carries with it “local citizenship,” while being confined by the national legal framework.

The regulation of the labour market is also subjected to local arrangements, the role of intermediaries between the authorities and foreigners can therefore prove decisive. Issa’s life course reveals the importance of legal expertise from associations defending the rights of foreigners, which was vital for family reunification initially and then regularization.

**Migration policies, status and its connection to work**

The type of influence public services can have on life courses depends on the hierarchy of immigrants’ statuses, which results in civic stratification. Being “European” today is clearly not the same as being a “third country national.” In the first case, foreigners can stay and work freely, and these rights allow them to eventually envisage a rewarding career, indicating, as in Julieta’s case, a difference with “non-Europeans.”

The life courses of non-EU foreigners, which are more precarious in terms of rights to stay and to work, are characterized by a relationship to work based on need and the acceptance of unfavourable conditions. In these circumstances, there is little scope to make career plans: the ability of individuals to choose professions and to envisage their own career development is limited to what administrative statuses and employment and immigration legislation allow them to consider (Issa and Abdel’s cases).
Table 1. **The main trends in French immigration policy (1980s)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitude towards the entry of foreign workers</th>
<th>Attitude towards long-term residency</th>
<th>Attitude towards short-term residency</th>
<th>Regularization</th>
<th>Link between employment and residence permit</th>
<th>Attitude towards family reunifications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FRANCE</strong></td>
<td><strong>UNFAVOURABLE</strong></td>
<td><strong>POSITIVE</strong></td>
<td><strong>AMBIGUOUS</strong></td>
<td><strong>ON A CASE-BY-CASE BASIS</strong></td>
<td><strong>SEPARABLE</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Following the 1973 economic crisis and the</td>
<td>For workers and their families <em>already in place.</em></td>
<td>Aside from seasonal migrants, migrant workers and their families are expected to settle permanently in the territory, particularly through obtaining stable employment. However, the 29th October 1981 law makes it more difficult for <em>new immigrants</em> to obtain a resident’s card.</td>
<td>In the summer of 1981, a number of interministerial circulars specified the conditions for exceptional regularization introduced for illegal workers and other illegal immigrants. In 1986, the Pasqua law tightened conditions for entry, residency and regularization, but it remained possible for employers and public services dealing with employment matters to make arrangements.</td>
<td>The 17 July 1984, law no. 84-622 on the rights to residency and to work was passed unanimously. It recognized the permanency of residency in France of the immigrant population and separated the right to stay from having a job.</td>
<td>In 1975, family immigration was once more allowed, despite the official cessation of economic immigration.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2. - *The main trends in French immigration policies (2000s)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitude towards the entry of low-skilled foreign workers</th>
<th>Attitude towards long-term residency</th>
<th>Attitude towards short-term residency</th>
<th>Regularization</th>
<th>Attitude towards immigrants from the EU’s new member states</th>
<th>Link between employment and residence permits</th>
<th>Attitude towards family reunifications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FRANCE</strong></td>
<td><strong>UNFAVOURABLE</strong></td>
<td><strong>NEGATIVE</strong></td>
<td><strong>POSITIVE</strong></td>
<td><strong>ON A CASE-BY-CASE BASIS</strong></td>
<td><strong>STRONG but open thanks to access to social rights (e.g., unemployment benefits)</strong></td>
<td><strong>UNFAVOURABLE</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Restrictions on obtaining a residence permit.</td>
<td>Even in the case of the higher skilled. For example, the Skills and Talents Card, which is valid for three years and renewable under certain conditions, max. once for immigrants from the area of priority solidarity, except Algeria; European Blue Card: salary must be at least 1.7 times the minimum wage (SMIC), valid three years, renewable for at least two. If a work contract is for less than three years, the card is valid for the whole term of the contract + three months, during which time the holder must find another job.</td>
<td>ON A CASE-BY-CASE BASIS</td>
<td>OPEN Since 2008 for the countries in the 2004 wave.</td>
<td>CLOSED For Bulgaria and Romania (2007 wave).</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* * In 2006 it was decided to abolish opposability of the situation in the labour market, and in the same year a list of 62 occupations open to immigrants from new EU member countries (with the exception of Cyprus and Malta) was provisionally drawn up, before being expanded in December 2007 to 151 professions, most of which were unskilled in the construction, restaurant and service sectors. A second list of 30 occupations related to a second category of foreigners: immigrants from non-EU countries. These occupations, in contrast to those in the first list, were often skilled posts (such as “works foremen” and “surveyors”) and most of them, 24 of the 30 to be precise, were open only within specific regions and not at the national level. Targeting through bilateral agreements meant that Tunisians and Algerians were excluded from these measures along with immigrants from several West African countries, such as Benin, Senegal, Gabon and the Republic of Congo. The circular issued by the Ministry of Immigration in January 2008 introduced a regularization procedure on a case-by-case basis for foreign workers who had worked regularly in France for at least a year and you could quickly find employment in one of the 30 professions set out in the 2007 circular. The new circular that Manuel Valls, Minister of the Interior, drew up in November 2012 was expected to set out the official criteria to be met for a foreigner to be regularized and removed from the lists. This circular aimed to reduce the procedural inequalities that had been observed in the regional application of arrangements for regularization under the Sarkozy government, but results are disappointing at this point.
In this sense, the lack of recognition of foreign qualifications, in a French context marked by the importance of skills certification, directs foreign labour towards sectors and occupations that require no qualifications. For immigrants from non-EU countries with no papers or with temporary permits, work conditions are of secondary importance, and the main objective becomes extending one’s right to stay, even at the cost of a downgraded status.

The life courses of the second generation of immigrants demonstrate that a mixture of institutional contexts and local environment ingredients direct female and male immigrants towards gendered, unskilled professions (in this case construction and personal care services). While this may facilitate initial occupational integration, it can also make career development difficult and restrict immigrants, whose qualifications are unrecognized, to the least skilled sectors of the labour market.

Table 3. – Status, relationship to work, and networks: An overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1980</th>
<th>2000s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Legal status</td>
<td>Relationship to work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ali</td>
<td>Stable. Regularization and access to rights thanks to declared and permanent work</td>
<td>Ambiguous: without career prospects but with a sense of belonging to an occupation (construction worker)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aisha</td>
<td>Stable. Access to rights thanks to declared and permanent work of husband</td>
<td>Negative: progressing from inactivity to looking for work is restricted by partner’s economic difficulties. The choice of personal care services is made &quot;by default&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000s</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdel</td>
<td>Unstable</td>
<td>Problematic: progression from student status to that of being a worker is impossible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issa and Obame</td>
<td>Unstable, but exceptional regularization (because of the health of one of their children)</td>
<td>Negative: strong sense of lower status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julieta</td>
<td>Unstable, but with the prospect of receiving European status</td>
<td>Positive, but only in the future (in the expectation of becoming “European”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diallo</td>
<td>Unstable</td>
<td>Negative. Sense of having no choices, and acceptance of work that is not or barely worthwhile</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of intra-generational inequality, in the 1980s the stability of employment of migrant workers could allow spouses to attain an, often long-term, right to stay (residence card) as well as a right to work. But this male employment stability could also drive female labour towards inactivity (Aisha’s case).

In the 2000s, more women travelled alone, leaving their families in their countries of origin (Kofman et al. 2011). In this context, female European workers are at an
advantage, their rights to stay in the country not being dependent on the length and legality of work contracts. This status has an extremely significant impact on these women’s relationships to work: not only do they take on an autonomous migratory career, on which their family who remain in the country of origin are dependent, but they can also envisage a career in line with their hopes and ambitions.

Intragenerational inequalities have been transformed. Whereas in the 1980s the status of resident through family reunification could enable women to be economically inactive, or even direct them towards inactivity; in the 2000s, immigrants, when they have access to the labour market, more easily find employment in the casual sector or in undervalued occupations with little potential for mobility (Lendaro and Imdorf 2012). They are over-represented in sectors such as domestic help and hospitality (Kofman 2008), characterized by unattractive working conditions and high proportions of undeclared work (Roulleau-Berger 2010) in a context where it is extremely difficult to receive recognition for skills and qualifications obtained abroad.

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A comparison of two generations of immigrants reveals that the difficulties they have with occupational integration and building careers are accentuated as a result of rules that tightly govern the stability of the legal status of workers living legally in France. The 2000s saw a tightening of restrictions on foreigners wanting to settle in the long term in the “Hexagone” (mainland France): the type of work they could easily access (atypical, undeclared, etc.) undermined social protections associated with work and reduced their ability to stay legally and uninterruptedly in France.

The methodological benefit of an analysis of life courses lies in its ability to show that individuals are clearly involved in an institutional context that defines a “framework of what is possible” but also in more local and informal relational contexts, which allow them to put strategies into place and to develop their abilities, such as knowing how to interpret the law, accessing information, asserting their rights or also standing up for themselves in the absence of formal rights (Barron et al. 2011). These life course types reveal, by way of their bifurcations, choices and impasses and the interweaving of restrictions and opportunities, the effects of civic stratification resulting from the increasing numbers of statuses for access to employment, social rights and opportunities for occupational mobility for migrants. The material calls into question the validity of the transnational citizenship thesis in particular (Sassen 1999), including the case of European citizens who are not on the same level in terms of rights, as Julieta’s case illustrates.

In the context of an erosion of permanent employment and increasingly restrictive conditions for access to rights as a function of employment, the status of having a right to stay and to work has become more insecure because it has become more complex to maintain over time. A comparison between two generations of immigrants enables us to highlight the change in the institutional context that has made the hierarchy of foreigners’ statuses progressively more complex. The discrepancies between institutional and biographical temporality (Mayer and Schoepfling 1989) are growing, and in the face of a multitude of administrative difficulties (recognition of qualifications, renewal of papers, family reunification) immigrants offer proof of disproportionate ingenuity, endurance and an ability to circumvent rules.
Labour Market Inequality between Two Generations of Immigrants

**Public policies and the (non-)structuring of social time**

Public policies outline typical life courses (Lendaro 2011) that define standard transitions and associated temporalities (Lima 2006). It is above all national regulations that have the normative and cognitive power to institutionalize life cycles (Guillemard 2008). However, sociologists of youth, like Cécile Van de Velde (2008) and Léa Lima (2008), have shown that the ternary model of ages of life (Smelser and Halpern 1978) has been destabilized by the extension and institutionalization of a fourth age, called integration, dedicated to tentative access to employment, which has interposed itself between education and entering the labour market.

The life courses reconstructed here have shown that individuals arriving in the 2000s, whatever their ages, found themselves faced with an extension in the time it is supposed to take to attain a stable legal status in the labour market. They can, in point of fact, quickly get work, but without this enabling them to automatically obtain a legal status (as in the case of undeclared work) or an enduring legal status (as in the case of short-term contracts).

The “integration period,” which is defined by the to and fro between work, unemployment and training has been extended and made more complex for the second generation of immigrants, leading to an accentuation of career instability. These life courses highlight the discrepancy between, on the one hand, the linear conception of life cycles that emerges from public policies, and, on the other, the forks and reversibility of immigrants’ statuses, which are far from being ordered sequences. A foreigner who has difficulty integrating, as in the case of Abdel, is thus an “integration failure” (Lima 2006: 58) since no legal status grants them a right to learn occupational codes, norms, habits and knowledge prior to working (Rose 1996). In effect, economic immigrants are supposed to settle in the country having already got a job, since it is precisely this employment that legitimizes their presence. The age of integration, as a period instituted by public employment policies, seems not to relate to foreigners, while integration difficulties well and truly exist.

These life courses highlight a paradox: whereas, since the 1980s, French integration policies have increased the services aimed at providing career security, immigration policies have instead created fractures and the destabilization and reversibility of statuses as a means for controlling and selecting foreign labour, thereby reinforcing French society’s internal borders (Fassin 2010).

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9. Neil J. Smelser and Sydney Halpern show that social policies divide the lifetimes of individuals in society into the age of education, the age of work and the age of rest/retirement.
References

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